

AFRO - AMERICAN FOLKLORE
AND ITS PRESENCE IN GEORGE GERSHWIN'S
"PORGY AND BESS"

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC (JAZZ STUDIES)
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

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DURBAN, AUGUST 1993

ABSTRACT

This is a detailed study of Afro-American folklore and its presence in George Gershwin's Porgy And Bess. The study concerns itself with the historical, spiritual, analytical and sociological aspects of the opera. Negro traits are explored from their environments to their lifestyle, from their folklore to their underlying values and traditions.

The first chapter is entitled 'TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF FOLK'. Before even discussing Afro-American folklore, the meaning of 'folk' or 'folklore' needs to be established. What is most important about 'folk music' is that it is learnt through oral tradition. Among its many functions are accompanying activities, narrations or dance music. There are certain musical styles which are characteristic of folk music; this comprises the text, melody, harmony, form or singing style. The most common folk instruments used are shared with the world's simplest tribal cultures. It is history that makes folk music. A community which behaves in a certain way today, makes history tomorrow, and this is 'folk'.

Chapter Two entitled 'AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE', discusses Black music that developed in the U.S.A. after the Africans were imported to America as slaves. They created their own music, which included work songs, field hollers, spirituals and the blues. Their music had certain characteristics where melody, harmony, singing styles, group singing, handclapping and percussive effects were concerned.

The third chapter entitled 'THE PRESENCE OF AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE IN PORGY AND BESS', is an analysis of the music. The folk elements of the opera are exposed and then aligned to the Negro lifestyle discussed in the previous chapter.

Chapter Four entitled 'A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH', discusses white 'folk' teaching Black 'folk' how to do what they do naturally. The views of the performers, the criticism of the press and the reaction of the audience are also included.

The appendices comprise two interviews; one with the original 'Porgy' and the second with the original choral director of Porgy And Bess, who claims to have translated the dialect of standard English into a negro style flavour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby acknowledge the financial assistance of the Development of the Human Sciences Research Council.

I would like to express my appreciation to:

Mr Darius Brubeck, for his supervision and encouragement;

Jürgen Bräuninger, for his assistance;

Professor James Standifer, for allowing me access to the Afro-American Collection at the University of Michigan, U.S.A.;

Professor Todd Duncan and Dr Eva Jessye, who made themselves available for interviews;

My parents, for their love and support;

Ray, for typing my dissertation, and Dawn, for printing it.

THE WHOLE THESIS, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, IS MY OWN ORIGINAL
WORK.

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INTRODUCTION

George Gershwin's Porgy And Bess is an opera which is based on Negro lifestyle, but it did not begin there. Its origin is traceable to a newspaper article about a crippled beggar from Charleston, South Carolina. This was transformed into the novel Porgy by Dubose Heyward and later translated into a play. Gershwin then picked it up and created his opera, using folk elements evident in the lifestyle of the Negroes.

This study was initiated by my interest in Negro folk; their lifestyle, their folklore and their traditions. The opera, Porgy And Bess by George Gershwin surfaced. He said: "Porgy And Bess is a folk tale. Its people naturally would sing folk music."¹ So I set out to prove that this opera is a folktale indeed, and that Negro traits can be traced throughout the work.

The framework of my dissertation consists of the historical, spiritual, analytical and sociological aspects of folk music and traditions. It begins with the definition of 'folk' and 'folk music', its cultural characteristics and its functions. The historical and spiritual aspects are concerned with the Afro-American customs and its folklore. The story and the music is then analyzed and compared to Afro-American folk elements. The sociological aspect concerns the 'White' composer, director and lyricists in an opera which depicts Negro lifestyle, how the performers felt, what the critics said and how the audiences reacted.

Research methods used were from primary and secondary sources. I consulted literature on Gershwin and on Negro or Afro-American folk music, read the novel Porgy, by Dubose Heyward, worked from the original score of the opera, listened to different recordings of Porgy And Bess and other serious works by Gershwin.

1. A.Kendall, George Gershwin. A Biography, p.156.

In my research I read letters to Dr Eva Jessye from Gershwin, articles, reviews, and programmes of different productions that all form part of Dr Jessye's collection on Porgy And Bess. In addition to interviews I held with Professor Duncan and Dr Eva Jessye, I saw video recordings of interviews conducted by Professor Standifer with Professor Duncan, Anne Brown (Bess) and Dr Eva Jessye. The Afro-American Collection proved a valuable source of information for me - from its dissertations, researches and long essays on Black music.

My dissertation is presented in four chapters, namely "TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF 'FOLK'", where I discuss the different meanings of 'folk'. This chapter leads onto "THE AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKLORE" in which I discuss Negro customs and folklore. Chapter Three, "THE PRESENCE OF FOLKLORE IN PORGY AND BESS", analyzes the music and aligns it to Negro folk elements. In the final chapter, "A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH", I discuss the elements of 'Black' and 'White' folk.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF FOLK

1. DEFINITION.

'Folk' is a difficult concept to define precisely. It could mean 'folk' as in people or their language and customs, their beliefs and superstitions, or just the way they respond to certain things like the weather. It is also difficult to decide whether a particular song is a folk song. Christmas carols, early jazz and shape-note hymn singing are borderline cases. But there is a body of music in the most specific sense of the term.

Folk music is oral tradition, often in a relatively simple style and primarily of rural provenance, normally performed by non-professionals. It is used and understood by broad segments of a population, and especially by the lower socio-economic classes. Folk music is characteristic of a nation, society, or ethnic group, and claimed by one of these as its own.

It is most useful in explicating the musical culture of Europe and the Americas before 1920, but it is also valid in non-western cultures such as those of East, South and West Asia.

2. CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Oral tradition is often considered the central characteristic of folk music. Popular music uses mixed written and oral transmission, as does jazz, which is mainly art music. Many folk instrumentalists can and do read whilst folk singers may use printed versions of song texts, negating the purely oral character of the tradition.

A piece of folk music, a repertory, or a style may be claimed as the property of a folk community. But composition is normally carried out by individuals and not by a group. Many folk songs originate outside the folk community, as hymns or art songs are taken up. In the course of transmission, however, a song may undergo change at the hands of many who learn and in turn teach it.

A song may be shortened or lengthened, its mode, rhythm or form altered, because of random imperfect learning, but more important, so that it will conform to the musical norms of the culture or to stylistic changes that the repertory maybe undergoing as a result of urban influence or contact with neighbouring peoples.

As a result, folk songs do not have standard authentic forms, but exist, rather as parts thereof. This may consist of dozens or even hundreds of related tunes within one national repertory.

In some cases, two or more national repertories contain related variants of a tune, which has adopted the style of each repertory that it has entered boundaries, it seems rarely to be accompanied by a text.

3. FUNCTIONS OF FOLK MUSIC

Le Roi Jones, writes about folk music being functional music, and he goes on to say that folk music is usually described as functional implying that it is always used to accompany activities or to help in accomplishing some non-musical purpose. This statement is an oversimplification, but it is true that folk music is frequently associated with specific uses. A large proportion are calendric songs, which are used to accompany rituals in life's cycle. This includes songs for births, weddings and funerals.¹

Another major function is narration, carried on for entertainment, preservation of history, and maintenance of ethnic identity. The texts of these songs are often based on incidents in local history or moralistic and sentimental tale. Robert Chase comments on various musical styles used :

Important genres, typically with distinct musical styles, are dance music usually but not always instrumental, children's songs, work songs, and religious music performed outside the framework of the church. Folk music plays a particularly strong role in the culture of minorities, where it is a special device for underscoring ethnicity. In modern urban life, folk music has absorbed new functions in political, social and student movements²

1. See L.Jones, Blues People, pp.28 - 30.

2. R.Chase, comp., American Folk Tales and Songs, p.15.

4. MUSICAL STYLES.

Even though each nation has its distinctive style, a few characteristics pervade western folk music. The typical melodic form is strophic, a stanza consisting of two to eight lines with four most common. The relationship among the lines varies. It could use the melodic form ABCD, ABBA, AABA, ABCA or ABAB. Most folk music is monophonic, but harmony and polyphony are found.

The aspects of music in which the various repertories differ most are rhythm and singing style or timbre. In rhythm, regular or irregular isometric structures can be used. Regular structures are based on the total number of syllables per line.

Singing style is the way in which the voice is used and the kinds of sounds that are produced, neither is the more natural, since each results from aesthetic and cultural values. In folk cultures, even though there is no formal instruction in using the voice, characteristic styles of sound production, ornamentation, nasality, raspings, tension, vocal blend in group singing, tessitura etc, are expected of singers. It seems likely that characteristics of a culture such as types of interpersonal relationship, political structure, and degrees of co-operation in labour play a part in determining the singing style of a society.

5. INSTRUMENTS.

The relationship between folk and art music seems closer in instruments and instrumental music than in song. Folk cultures received many instruments from cities, courts, the church, and non-western cultures. It is useful to consider folk instruments in terms of their origin or source.

Most widespread is a group that western folk cultures share with the world's simplest tribal cultures. These include simple percussion instruments such as rattles, vertical flutes and wooden trumpets with few or no finger holes, and improvised sound sources such as pots and pans. These are used by children and in remnants of pre-Christian rituals.

A second group consists of instruments brought to Europe from non-European cultures since the Middle Ages. Among them are the banjo and xylophone from Africa. Another group comprises of instruments developed in the folk cultures themselves from simple materials in imitation of more complex urban or court models, like the washtub bass, a kind of pre-string double bass.

Although vocal tunes are sometimes performed instrumentally, there is, generally speaking, a separation of repertoires and forms. A large proportion of instrumental folk music is intended for dancing.

6. HISTORY.

The history of folk music depends almost entirely on oral tradition, therefore there are very few documents for historical study. According to Scholes :

A large part of the modern interest in folk poetry and folk music comes from the work of Bishop Percy in the middle of the 18th century: this it was that first aroused a largely town-living world, that was beginning to lose touch with its own countryside, to the fact that something valuable had, in the migration, been left behind.¹

Obviously, a great proportion of the corpus of folk music could have been collected, if every migrant was only allowed to leave their town or village after they were stripped of all they possessed of it. Scholes goes on :

The business of taking down folk songs from the lips of the people, and similarly of taking down folk-dance tunes and steps from their fiddles and their legs, was very actively pursued in Britain towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (probably only just in time to save a great mass of beautiful material).²

With the invention of recording, folk communities began to have contact with a way of standardizing tunes and performances easier to comprehend than written music, and recordings by outstanding musicians began to dominate some of the traditions. In the 20th century, folk and popular music began to merge, oral tradition was replaced or supplemented by written or recorded tradition, and professional singers began to sing versions of folk songs and to compose new songs with elements of folk styles in music text and subject matter.

1. P. Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music, p.356.

2. Ibid., p.366.

Folk music styles have changed as a result of cultural change and interactions with art and popular music, but many individual songs have remained in the repertoires for centuries, participating in these changes but keeping their identity. The history of the individual song is an important strand of the history of folk music.

CHAPTER TWO

THE AFRICAN - AMERICAN FOLKLORE

1. HISTORY.

What made the Black music that developed in the U.S.A. so different from both classical music and from the traditional folk songs and ballads, which were popular among the working people in both Britain and U.S.A.? The answer lies in the way in which people in Africa, learned, performed and listened to music.

According to Roberts, the main musical instrument in West Africa was the drums. Groups of drummers would play music that was highly complicated, particularly in its use of rhythm. Africans would sing and hand-clap as an accompaniment, but very differently from the way in which Europeans were taught to sing. In some regions of West Africa, the music was also influenced by the music of the Arab countries, which lay to the north. There, in addition to drums, Africans used home-made stringed instruments and rattles. These would accompany the singing of people as they worked, and in the many ceremonies which existed in traditional tribal life.

Roberts then adds that Africans were imported to America as slaves. They created music which mixed both their traditional African music and ideas from the European music of their white masters. This was a new type of music, which was no longer purely African in nature. It therefore received a new name, and came to be called 'Afro-American' music.¹

1. See J.S.Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, Chapter 2.

2. WORK SONGS AND FIELD HOLLERS.

The work song was one of the earliest types of Black American music and was strongly influenced by the type of music the Blacks had known in Africa. According to Jones, most of the African traditional leisure pursuits could not take shape in America because the slaves spent most of their time working. Whether on farms or cotton plantations, they were always closely controlled by the slave-owners. Thus drums, which for many Africans were their main musical instrument, were banned in many states for fear that they would be used to start a rebellion and to communicate messages to other slaves at a distance.¹

Roach comments on the close relationship between the spoken language and the playing of drums in Africa. Drummers could actually copy the rhythm and intonation of speech. In African wrestling, for example, drummers would tap out comments to the fighters - hence the expression 'the talking drum'.²

But the traditional African habit of singing to accompany work did not worry the slave-owners because, if anything, it helped the slaves to work harder. The work song usually included a call-and-response pattern of singing. Here, one man would sing the verse and the entire group would reply in the chorus. All this would be sung rhythmically in time with whatever work they were doing, easing the boredom. The call-and-response pattern was an important part of the African tradition and later of Afro-American music.

It was also important for the development of Afro-American music in that the way in which Africans sang was very different from European styles of singing. As Courlander points out, Africans used varying vocal tunes, often involving growls and cries and falsetto, instead of the pure tone favoured by the classically trained singer of Europe.³

1. See L.Jones, op. cit., p.19.

2. See H.Roach, Black American Music. Past and Present, pp.9 - 10.

3. See H.Courlander, Negro Folk Music U.S.A., pp.24 - 25.

Work songs were sung extensively on the plantation farms during the days of slavery. Both men and women worked hard at a variety of jobs, but particularly at picking the cotton crops. They usually sang about their work, but sometimes used the songs purely to express the way they felt about life in general. This included complaining about the way they were overworked, although this could be dangerous if the slave-owners heard them and understood what they were singing.¹ For example if they wanted to complain about the slave-owners, they would refer to him as the captain.

Oh the Captain can't read,
the Captain can't write,
Captain can't tell you,
when the tracks lined right.²

Later, after the freeing of the slaves, work songs went with the ex-slaves to their new jobs, whether laying rails with a railroad gang or chopping down trees in the lumber camps. Some types of work song have survived even up to the present day. These are mainly in the southern jails, where Black convicts sing while doing manual labour in much the same way they did a hundred years ago.³

Another early Black American vocal style which was strongly influenced by African music was the field holler which was sung by a person working alone, rather than in a group. An informer interviewed by Courlander said:

These were calls to communicate messages of all kinds - to bring people in from the fields, to summon them to work, to attract the attention of a girl in the distance, to signal hunting dogs, or simply to make one's presence known.⁴

Courlander goes on to say :

There were others, more aptly described as cries, that were simply a form of self-expression, a vocalization of some emotion. A man working under the hot sun

1. See L. Jones, op.cit., pp.18 - 19.

2. H. Courlander, op.cit., p.96.

3. See L. Jones, op.cit., p.67.

4. H. Courlander, op.cit., p.81.

might give voice to such a cry on impulse, directing it to the world, or to the fields around him, or perhaps to himself. The Negro cries and calls of the open spaces are known by different names in different places. Sometimes they are called 'cornfield hollers', 'cottonfield hollers', or just 'hollers'.

The cry does not have to have a theme, or to fit into any kind of formal structure, or to conform to normal concepts of which every sound, line and phrase is exploited for itself in any fashion that appeals to the crier. It may be short and sharp, with an abrupt end, or it can waver, thin out and gently disappear into the air. It may consist of a single musical statement or a series of statements and may reflect any one of a number of moods - home sickness, loneliness, lovesickness, contentment, exuberance. The clue often lies in the words as well as the music.

3. SPIRITUALS.

According to Roach, one of the earliest musical contacts between the black and white people in the south was through religious music. The early nineteenth century was a time of great religious activity in America. Black congregations were particularly attracted to the Baptist and Methodist missionaries, because of their very lively and emotional style of preaching and conducting services. In this, they were closer to African religious practices than any other Christian denomination. However, rather than simply copying the European hymns they heard the white people sing, the slaves combined the music and the religious traditions with those they had known in Africa.¹

Thus the earliest form of Black religious music in America was probably the 'ring shout'. As explained by Courlander this was a kind of religious dance accompanied by singing in a call-and-response pattern, with the dancers stamping their feet to beat out a rhythm, as they moved around in a circle. This illustrates the very different ideas about religion that exist in Europe and Africa. European church goers sit quietly in their seats, but in African culture physical action - dance as well as music, is vital to worship. So also is the call-and-response technique between preacher and congregation. This explains the beginning of the song-sermon among black Americans. Here, at religious gatherings, either in the churches or in the widespread camp meetings in the countryside, the preacher would sing or cry his line and the congregation would shout or sing the response.²

What are now known as spirituals grew out of the early ring shouts and song-sermons. As Roberts goes on to explain blacks and whites worshipped together in churches. But whites increasingly disapproved of this, while blacks were also keen to separate, so that they could worship in their own ways. Therefore as early as 1816, churches were set up for black congregations only.

1. See H. Roach, op.cit., pp.37 - 39.

2. See H. Courlander, op.cit., pp.194 - 197.

This meant that, rather than having to sing traditional hymns in a strict European fashion, they could be adapted and sung with the types of African characteristics discussed. Hymns performed in this way are known as spirituals. They had a special significance for their slaves, because they adapted stories from the Bible to their own situation.¹

One of the most popular was that of the Israelites in captivity in Egypt, which is the theme of 'Go Down Moses':

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go!²

1. See J.S.Roberts, op.cit., pp.48 - 49.

2. Quoted in H.Roach, op.cit., p.28.

4. BLUES AND BALLADS.

The freeing of the slaves in 1865, which was called Emancipation, brought about some changes in Afro-American music. Although this day of freedom had arrived, laws were soon passed to ensure that blacks stayed at the bottom of the economic and social ladder.

Many of the freed slaves moved away from the south but the vast majority stayed. Thirty years later, life was not very different. Most of them were involved in the same kind of agricultural work as they had been as slaves. However, they did have free time on their hands and were no longer subject to the very strict control of the slave-owner. During this time, there was a rapid development of Black music styles. These ranged far beyond the work songs, field hollers and spirituals which had existed in slavery times. And, as in these earlier styles, we find the influence of both African music and the traditional music of white Americans such as folk songs and hymns, that had been brought over from Europe.

A case in point is the black ballad. The ex-slaves had heard white people sing folk European ballads and folk songs and so they adopted these to suit themselves. Some of the most famous ballads emerged out of the earlier work songs. The 'Ballad of John Henry', for example, is the story of a Black steel driller working on the building of a railway tunnel. He was supposed to have had a competition with a steam-driven pile driver and beaten it, but, having worked so hard in the attempt, he had a heart attack and died at the moment of victory.

This song was originally used as a work song by Black workers engaged in railroad-track laying. But it became so famous mainly because it was an example of the black man fighting against almost impossible odds, and it developed into a ballad that was sung by not only Black musicians, but by white ones too. And each time it was sung, the musician would add to the story, so that John Henry became one of the legends of Black history.

But the ballads were not always about black heroes like John Henry; they were often about 'bad' men too.

The ballad wasn't the only European musical form to be adapted and changed by Black people. Traditional dance tunes were played by those slaves who had been allowed to play the fiddle or banjo, which were the most popular instruments, by the slave-owners. But they were played with the strong rhythmic emphasis which is a basic feature of African music. Hence, work songs, field hollers, spirituals, ballads and dance tunes all contained aspects of both African and European music, when they were played or sung by ex-slaves or their descendants. Those musical forms all affected each other to give a particular black folk-music style. Out of this came the blues.

The blues emerged in order to express the personal feelings of the singer. The ballad told the story of someone else, the work song sang rhythmic phrases designed to coincide with the pace of work, and the spirituals had religious lyrics. But, the blues simply expressed the mood of the singer. It gave musicians a chance to talk about themselves, their loves, their hates, their attitudes to work and so on.

Despite all the African elements discussed, blues was not African music. Although the slaves might have originally come from Africa, their descendants were brought up in an entirely different environment, one that had been greatly influenced by American life. Therefore, all the Black styles of music that developed during and after slavery were combinations of African and European musical influences.

5. MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

i) MELODY.

A great deal of American Negro music has been found to use certain pentatonic scales, which in its commonest form is made up of the tones corresponding to the black keys of the piano starting on G \flat . Many Negro songs utilize other systems, such as the ordinary major scale lacking its fourth or its seventh - in other words, the pentatonic plus an additional note, either the major fourth or the major seventh. Other scales, are the major with a flattened seventh, the minor with a raised sixth, the minor without the sixth, and the minor with the raised seventh; these four have been characterized by some analysts, as probable survivals of scales brought from Africa.

ii) BLUES TONALITY.

This is characteristic of the Negro Blues songs, the partially \flat 3rd and \flat 7th. This is found in many different kinds of Negro folk music - work songs, religious songs and others. Jazz specialist Marshall Stearns says:

Two areas in the octave - the third and the seventh in the scale - are attacked with an endless variety of swoops, glides, slurs, smears and glisses.

This difficult-to-define treatment of the thirds and sevenths is what produces the blue tones.

iii) HARMONY AND POLYPHONY.

Courlander states :

A general impression that comes from listening to spirituals, work songs, and other traditional forms of Negro music is that there is an absence of harmony. Group singing tends to be in unison, sometimes in octaves. But certain notes or groups of notes may be sung in simultaneous 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, or 5ths. This is particularly true in church singing and gang singing.²

1. Quoted in H.Courlander, op. cit., p.18.

2. Ibid. p.21.

Some improvisatory and semi-improvisatory singing produces unmistakable polyphonic effects as in:



The top line represents the helper and the bottom, the leader. This kind of harmonization is solidly within the Negro tradition.

iv) SINGING STYLES.

There are various singing styles in Negro tradition. One of them is the tendency to break into falsetto tones, sometimes for a note or two, on occasion for whole phrases or entire songs. This is not the result of inability on the part of the singer to reach tones higher than his natural register. In Negro tradition, the falsetto has an aesthetic value placed upon it. African singers often use falsetto as an informal style for singing solo and in small groups.

Other Negro singing elements that are noteworthy are humming and 'moaning and groaning'. They are found in religious songs, worksongs, old-style blues, and field cries. 'Moaning' does not imply grief or anguish, on the contrary, it is a blissful or ecstatic rendition of a song, characterized by full and free exploitation of melodic variation and improvisation, sometimes with an open throat, or with closed lips to create a humming effect. On occasion, moaning is done in falsetto. Elements of this kind are sometimes observed in preaching and in church prayers, where they may result in rudimentary polyphony.

v) CALL AND RESPONSE

One of the readily recognized characteristics of Negro group singing is the leader and chorus responsive pattern. Whenever group singing takes place, whether in work gangs, in the home, or in church, there is a natural tendency for two-part singing; the first being the leader, and the second part, that of the group.

In the typical call-and-response form, the leader makes a statement of one or more phrases, with the chorus coming in at some point to add to the statement. In some instances, the leader sings the entire song, with the chorus joining in towards the end of a line or phrase. In others, the response may consist of a repetition of the line sung by the leader. Courlander writes :

A frequently observed practice is for the leader's part and the responsive part to overlap. Thus, the leader may start a new phrase before the chorus has quite ended, or the chorus may come in before the leader has quite finished.

Many songs of the responsive type completely change character when sung in solo. A soloist trying to sing a song normally sung by a group usually tries to compensate in some way for the absence of a 2nd part or choral response. The result is a rendition which only approximates the original and which is devoid of its intricacies, subtleties and embellishment.

The relationship of leader and response is often developed by the singers according to their feelings, in secular group signing. Once the pattern has been set, it is followed throughout. Responsive parts in religious songs are rarely improvised, however, there is a more conservative attitude about religious singing and generally a recognized 'correct' response. Courlander comments on the notion of response being deeply rooted in Negro culture. He goes on :

1. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

A man telling a story, particularly if his rendition is effective, will often stimulate conversational responses such as 'Oh, Lord', 'Yeah', 'Ain't it so', and 'It's true' at appropriate places. The interplay of narration and exclamation sometimes sets up a rhythmical, near musical pattern. In church preaching, this effect is part of the ritual, and almost any sermon will produce this response pattern.¹

vi) PERCUSSIVE EFFECTS.

Another commonly observed element in traditional Negro music is the part played by patting and handclapping as discussed by Courlander. Clapping is the normal way of providing percussive effects and maintaining a rhythmic pulse for singing. Thigh-slapping or patting was a commonplace accompaniment to old time social dances and to certain kinds of singing. Patting and clapping are integral to most old style church singing and are used in most children's ring games and play party songs. Clapping beats may not coincide with melodic accents. Often the clapping sounds fall squarely between the stressed voice tones and constitute a regular offbeat. Clapping provides a steady pulse.²

Worksongs, tools such as axes, hammer, and tampers provide percussion effects of a different though related kind. This tempo of work with heavy tools is necessarily slower than handclapping. But the work beat can relate to the melodic accent in various ways, for example in the song 'It Take A Long Pull'.³

Negro church music and secular music have much more sophisticated elements of offbeats, retarded beats, and anticipated beats than does Euro-American folk music in general. The main accents of African melodies regularly fall between the down and up beats.⁴

1. Ibid., p.27.

2. Ibid., p.148.

3. Ibid., pp.90 - 91.

4. See H. Roach, op.cit., pp.34 - 35.

Blues, field calls and cries, field songs, cotton picking songs, lumbering songs, rowing songs, railroad songs, preaching - singing styles, prayer singing, ring shouts, game songs, long-shoreman's songs, prison camp songs, secular songs of ridicule and recrimination, songs accompanied by percussion devices or banjo, and numerous others are elements found in George Gershwin's Porgy And Bess, which will now be discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESENCE OF FOLKLORE IN PORGY AND BESS

1. BACKGROUND.

The origin of Porgy And Bess is traceable to a newspaper article from 'News and Courier', about a crippled Negro beggar from Charleston, South Carolina, which read:

Samuel Smalls, who is a cripple and is familiar to King Street with his goat and cart was held for the June term of court of sessions on an aggravated assault charge.¹

This was transformed into the Novel Porgy by DuBose Heyward and later translated into a play. Gershwin then picked it up and created his opera, using folk elements evident in the lifestyle of the Negroes. According to Schwartz, Heyward had lived in Charleston nearly his entire life, in close proximity to Blacks similar to those he had written about. He was familiar with the dialects of Blacks from the locale and knew many of their customs, habits and superstitions. He drew on his own experiences to create the teeming life of Catfish Row.²

Schwartz comments on Heyward's creation of Porgy :

He modelled his Porgy on an actual Charleston character he was familiar with, a badly crippled coal-black beggar with bloodshot eyes and greying hair, nicknamed 'Goat Sammy', because he moved about by a goat. 'Goat Sammy' had the disconcerting habit on his begging rounds of staring blankly and interminably into space while awaiting the handful of coins fitfully thrown his way by people passing by who were moved by his strange look, abject poverty and crippled body.³

Using the Charleston he knew so well as the setting for his novel, Heyward fashioned a story about a beggar called Porgy. Catfish Row of Heyward's novel also had a real life counterpart as Porgy did, and that was Cabbage Row: a "dilapidated building

1. D.Heyward, Porgy, Introduction.

2. See C. Schwartz, Gershwin. His Life and Music, p.243.

3. Ibid., p.244.

for poor Charleston Blacks surrounding a courtyard which was formerly part of a luxurious mansion."¹

Like 'Goat Sammy', Porgy was crippled, past middle-age and dependant on a goat cart to get around. Porgy emerged as no less then a tragic hero. He was crafty and malevolent at times, but his deeply felt love for Bess was monumental in his heartbreaking persistence against oppressive odds.

Heyward wrote not out of pity for an exploited race, nor with any desire to propagandize. His intention was to dramatize a way of life which he found strong and admirable and worthy of serious artistic expression.

Gershwin on the other hand did not live in close proximity to Blacks like the way Heyward did, but stayed at Folly Beach, a small island ten miles from Charleston. Along with its primitive living went the privacy that allowed him to work on uninterrupted. Besides the necessary solitude, Folly Beach also gave him the opportunity to observe at close range the Blacks of the vicinity, especially the Gullahs who inhabited the adjacent James Island.

In many ways the Gullahs were the real-life counterparts of the characters in Porgy. Like those of the residents of Catfish Row, a good many of their habits, superstitions, ecstatic incantations, singing, dancing, foot-stamping and hand clapping, and even their dialect had an unmistakable African origin. By being physically and emotionally removed from the mainstream of American life they had retained more of their African heritage in their customs and languages than probably any Black group in America.

1. Ibid., p.244.

There was a quality in their customs especially as it affected music and rhythm, in particular, to which Gershwin responded instinctively. This made them invaluable as a collective model for Porgy. Heyward even admitted that the 'primitive' Gullahs furnished Gershwin and himself "with a laboratory in which to test our theories as well as an inexhaustible source of material."¹

As Eva Jessye puts it:

A lot of gutbucket stuff he particularly liked had to be cut. And you know, he had written in things that sounded just right, like our people: 'She's worse than dead, Porgy'; we were doing a brush-rhythm thing with our hands, and the more long hair people who had to do with the production, cut it out.²

In the actual synopsis of the opera, there are many examples that could be aligned to Negro life. One of the opening scene, is a crap game in progress, which was normally played by the black men folk to pass the time. The players called themselves crap shooters. The most part of Act 1 Scene 2 is centred around this game. Negroes also believed very strongly in luck, as shown in the song sung by Porgy, 'O Little Stars', for luck to roll in the crap game.

When a person died, it was customary to place a saucer on the chest of the dead person so that people who came to see the body would place money in it. This would be used for the burial. In Act 1 Scene 2, this custom is used when Robbins is murdered.

1. Ibid., p.260.

2. Ibid., p.4.

Black people were very superstitious, and they believed that when a buzzard flies overhead, it was an ill-omen. In Act 2 Scene 1, a buzzard flies over the court, and Porgy exclaims in horror, that it brings bad luck to everyone living in the house. His 'Buzzard Song' elaborates his feeling of terror that follows: "Once de buzzard fold his wing an' light over ya' house, all yo' happiness done dead."¹

In Negro customs, the man was always the head of the home. He dominated his household, for in him there was strength. Although Porgy was crippled, Bess relied on his strength, and felt secure with him. This is shown in their duet "I Loves You, Porgy", in Act 2 Scene 3. Gershwin brings this out in his music, by using flowing passages for Bess, and rhythmical marcato passages for Porgy.

In this same scene, Bess is ill and Serena calls on Dr Jesus to take care of her. Here Gershwin was inspired by a spiritual he had heard the Gullahs sing, "Dr Jesus, Lean Down From Heaven And Place A Belly Band Of Love Around Me."

The last comparison is found in the final song sung by Porgy "Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way", when he goes to New York to look for Bess, after he has been released from gaol. To the blacks, going to New York represented freedom. In slavery days, they always sang songs of freedom eg. "Swing Low". Jordan was used to represent New York.

1. G. Gershwin, Porgy and Bess (Vocal Score).

2. MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

i) MELODY.

The use of the pentatonic scale is characteristic of Negro music as already discussed. Gershwin makes extensive use of this in Porgy And Bess.

The first instance is found in Serena's waiting song "My Man's Gone Now", which uses the E minor pentatonic for its first melodic idea.

The image shows a musical score for the song "My Man's Gone Now" from the opera "Porgy and Bess". The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "For his tired foot - steps climb-in' up de stairs." The piano accompaniment features a prominent E minor pentatonic scale in the right hand, which is the first melodic idea of the song. The score includes dynamic markings such as *fp* (fortissimo piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The vocal line is marked with a soprano 's.' and includes a fermata over the final note.

The rowing song "It Take A Long Pull To Get There", has its verse built on the E minor pentatonic scale with the seventh.

JAKE *mf*

1. Oh, I'm a - go - in' out to de Black - fish banks_ no
if_ I meet Mis - ter Hur - ri - cane_ an'

mat - ter what de wed - der say, An' when I say I'm go - in' I means
Hur - ri - cane tell me no_ I'll take ole Mis - ter Hur - ri - cane_

un poch. rit. *mf*
go - in',_ an' I'm leav - in' at de break o' day. It take a
by the pants an' I'll throw him in de jail_ house do!

The major scale with the $\flat 7$ th, also characteristic of negro music can be seen in the cry of the honeyman. The melody is based on the G major scale with the added $\flat 7$ th, as seen below.

Po.

Yes mam, I got hon - ey in de comb._ An'_ is yo' hon - ey

The finale "Oh Lawd I'm On My Way" led by Porgy uses the E major scale with the $\flat 7$ th.

177 Moderato ben ritmato (quasi Spiritual)
PORGY (with religious fervor)

mp *mf*
Oh_ Lawd, I'm on my
way. I'm on my way to a Heav'n - ly

ii) BLUES TONALITY.

The use of the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$ and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ is evident throughout Porgy And Bess. Not only is it used in worksongs, spirituals and blues, but also in the recitative. The $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ is used mainly by or for bad characters like Crown and Sportin' Life. It is also used to represent anything that is 'not good'.

For example, "A Woman Is A Sometime Thing", which is a song that does not speak good of woman and warns children against their mothers, starts on the $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ and uses this together with the $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ throughout. It is in a minor key which also suggests the use of the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$.

56 Poco meno $\text{♩} = 96$
happily
 Lis-sen to yo' dad - dy warn - you, — 'fore you start a - trav - el -
 ing, Wo-man may born - you, love you, an' mourn you,

Handwritten annotations: $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$, $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$, $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$

During the storm, everyone is afraid when there is a knock at the door, and they break out into a spiritual "Oh Dere's Somebody Knockin'". It is Crown. Therefore, the $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ is used in the alto and tenor voice parts, whilst the orchestra makes use of the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$ and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$.

248 Moderato con spirito $\text{♩} = 72$ (in Spiritual manner)

Soprano *mf* Oh, dere's some - bod - y knock - in' at de

Alto *div. mf* Some - bod - y knock - in' at de

Tenor *mf* *div.* Oh, dere's some - bod - y knock - in' at de

Bass *div. mf* Some - bod - y knock - in' at de

Moderato con spirito $\text{♩} = 72$

249

S. do', Oh, dere's some - bod - y knock - in' at de do',

A. do', Oh, dere's some - bod - y knock - in' at de do',

T. do', Oh, dere's some - bod - y knock - in' at de do',

B. do', Some - bod - y knock - in' at de do',

$\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$

"What You Want Wid Bess", a duet sung by Bess and Crown, uses chromaticism extensively, however, the highest note sung by Crown is the $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$.

161

B. Oh, Crown, - won't you let me go to my

Cr. I need you now - an' you're mine - jus' as long - as I

mf *gradatamente cresc.*

$\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ in B major

Both songs sung by Sportin' Life who happens to be the dope pedlar in the story, have strong blues melodic lines, using the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$, $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ notably. These songs are "It Ain't Necessarily So", which ridicules the Bible, and "There's A Bodd Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York", which is a song of seduction for Bess.

SPORTING LIFE

mp *Happily, with humor*

It ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so, It

s.l. ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so De t'ings dat yo' li - ble To

$\flat 5^{\text{th}}$

(He looks around covert to make sure no one is there.) *mf*

S.L. There's a

p *b5th*

S.L. boat dat's leav-in' soon for New York, Come wid

R.H. *b7th*

[76] *b3rd*

S.L. me, dat's where we be - long, sis - ter.

mf

Most of the remaining songs use the $b3rd$ and $b7th$. For example, in the spiritual "Leavin' For The Promise Lan'", Gershwin uses the key signature of Eb , but the melody is written in Bb with the ' ab ' note as the $b7th$.

219

Moderato (♩ = ♩ of previous rhythm)

S.1

S.2 *well marked*
leav - in' for the Prom - ise' Lan' an' you bet - ter get on

T.

B.1 *well marked*
leav - in' for the Prom - ise' Lan' an' you bet - ter get on

Moderato (♩ = ♩ of previous rhythm)

p *R.H.*
L.H.

S.1 *mf*
Oh, we're

S.2
board, all you sin-ners, oh, you bet - ter get on board, 'Cause we're

T. *mf*
Oh, we're

B.1
board, all you sin-ners, oh, you bet - ter get on board, 'Cause we're

In the famous "Summertime", Gershwin uses the minor mode which automatically suggests the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$, and introduces the $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ at the end of the melodic phrase which is also in the relative major.

(Lullaby, with much expression)

CLARA *p* 17 Moderato $\text{♩} = 96$

Bells Sum-mer time _____ an' the liv-in' is

rit. *pp* *espr.* *R.H.*

mp poco rit. *a tempo*

Cl. eas - y, Fish are jump-in', an' the cot-ton is high.

poco rit. *mf a tempo*

18

Cl. Oh yo' dad-dy's rich, an' yo' ma is good-look - in', So

pp *R.H.*

RELATIVE MAJOR = D

Cl. hush, lit-tle ba-by, don' yo' cry.

poco animato *mf espr.*

iii) HARMONY AND POLYPHONY.

'Jazz' which has developed parallel to the 'blues', makes use of rich chords by using the $\flat 5$ th, 6th, 7th, major 7th, 9th, $\flat 9$ th, 11th and 13th. These are chords Gershwin often uses. For example, in "He's A Gone Gone Gone", the chorus responds homophonically with seven crotchets on 'gone', using jazz chords like minor 7ths, $\flat 9$ th, 7 $\flat 5$ th, 13 $\flat 9$ th, etc.

162

The musical score is for a piece titled "He's A Gone Gone Gone". It features six vocal parts (Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor, Bass 1, Bass 2) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with a box containing the number 162. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone." and then "Rob-bins is gone-". The piano accompaniment features a series of chords: D \flat maj 7 , D7 $\flat 5$, and C13 $\flat 9$. The piano part is marked with *mp cresc.* and *fz p*. The vocal parts are marked with *mp cresc.*, *fp*, and *f*. The piano part includes a handwritten note: "G \flat 9 in 1st inversion".

Sop. Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Rob-bins is gone-

A.1 Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Rob-bins is gone-

A.2 gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Oh, he's gone. Rob-bins is gone-

Ten. Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Rob-bins is gone-

B.1 Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Rob-bins is gone-

B.2 gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. Oh, he's gone. Rob-bins is gone-

mp cresc. *fz p* *f*

D \flat maj 7 D7 $\flat 5$ C13 $\flat 9$

G \flat 9 in 1st inversion

Negro music used intervals of 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, and 8^{ves} in group singing. This texture predominates the opening scene with Jasbo Brown on the piano.

ACT I

Scene I

JASBO BROWN (Piano on stage) At rise of curtain Catfish Row is dark except for Jasbo Brown's room which
Allegro moderato (In Jazz manner) ♩ = 120



can be exposed to view by use of a sliding panel. Jasbo is at the piano playing a low-down blues, while half a dozen



complex can be seen dancing in a slow, almost hypnotic, rhythm.



The use of unison octaves in voices can be heard in the background sung by the chorus.

10

W
wa Wa - wa Doo - da_

M
wa Wa - wa Doo - da_

p

W
O-wa-de - wa Wa - wa *mf*

M
O-wa-de - wa Wa - wa *mf*

(Orchestra joins piano)
p

W
Doo-da O-wa-de - wa Wa - wa_

M
Doo-da O-wa-de - wa Wa - wa_

Complex melodic polyphony which is used freely in the opera, comes from Gershwin's absorption of the Western classical music. "He's A Gone Gone Gone", progresses into a contrapuntal texture against the diminution in the rhythm.

SERENA
mf
 Who's dat a-com-in' climb-in' up my steps?

MARIA
apens door
mf
 It's Por-gy

Sop.
pp
 gone, gone, gone,

A.1
pp
un poch. marc.
 gone, gone, gone,

A.2
pp
un poch. marc.
 gone, gone, gone,

Ten.
pp
un poch. marc.
 gone, gone, gone,

B.1
pp
un poch. marc.
 gone, gone, gone,

B.2
pp
un poch. marc.
 gone, gone, gone, gone,

Piano
pp dolce (colla voce)

'springs to her feet). *f with hatred*

S. What's dat wo-man com - in' here for?

Ma. an' Bess is a-help - in' him.

Sop. gone, gone, —

A.1 gone, gone,

A.2 gone, gone, —

Ten. gone, gone, —

B.1 gone, gone, gone,

B.2 gone, gone, gone, gone,

Piano accompaniment

Polyphonic effects spoken about on p.18 and p.19 can be seen in the spiritual "Overflow", which develops into a contrapuntal texture. The voices are divided into six parts, with the sopranos doubling the tenors, the alto 1 doubling the bass 1, and the alto 2 doubling the bass 2.

The musical score is for a spiritual titled "Overflow". It features six vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are arranged in three systems of two staves each. The first system contains the Soprano (Sop.) and Alto 1 (A.1) parts. The second system contains the Alto 2 (A.2) and Tenor (Ten.) parts. The third system contains the Bass 1 (B.1) and Bass 2 (B.2) parts. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment is shown at the bottom of the page, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The music is written in a contrapuntal style, with each voice part having its own melodic line. The lyrics are: "Lawd, send down yo' - bins is ris - in', oh, Rob - bins is ris - in' to Heav - take Rob - bins to your".

Sop. Lawd, send down yo'

A.1 - bins is ris - in', oh, Rob - bins is ris - in' to Heav -

A.2 take Rob - bins to your

Ten. Lawd, send down yo'

B.1 - bins is ris - in', oh, Rob - bins is ris - in' to Heav -

B.2 take Rob - bins to your

"Leavin' For The Promis' Lan'", begins with two voices in unison. Two new unison voices are then added making it two-part. Another two unison voices are added, making it three-part, thus there are six voices - sopranos 1 and 2, altos, tenors, and basses 1 and 2.

First system of the musical score. It features six vocal staves: S.1 (Soprano 1), S.2 (Soprano 2), A. (Alto), T. (Tenor), B.1 (Bass 1), and B.2 (Bass 2). The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The lyrics are: "board, all you sin-ners, oh, you bet - ter get on board, 'Cause we're Lan' an' you bet - ter get on". The first two staves (S.1 and S.2) have a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and the lyrics "Oh, we're". The piano accompaniment is shown at the bottom of the system.

Second system of the musical score, starting at measure 223. It continues with the same six vocal staves. The lyrics are: "leav-in' for the Prom-ise' Lan' an' you bet-ter get on board, all you sin-ners, oh, you leav - in for the Prom - ise' Lan' an' you leav - in' for the leav-in' for the Prom-ise' Lan' an' you bet-ter get on board, all you sin-ners, oh, you leav - in' for the Prom - ise' Lan' an' you leav - in' for the". The piano accompaniment continues at the bottom.

"What You Want Wid Bess", is an excellent example of two-part polyphonic writing. Here, Gershwin uses rhythm and chromaticism in the music to depict the disagreements between Bess and Crown.

B. Can' you see, I'm with Por - gy,
CROWN *mf* What I wants wid oth - er wo-man, I—gots a wo-man, yes,

B. now an' for ev-cr, I am his wo - man, — he would die — with-out me,
Cr. — An' dat is you, yes, dat is you, yes,

161
B. Oh, Crown, — won't you let me go — to my
Cr. I need you now — an' you're mine — jus' as long — as I

"Oh Heavenly Father" has six soloists singing six different prayers simultaneously, creating a contrapuntal texture. Gershwin uses this to evoke the terror and faith of the inhabitants of Catfish Row during the mighty storm.

with religious fervor and motion

S.1 *mf* *3*
hab mer - cy on we, look down — wit' grace an' sym - pa - thy, You whose po'

S.2
arms thru de roof of dis house an' lif' me to Yo' bo - som till de

mf with religious fervor and motion
Alto
teach Yo' ig - no - rant chil - len how to com - bat de fires

motion *len.*
Ten.
but we al - so knows You can raise, — an' we's be - secch - in' You to

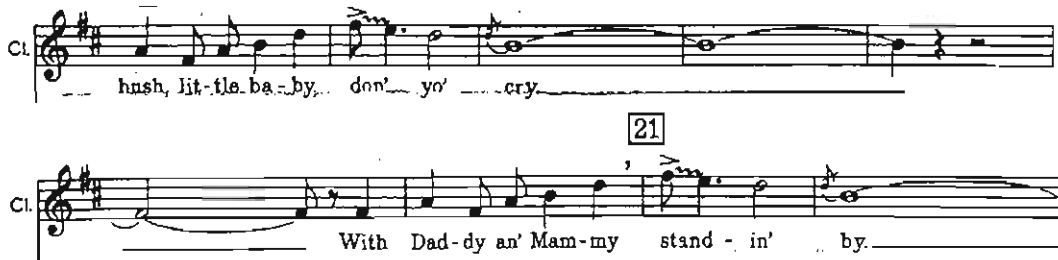
mf with religious fervor and motion
B.1
Je - sus, find it in Yo' heart to save us, I's giv - en you

Broadly... *mf with religious fervor and motion*
B.2
Oh, Fa - ther, what die on Cal - be - ry, we's de -

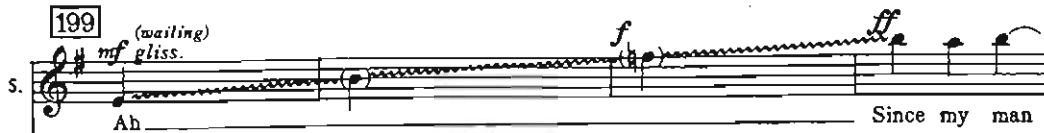
iv) SINGING STYLES.

Falsetto tones, humming, moanings and groanings are characteristic of Negro Folk Music which is found in Porgy And Bess.

The first instance we hear this, is in "Summertime", when Clara sings to her baby. The last lines of the verses which says "don't yo' cry", and "standin' by", uses glissandi.



Serena's wailing in "My Man's Gone Now", is well demonstrated in a vocal glissandi over one and a half octaves.



The chorus joins her in wailing.

S. wailing p gliss. poco cresc. mf rit. (approximate notes)

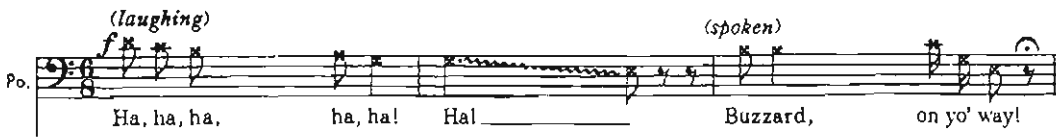
A. wailing p gliss. poco cresc. mf rit. (approximate notes)

T. wailing p gliss. poco cresc. mf rit. (approximate notes)

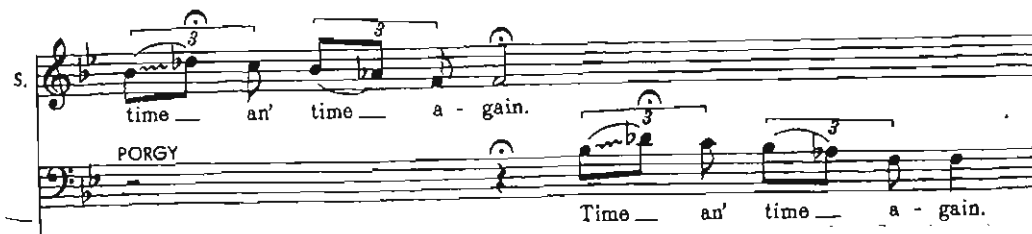
B. wailing p gliss. poco cresc. mf rit. (approximate notes)

mp meno poco cresc. mf rit.

Gershwin uses the spoken voice in glissandi, when Porgy laughs between the verses in the "Buzzard Song".



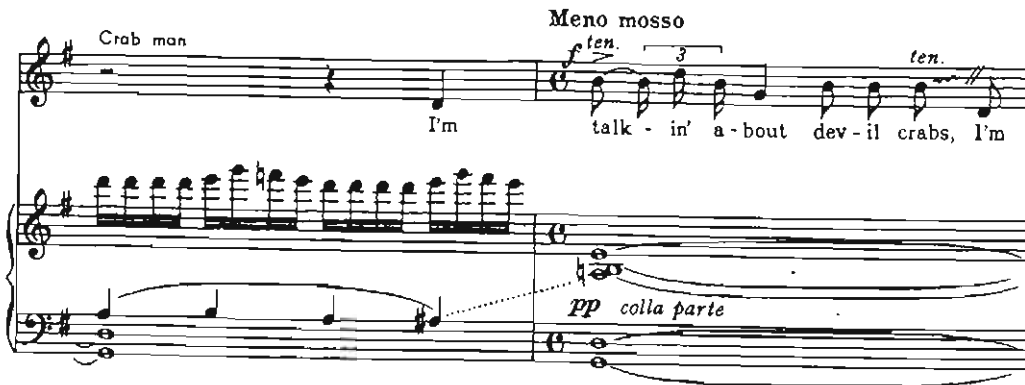
Short ascending glissandi are used in the prayer to Dr Jesus by Serena and Porgy, illustrating that their prayers ascend to heaven.



When Clara sees Jakes's boat without him, she screams on a descending glissando, depicting a sigh of hopelessness.



A good example of falsetto is found in the crabman's cry. At the end of every phrase, he uses an ascending glissando which ends in speed.



'Humming' is heard throughout the opera. In the spiritual "He's A Gone Gone Gone", the chorus hums plaintively for four bars, creating death in the atmosphere.

163 *plaintively*
f (*humming*) *decresc.* 164 (*Sound of steps outside doorway*) *p*

Sop. *hmm* gone, gone, gone, gone,

A.1 *hmm* gone, gone, gone, gone,

A.2 *hmm* gone, gone, gone, gone,

Ten.

B.1 *p* gone, gone, gone,

B.2 *p* *decresc.* *p* *hmm* gone,

mf *decresc.* *p*

In the great love ballad "Bess You Is My Woman Now", both Porgy and Bess hum for one bar each, sounding as though they are calling each other by name.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system shows Porgy (Po.) humming a single note (F#4) while Bess (B.) sings a melodic line. The second system shows Bess humming a single note (F#4) while Porgy sings a melodic line. The piano accompaniment is marked *p dolce* and features a gentle, flowing melody in the right hand and a simple harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.

System 1:

- Bess (B.):** *gently* Morn - in' time an' ev - 'nin' time an' sum - mer time an' win - ter time.
- Porgy (Po.):** *(humming)* Hmm

System 2:

- Bess (B.):** *(humming)* Hmm
- Porgy (Po.):** Morn - in' time an' ev - 'nin' time an' sum - mer time an' win - ter time.

Throughout the prayer "Oh Heavenly Father", the chorus hums, creating the mysterious effect of the danger outside during the storm.

Curtain rises on Serena's room. Outside there is a terrific storm. Inside the negroes are huddled in groups and sing. Every face is filled with fear.

232 **Prayer (ad libitum)**

Broadly *f* Oh, Hev'n-ly Fa-ther,

Broadly *f* *mf* with religious fervor and motion Oh, Doc-tor Je-sus, look down on me wit' pit-y. Put Yo' lov-in'

Broadly *f* Pro-fess-or Je-sus,

Broadly *f* *mf* with religious fervor and *len.* Oh, Lawd a-bove, we knows You can de-stroy,

Broadly *f* Oh, Cap-tain

(Continuous humming during Prayer)

mp Women Hmm

mp Men

mp

v) CALL AND RESPONSE

This is evident throughout Porgy And Bess. The first time it is used is in "A Woman Is A Sometime Thing". Jake sings about women being ungrateful and ends with the line "'cause a woman is a sometime thing", and the chorus answers in agreement with "Yes, a woman is a sometime thing".

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (J) begins with the lyrics: "'Cause a wo-man is a some-time". The piano accompaniment (p) features a *cresc.* (crescendo) leading to a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section, and then a *deciso* (decisive) section. The piano part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Second system of the musical score, starting at measure 61. The vocal line (J) continues with the lyrics: "thing. Yes, a wo-man is a some-time". The piano accompaniment (p) features a *mp* (mezzo-piano) section, followed by a *p* (piano) section, and then a *cresc.* (crescendo) section. The piano part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line (J) continues with the lyrics: "thing, Yes, a wo-man is a some-time". The piano accompaniment (p) features a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section, followed by a *p* (piano) section, and then a *cresc.* (crescendo) section. The piano part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

A typical call-and-response is seen in the slow spiritual "He's A Gone Gone Gone". A soprano soloist asks 'Where is brudder Robbins?', and the chorus responds with 'He's A Gone Gone Gone Gone Gone Gone'.

159 Andante $\text{♩} = 66$ *Quasi marcia funebre*

decresc. *p* Solo *ten.*

Sop. gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. I seen him in de morn-in' wid his

A.1 *f* *decresc.* *p* Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

A.2 *f* *decresc.* *p* Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

Ten. *decresc.* *p* gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

B.1 *f* *decresc.* *p* Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

B.2 *f* *decresc.* *p* Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

Andante $\text{♩} = 66$ *Quasi marcia funebre*

decresc. *p*

This leads into a fast spiritual, "Overflow", which also uses call-and-response.

166 Subito con spirito ♩ = 88
Hands saucer to Bess who carries it to Porgy. Porgy and Bess put money in saucer.

S. sau-cer!

Sop. Solo (fanatically)
 gone. Come on sis-ter, come on brud-der, fill up de sau-cer till it

A.1 gone.

A.2 gone.

Ten. gone.

B.1 gone.

B.2 gone.

Subito con spirito ♩ = 88

167

Bess returns it to Serena who sits counting the money in saucer.

All principals sing here according to their voices

Sop. o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau-cer till it

A.1 o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

A.2 o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

Ten. o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau-cer till it

B.1 o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

B.2 o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

mf *f*

"Leavin' For The Promis' Lan'", a spiritual led by Bess, gradually accelerates like a starting train.

209 *Moderato* *accl.*
(gradually increasing like a starting train)

B. train is at the sta-tion an' you bet-ter get on board, 'Cause it's leav-in' to - day,

S. _____

A. _____

T. _____

B. _____

Moderato

mf *l.h. pesante* *fp* *fp* *gradatamente accel.* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

210 *Allegro* *poco rit.* *as before*

B. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day. Oh, the

S. *f* Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

A. *f* Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

T. *f* Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

B. *f* Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

Allegro *poco rit.*

The musical score is for a spiritual song. It begins at measure 209 with a 'Moderato' tempo and an 'accl.' (accelerando) instruction, with a note that it should 'gradually increase like a starting train'. The vocal parts (Bass, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) enter with the lyrics 'train is at the station and you better get on board, 'Cause it's leavin' to-day'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex bass line in the left hand, with dynamic markings of *mf*, *l.h. pesante*, *fp*, and *gradatamente accel.*. The score continues to measure 210, where the tempo changes to 'Allegro'. The vocal parts repeat the lyrics 'Leav-in' to-day, leav-in' to-day. Oh, the'. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar pattern, marked *f* and *poco rit.* at the end of the section.

An 'anti-spiritual', "It Ain't Necessarily So", is led by Sportin' Life, relating Bible stories. The chorus responds to each story with "It Ain't Necessarily So".

SPORTING LIFE *mp* *Happily, with humor*

It ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so, _____ It

mp It

p

i. l. ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so, _____ De t'ings dat yo' li'-ble To

W. ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so, _____

M. ain't ne-ces - sa - ri - ly so, _____

R.H.

"Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens", and "Oh Dere's Somebody Knockin'" are two similar spirituals sung one after the other. The main characters each take turns to lead whilst the chorus responds.

Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens :

The musical score is for the spiritual "Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens". It features a solo part for Porgy and a four-part chorus (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). The piano accompaniment is at the bottom.

PORGY (raising voice above chorus)

mf Cla - ra, come sing wid us sis - ter, ain' you know, song make you for -

S. *pp* Lawd, raise de wa - ter an' de hyp - o - crite drown

A. Lawd, Lawd,

T. *pp* Lawd, raise de wa - ter an' de hyp - o - crite drown

B. Lawd, Lawd.

The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand, with some harmonic support in the bass.

Oh Dere's Somebody Knockin'

251

MARIA

What you say, dad-dy Pe-ter?

Pa. do'. I hear Death

S. some-bod - y knock - in' at de do', Oh, dere's some-bod - y

A. some-bod - y knock - in' at de do', Oh, dere's some-bod - y

T. some-bod - y knock - in' at de do', Oh, dere's some-bod - y

B. *pp* some-bod - y knock - in' at de do', Some-bod - y

The musical score is written for a vocal ensemble and piano. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and a melodic line in the right hand. The vocal parts are arranged in a SATB format, with Maria having a solo line at the beginning. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, and the piano part has a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo).

The finale sung by Porgy, "I'm On My Way", is answered by the chorus although they are not on their way to New York with Porgy. However, they are sympathetic towards him.

177 Moderato ben ritmato (quasi Spiritual)
 PORGY (with religious fervor)

Oh— Lawd, I'm on my

way. I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

Soprano I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

Alto I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

Tenor I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

Bass I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

I'm on my way to a Heav'n-ly

Another type of call-and-response discussed in the previous chapter, is that of conversational response or responsive shouts. This is demonstrated in the cry to Dr Jesus. While Serena prays, Porgy, Peter and Lily shout out 'Amen', 'Oh my Jesus', 'Oh my Father', 'Allelujah'.

S. time an' time a - gain.

PORGY Time an' time a - gain.

PETER (shouted) Oh, my Je - sus!

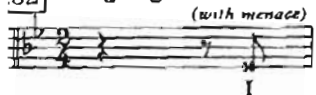
During the storm, when the leaders and chorus sing "Oh Dere's Somebody Knockin'", several people cry out 'Gawd have mercy', 'Oh Gawd', 'I's repent'.

vi) PERCUSSIVE EFFECTS

Although handclapping is a common characteristic in Negro music, Gershwin does not use it at all, not even in the children's song where it is expected. This could be because he used the orchestra to maintain the rhythmic pulse throughout.

However, percussive instruments and tools are used often in the opera. When Maria threatens Sportin' Life because she saw him with white powder, the sound of muffled drums are heard in an intricate rhythm, depicting Maria's anger.

32 Allegro giocoso $\text{♩} = 132$
(with menace)



Allegro giocoso $\text{♩} = 132$
(muffled drums) etc.



Mo. hates yo' strut-tin' style, Yes, sir, An' yo' god damn sil-ly

Act 2 Scene 2 opens with two African drums playing cross rhythms while some Negroes are dancing, and others are playing mouth organs, combs, bones, a washboard and a washtub.

2 African Drums

Allegretto barbaro $\text{♩} = 100$

127 *cresc.*

128 *f*

Afr. Ors. *f*

* (Negroes are dancing, some play mouth organs, combs, bones. One plays a washboard, another a washtub. Everyone is full of gaitly)

L.H. *f*

The clang of a bell is heard in the hurricane scene, creating an ominous atmosphere.

228 *Con brio*
The deep, ominous clang of a bell is heard back-stage.

The musical score for measure 228 is in 8/4 time. It begins with a piano introduction marked 'f' (forte). The melody is characterized by a deep, ominous clang of a bell heard back-stage. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'f' and 'poco' (poco). The music is written for piano and includes a variety of note values and rests.

Act 3 Scene 3, which is the last scene, opens with a sleeping Negro, a man with a broom, a man with a hammer, and a man with a saw. Although these work tools are not actually heard, the music depicts each tool. The broom uses this alternating long-short rhythm, creating a sweeping sound:

(Man with broom)
101 *Allegro* $\text{♩} = 88$

The musical score for measure 101 is in 2/4 time. It is marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 88. The melody is characterized by an alternating long-short rhythm, creating a sweeping sound. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). The music is written for piano and includes a variety of note values and rests.

The hammer uses high, loud notes, creating the metal effect of the hammer and the nail, whilst the saw uses low, soft and equal notes creating the dull sound of wood. Both these rhythms are juxtaposed.

(Man with hammer and man with saw)
104 *Allegretto* $\text{♩} = 108$

The musical score for measure 104 is in 2/4 time. It is marked 'Allegretto' with a tempo of 108. The melody is characterized by high, loud notes (hammer) and low, soft notes (saw), creating a juxtaposition of sounds. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The music is written for piano and includes a variety of note values and rests.

3. WORKSONGS.

The Negro worksongs, particularly the kind sung by railroad gangs, stevedores, woodcutters, fishermen and prison road gangs, are in an old and deeply rooted tradition. Many of these worksongs are found in Gershwin's Porgy And Bess. As throughout Negro singing generally, there is an incidence of social criticism, ridicule, gossip and protest. The men may sing of the work they are doing, women, heroic events, places they have been, good lives, or lives gone wrong, preachers and gang bosses, the hard lot of the Negro, or salvation.

An example of a typical work song is that of a rowing song. Harold Courlander quotes from a 'Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation':

As the boat pushed off and the steersman took her into the stream, the men at the oars set up a chorus, which they chanted in unison with each other, and in time with their stroke, till the voices and oars were heard no more from the distance.

"It Take A Long Pull To Get There" is a typical rowing song. Jake leads in the verses, and the men respond in the chorus with 'huh'. The ejaculated 'huh' suggests the physical effect of a rowing boat at which point the orchestra emphasizes that by a clustered chord in the higher register.

The musical score is for a rowing song titled "It Take A Long Pull To Get There". It features three main parts: a vocal line for the lead (labeled with a box containing the number 3), a vocal chorus for Tenors and Basses, and a piano accompaniment.

Vocal Lead (Top Staff): The tempo is marked "Meno mosso" and the expression is "espr.". The lyrics are "long pull to get there, huh! It take a long pull to". There are musical notations for a "grunt" and a "pulling at net" (indicated by a double bar line and a sharp sign).

Vocal Chorus (Middle Staves): The Tenors and Basses sing in unison. The lyrics are "to get there, huh! to". The tempo is "Meno mosso" and the expression is "mf". There is a musical notation for "pulling at net" (indicated by a double bar line and a sharp sign).

Piano Accompaniment (Bottom Staff): The tempo is "Meno mosso". The piano part starts with a "mp" (mezzo-piano) dynamic and then moves to "più espr." (più espressivo). The right hand (R.H.) plays a melody, and the left hand (L.H.) plays a bass line. There is a musical notation for "pulling at net" (indicated by a double bar line and a sharp sign).

4. CALLS, CRIES AND FIELD HOLLERINGS.

Calls, cries and hollerings which were used in the old days whenever men or women worked, are prevalent in Porgy And Bess. The first instance is seen in the honeyman's cry. The music is free in the sense that although the crotchet is the main beat, every bar has a different number of beats, because the lyrics dictate the music. The chordal accompaniment is based on the G major scale, with the b7th, creating a drone effect, and implying the monotonous tone of the honeyman.



The next few examples which are found in Scene 3, follow each other. "Dr Jesus", a prayer with its melody based on the blues' scale, is punctuated with cries and exclamations in agreement as seen in the example over the page. Although it has a common time signature, the extensive use of 'pauses' gives the impression of unmeasured bars. The sung part however, is written so that the rhythm and pitch are determined by the inflection of speech. This is chanted freely over open fifths creating the drone effect as in the honeyman's cry.

187 *(gets down on knees) (with religious fervor, freely)*

S. Oh doc-tor Je - sus, who done trou-ble de wa-ter in de Sea of Gal-ler-ie. *(shouted)*

Po. A-men.

f *p* *coila voce*

S. An' like-wise who done cas' de dev - il out of de af - flict - ed

S. time — an' time — a - gain.

PORGY

PETER

Time — an' time — a - gain. *(shouted)*

Oh, my Je - sus!

The street cry of the strawberry woman follows. Although it is sung over open fifths, it differs from the previous two examples in that, the bars are metered and the time signature is constant throughout, but, it is still sung freely with the use of 'pauses'.

Strawberry Woman 192 Lento

(Street cry, sung freely)

mf Oh dey's so fresh an' fine, an' dey's jus off de vine, straw -

fp *p sempre colla voce*
R.H.

Str. W. ber - ry, straw - ber - ry, straw-ber-ry, Oh,dey's so fresh an' fine an' dey's

Str. W. jus' off de vine, straw - ber - ry, straw - ber - ry, straw-ber-ry.

accel.

The crabman's cry is chanted over three sets of open fifths stacked upon each other. Here, although the time signature is maintained throughout, the use of triplets and glissandi creates the effect of unmetered time. Glissandi are used notably, depicting the inflection of speech.

Meno mosso

Crab man

f *ten.* *3* *ten.*

I'm talk - in' a - bout dev - il crabs, I'm

pp *colla parte*

Crab

ten. *3* *ten.* *ten.* *3* *ten.*

talk - in' a - bout dev - il crabs, I'm talk - in' a - bout de food I. sells,

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Meno mosso'. The first system features a vocal line for 'Crab man' and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes a triplet of eighth notes and glissandi (marked 'ten.') over the lyrics 'I'm talk - in' a - bout dev - il crabs, I'm'. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of stacked open fifths in the right hand and a single note in the left hand. The second system features a vocal line for 'Crab' and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes a triplet of eighth notes and glissandi (marked 'ten.') over the lyrics 'talk - in' a - bout dev - il crabs, I'm talk - in' a - bout de food I. sells,'. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of stacked open fifths in the right hand and a single note in the left hand.

5. SPIRITUALS.

In regards to the various aspects found in spirituals, Courlander states :

Negro religious songs include a wide range of styles, idioms, and substance. There are staid, square-measured songs that strongly reflect white hymns of an earlier day; rocking and reeling songs that truly shake the rafters; two part prayer songs of polyphonic character; spirited tunes that are nothing less than marches; shouts that call for percussive effects by clapping and foot stamping; songs that are sung quietly and songs that put people on their feet; ecstatic moans and groans; religious songs of street singers that are almost indistinguishable from blues; strident gospel songs calling on sinners to reform; and songs which transpose scenes from the Bible into moving, immediate, colloquial, and often dramatic terms.¹

In Porgy and Bess, the first example is seen at the beginning of Act 1 Scene 2, with the spiritual, "He's A Gone Gone Gone". The soloist calls out and tells the story of Robbins' death, and the chorus responds homophonically with seven crotchets on 'gone'. The tragedy of this wake scene, is heightened by the use of vocal glissandi.

159 Andante $\text{♩} = 66$ Quasi marcia funebre

decresc. *p* Solo *ten.*

Sop. 

gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. I seen him in de morn-in' wid his

1. Op. cit., p.34.

160

Come prima

Sop.

work clo'es on, But he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone.

A.1

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

A.2

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

1en.

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

S.1

Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. An' I

S.2

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

Come prima

mf decresc. p

This is followed by an impassioned rhythmic spiritual piece "Overflow". Here, homophonic syncopated rhythms are alternated with voices entering in strettì form, ultimately creating a contrapuntal texture.

167

Bess returns it to Serena who sits counting the money in saucer.

All principals sing here according to their voices

Sop.
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau-cer till it

A.1
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

A.2
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

Ten.
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau-cer till it

B.1
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

B.2
o-ver-flow, o-ver-flow, fill up de sau - cer

Piano
mf *f*

"Leavin' For The Promis' Lan'", is an exultant spirited tune led by Bess. Her call starts slowly and accelerates like a train that is starting. The chorus responds with syncopated rhythms. The texture changes from homophonic to polyphonic with six moving lines as already discussed.

209 Moderato *accel.*
(gradually increasing like a starting train)

B. train is at the sta-tion an' you bet-ter get on board, 'Cause it's leav-in' to - day,

S. _____

A. _____

T. _____

B. _____

Moderato *pesante* *gradatamente accel.* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

210 Allegro *poco rit.* *as before*

B. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day. Oh, the

S. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

A. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

T. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

B. Leav - in' to - day, leav - in' to - day.

Allegro *poco rit.*

The musical score is for a song titled "Leavin' For The Promis' Lan'". It consists of two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 209, is marked "Moderato" and "accel." with the instruction "(gradually increasing like a starting train)". It features a vocal line for Bess (B.) and four empty staves for the chorus (S., A., T., B.). The piano accompaniment is marked "Moderato", "pesante", and "gradatamente accel." with dynamic markings "fp" (fortissimo piano) repeated six times. The second system, starting at measure 210, is marked "Allegro" and "poco rit." with the instruction "as before". It features vocal lines for all six parts (B., S., A., T., B., and an additional B. line). The piano accompaniment is marked "Allegro" and "poco rit." with a dynamic marking "f" (forte).

In Act 2 Scene 2, we have an example of an 'anti-spiritual', "It Ain't Necessarily So", which is sung by Sportin' Life, one of the two evil characters in Porgy And Bess. The piece relates different stories from the Bible in the verses, but the chorus states:

"It ain't necessarily so,
De t'ings dat yo' li'ble
To read in the Bible
It ain't necessarily so."

and in conclusion he states:

"I'm preachin' dis sermon to show,
It ain't necessarily so."

Throughout this piece, the chorus responds to his call.

The musical score is for the song "It Ain't Necessarily So" from the opera Porgy and Bess. It features four staves: three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor) and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts are written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "ain't ne-ces-sa-ri-ly so. Dey tell all you chil-lun De ain't ne-ces-sa-ri-ly so. ain't ne-ces-sa-ri-ly so. deb-ble's a vil-lun, But 'tain't ne-ces-sa-ri-ly so. To". The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings like *mf* and *R.H.*.

"Oh Heavenly Father" is an example of a spiritual prayer. The continuous humming evokes a solemn and serious mood, in addition to the six solo prayers sung simultaneously above this.

Broadly. *mf as before*

S.1 Oh Hev'n - ly Fa - ther, hab mer-cy on we when de clouds an' de storms

S.2 an - gry wit' dis po' sin - ner? Why is You cry - in' dose tears,

Broadly. *mf as before*

Alto Pro - fess - or Je - sus, what die on Cal - be - ry. Dis - pense

Ten. feed us, You got the pow'r to clothe us, an' You can lead us

Broadly. *mf as before*

B.1 year dis Oc - to - ber, Oh, Cap - tain Je - sus, but we is sev - en

Broadly. *f*

B.2 trab - lin' de straight an' nar - row path dat ends in glo - ry. Oh Fa - ther,

W. (8)
Hum

M. (8)

The spiritual "Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens", during the storm scene, acknowledges that God is in control of the heavens. It has a religious mood and is different to the previous example in that the four soloists, converse with each other over the chorus, as already discussed.

Soprano *p ten.*
 Oh, de
 Alto
 Tenor *p ten.*
 Oh, de
 Bass
 Piano: *f*

The score shows the vocal parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, and the piano accompaniment. The Soprano and Tenor parts have a *p ten.* marking. The piano part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

234

Andante con moto $\text{♩} = 80$
religiously

S. Lawd shake de Heav - ens an' de Lawd rock de groun',
 A. *p religiously* Lawd, Lawd,
 T. *religiously* Lawd shake de Heav - ens an' de Lawd rock de groun',
 B. *p religiously* Lawd, Lawd,
 Andante con moto $\text{♩} = 80$
 Piano: *p tristamente*

The score continues with the vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The vocal parts are marked 'religiously' and 'p religiously'. The piano part is marked 'p tristamente'.

"Oh De Lawd Shake De Heavens" flow into "Oh Dere's Somebody Knockin'" which is more spirited. Here again, the soloists converse with each other over the chorus.

The musical score is written for a group of soloists and a chorus. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes the following parts:

- LILY**: Soloist part starting with a *mf* dynamic. The lyrics are "It mus' be death or Pe - ter can't hear 'im... He".
- MINGO**: Soloist part starting with a *mf* dynamic. The lyrics are "He ain' hear nut-tin', ain' no - bod - y".
- Pa.**: Part of the chorus, with lyrics "knock-in' at de do'." followed by a long note.
- S.**: Soprano part, with lyrics "knock - in' at de do'." followed by a long note "Oh".
- A.**: Alto part, with lyrics "knock - in' at de do'." followed by a long note "Oh".
- T.**: Tenor part, with lyrics "knock - in' at de do'." followed by a long note "Oh".
- B.**: Bass part, with lyrics "knock - in' at de do'." followed by a long note "Oh".
- Piano**: Accompanying piano part at the bottom, featuring a rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

The score is written on a grand staff with ten staves. The soloists' parts are in the upper staves, and the chorus parts are in the lower staves. The piano accompaniment is at the bottom. The lyrics are written below the corresponding staves.

Act 3 opens with a plangent spiritual, "Clara, Don't You Be Downhearted", encouraging and sympathizing with Clara over the loss of her husband. The mood is calm, with the ladies singing the melody homophonically, and the men, a simple related counter melody against it.

4 **A** *L'istesso tempo*
Repeat from A to B if wanted

The musical score is for a four-part vocal setting. The top four staves are for Soprano 1 (S.1), Soprano 2 (S.2), Alto (A.), and Tenor (T.). The bottom staff is for Bass 1 (B.1). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'L'istesso tempo'. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: 'Cla-ra, Cla-ra don't you be down-heart-ed, Cla-ra,'. The Soprano parts sing the melody homophonically. The Tenor and Bass parts sing a counter-melody, with the Tenor part starting with 'mf' and the Bass part with 'mf' and 'Ah' notes. The piano accompaniment is shown at the bottom, starting with 'p a tempo'.

The finale, "I'm On My Way", which is sung with religious fervour, is a quasi-spiritual. This song is sung by Porgy before leaving for New York. The chorus sings with him throughout, although they are not going to New York. Because of the latin-american beguine accompaniment, this song is not fully spiritual. Accompaniment figure :

The accompaniment figure is a short musical phrase in 4/4 time, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The figure is presented in both treble and bass clefs.

6. BLUES.

The blues song is distinguishable from most other Negro song forms by both its structure and its content, and it has certain standard - though always variable - musical characteristics. Nevertheless, the blues form is less rigidly conceived by blues singers than by those who have notated the songs. The blues stanza framework tends towards 8 or 12 bars, with the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$, $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$, known as blue notes. However, certain blues songs are done in such free styles as to fall into no clear-cut bar pattern at all. The only consideration of the blues singer is that his song should sound 'right', therefore, it is better to think of the blues as a variable form centering in the neighbourhood of 12 bars, with the swinging pendulum of improvisation or variation capable of producing a number of possibilities.

In Porgy and Bess, the first blues form is found in the lullaby "Summertime". It comprises two eight bar stanzas, which are repeated with a slight variation. For example, the piece begins with 2 crotchets on 'Summer', and the variation begins with a triplet on 'One of these'. Also, the chords I^7 , IV^7 , V^7 predominate a blues, and in 'Summertime', the first four bars uses the tonic chord, followed by two of IV and two bars of V.

(Lullaby, with much expression)

CLARA 17 Moderato $\text{♩} = 96$

Bella Sum-mer time an' the liv-in' is

rit. *pp* *espr.* *R.H.*

I 7

Cl. eas - y, Fish are jump-in', an' the cot-ton is high.

mp poco rit. *a tempo*

poco rit. *mf a tempo*

V 7

18

Cl. Oh yo' dad-dy's rich, an' yo' ma is good-look - in', So

pp *R.H.*

Cl. hush, lit-tle ba-by, don' yo' cry.

poco animato *mf espr.*

8

19 *poco rit.* **Tempo I**

Cl. *3*
One of these morn-in's you goin' to rise up sing - in',

Women's Voices *pp espr.*
Ooh ooh

8 *poco rit.* **Tempo I**
pp

20

Cl. Then you'll spread yo' wings an' you'll take the sky.

W. ooh ooh ooh ooh

IV⁷ *V⁷*

Cl. But till that morn-in' there's a noth-in' can harm you

W. ooh ooh

"My Man's Gone Now", is a 12 bar minor blues, which uses the Gmaj pentatonic scale. This immediately implies the $\flat 3$ rd and $\flat 7$ th. The piece basically uses the tonic, with one bar of chord IV.

191 *All sway to rhythm.*
Allegretto ben ritmato $\text{♩} : 108$

The score is for a piano piece in 2/4 time, marked 'Allegretto ben ritmato' with a tempo of 108. It features a melody line and a piano accompaniment. The melody begins with a 'Swaying stops' instruction and a 'f' (forte) dynamic. The piano accompaniment starts with a 'f deciso' (forte, decisive) dynamic. The piece includes a vocal line with lyrics: 'My man's gone now, - ain' no use a - listenin' For his tired foot - steps climb-in' up de stairs.' The piano accompaniment includes markings such as 'poco sostenuto', 'mp sempre ritmato', and 'fp' (fortissimo).

"It Ain't Necessarily So", is a blues with two eight bar stanzas, which have many verses. Some of the verses are lengthened for a variation. The chords I, IV, V are used repeatedly. The presence of the $\flat 3$ rd, $\flat 5$ th and $\flat 7$ th, are seen throughout the piece.

S.L. aint ne - ces - sa - ri - ly so. Dey tell all you chil - lun De

W. aint ne - ces - sa - ri - ly so.

M. aint ne - ces - sa - ri - ly so.

I IV I V R.H.

$\flat 5^{\text{th}}$

The score shows three vocal lines (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'aint ne - ces - sa - ri - ly so. Dey tell all you chil - lun De'. The piano accompaniment includes chord markings I, IV, I, V, and R.H. (Right Hand). A handwritten note ' $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ ' points to the fifth degree of the scale in the vocal lines.

b7th

S.L. *mf*
deb-ble's a vil-lun, But 'tain't ne-ces-sa-ri-ly so. To

legato

135

S.L. *mf*
get in-to Heb-ben don' snap for a seb-ben! Live clean! Don' have no

b7th

"A Red Headed Woman", sung by Crown, is a vulgar blues melody which begins on the $b6^{th}$. It is also made up of two eight bar stanzas. The chords of the first eight bars, have the same chord progression of a traditional blues:

I IV I I
IV IV I I

The melody uses the $b3^{rd}$ and the $b6^{th}$, whilst the musical accompaniment uses the $b3^{rd}$, $b6^{th}$ and $b7^{th}$. One of Gershwin's classical influences was Wagner. The $b6^{th}$ here, could have come from Wagner's extensive use of the German Sixth.

b6th

276 Allegretto (tempo di Jazz) $\text{♩} = 104$
(bursting into a jazz-manner)

Cr. *mp* *ben ritmato*
red-head-ed wo-man makes a choo-choo jump its

b3rd

chord built on the $b6^{th}$

The last example, "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin'", he also makes use of the $\flat 6^{\text{th}}$. Here we have a 12 bar blues, which uses the $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$, $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$ and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ in the melody. The piece is also marked, 'Tempo di blues'. After the first twelve bars, the music varies, by changing the melodic line, the chordal structure and the beat.

[75]

Moderato (Tempo di Blues) $\text{♩} = 96$

S.L. there's plen-ty more where that came from. Lis-ten,

mf misterioso $\flat 6^{\text{th}}$

(He looks around court to make sure no one is there.) *mf*

S.L. There's a

$\flat 5^{\text{th}}$

$\flat 7^{\text{th}}$

S.L. boat dat's leav-in' soon— for New York, — Come wid

R.H.

[76]

S.L. me, dat's where we be - long, sis - ter.

mf

The musical score is for a 12-bar blues piece in B-flat major. It features a vocal line (S.L.) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Moderato (Tempo di Blues)' with a quarter note equal to 96 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score includes handwritten annotations: $\flat 6^{\text{th}}$, $\flat 5^{\text{th}}$, and $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ pointing to specific notes in the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'there's plen-ty more where that came from. Lis-ten, (He looks around court to make sure no one is there.) There's a boat dat's leav-in' soon— for New York, — Come wid me, dat's where we be - long, sis - ter.' The score is divided into two systems, with measure numbers 75 and 76 indicated. The piano accompaniment includes triplets and a 'R.H.' (Right Hand) section with a 7/7 time signature.

7. BALLADS.

The ballad is a song which tells a story and which is made up of a series of stanzas, with or without a refrain. They do not require audience participation, only an audience. They are vehicles for expression of the performer's art. These ballads are devoted largely to heroic, sometimes near-epic, actions, to great misfortunes, injustice and bad men and their deeds. In general, they lack the immediacy of blues and the emotional content and poetic qualities of good religious songs and worksongs. The language is often trite and derivative. This drama being depicted is usually from a distance.

"A Woman Is A Sometime Thing", is the first example of a ballad. Jake sings to his baby, bringing women down. All the men join in agreement:

"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....".

This ballad is made up of 4 stanzas with a short refrain.
(The musical example follows on the next page..)

J. Yo' mam-my is the first to name you, an' she'll
 Mi. some-time thing.

58 tie you to her a - pron string — Then she'll shame you and she'll blame you till yo'

wo-man comes to claim you, 'Cause a —

wo-man is a some-time thing. Yes, a wo-man is a some-time

"I Wants To Stay Here", is a ballad sung by Bess to Porgy about Crown, and how he hypnotizes her. She sings about him coming back and having his own way.

213

Andantino molto espressivo

BESS *(trembling with emotion)*

I loves you, Por-gy, don' let him

Por-gy, what den? —

Andantino molto espressivo

take me, Don' let him han-dle me an' drive me mad. If you kin

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems. The first system features Bess's vocal line (treble clef) and Porgy's vocal line (bass clef). Bess's line begins with the lyrics 'I loves you, Por-gy, don' let him' and includes a 'ten.' (tenuto) mark. Porgy's line begins with 'Por-gy, what den? —'. The piano accompaniment is shown in grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs). The second system continues the vocal lines with Bess singing 'take me, Don' let him han-dle me an' drive me mad. If you kin'. The piano accompaniment continues with various chords and melodic lines. The tempo 'Andantino molto espressivo' is indicated at the beginning of each system.

"Bess Oh Where's My Bess", is a trio sung by Porgy, Maria and Serena about the whereabouts of Bess. Porgy inquires about her, and Maria and Serena answer by saying that Bess is not good enough for Porgy, and that he needs to forget her. It is an intense piece that is sung contrapuntally with great expression.

159 *mp*

SERENA
She gone, but you ver - y luck - y;

MARIA *mp*
Dat dir - ty dog Sport - in' Life

PORGY *mf*
Lawd, My Bess! I want her

un poch. riten. *a tempo*

S. She gone back to de hap - py dus'. She done throw Je - sus

Ma. make be - lievo, dat you lock up for - ev - er

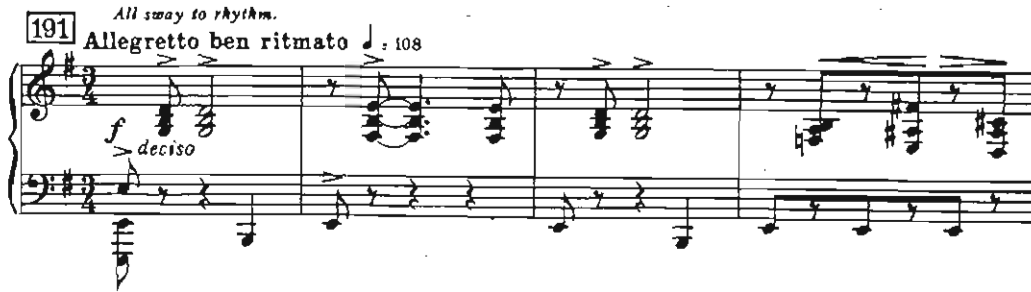
Po. now, Wid - out her I

8. DANCE.

According to Courlander, dance activities belonged to the unselfconscious Negro tradition, whether derived from African or European sources. Negro dance was an integral part of Negro culture. Dance activities or patterns were preserved and handed on by the same process by which folk music is propagated.

Neither folk music nor dance are things in themselves. They are related to a complex of activities, attitudes and customs. When the complex to which they are attached breaks up, their character changes, their meanings change, their importance diminishes, and they become akin to curious artifacts.

Gershwin uses dance at least five times in Porgy And Bess. When Serena's husband dies, she sings a blues "My Man's Gone Now", and everyone sways to the rhythm, in sympathy with her.



Preceding the rowing song "It Take A Long Pull", Jake and the fisherman, sitting on the floor, sway to the rhythm of the music as if they are actually rowing. Again, as in the previous example, the dance relates to the activities.

1 Più mosso $\text{♩} = 132$

Curtain Jake and fishermen in center repairing nets sitting on floor and swaying to the rhythm of the song

L'istesso tempo

as if actually rowing. Other principals of the cast sit about. Mingo enters.

"Oh I Can't Sit Down", a gay and happy song, has the residents of Catfish Row on their feet, singing and dancing with the band.

109 *Residents of the row pour from the doorways singing and dancing with the band.*
Tempo di Marcia giocoso $\text{♩} = 108$

Sopr.

mf Oh, I can't sit down! Ah, Got to keep a - go - in' like de

mf Oh, I can't sit down! Got to keep a - go - in' like de

mf Oh, I can't sit down! Got to keep a - go - in' like de

mf Oh, I can't sit down! Got to keep a - go - in' like de

Stage band comes on playing.

Tempo di Marcia giocoso $\text{♩} = 108$

This gaiety is continued in the next Scene, with the Negroes dancing and playing different instruments. This leads them into the song "I Ain't Go' No Shame, Doin' What I Like To Do," obviously they are enjoying themselves.



Children's songs, games and play patterns have considerable tenacity as well as spontaneous and innovative elements. They require no props or equipment. Belonging to the children's world, they have their own rules of inheritance and survival. This can be seen in the simplicity of such a song in Porgy And Bess. They sing and dance joyfully;

"Yes, you boun' to go heaven, if yo' good to
yo' mammy an' yo' pappy, wash yo' face an'
make dem happy, La, La, La, La."



9. INSTRUMENTS.

Courlander points out that the washtub bass, sometimes known as a gutbucket, was used to provide bass tones. It is an inverted washtub, to the centre of which is attached a cord which was either plucked or slapped, producing a musical tone.¹ A companion piece to the washtub, was the washboard which was played by scraping its surface with a wire, a nail, a thimble or a bare finger, creating different tone variations.² Frying pans, metal objects and iron bells were used as an element of percussion accompaniment to singing.³

The African-style drum and the gourd rattle were used for dances and rituals, for example, a 'wake'. Drums were also used in the funeral procession.⁴ One of the few stringed instruments in the New World of almost certain African provenance is the banjo. Negro banjo style is played in a fast, frenetic manner as an accompanying instrument, with emphasis on chords and melodic lines which support a vocal part.⁵

An example of a banjo song, which made Porgy famous, is "I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'". The banjo is played with bass notes on beats 2 and 4. Porgy plays it to accompany him on his song.

13 Moderato con gioia (Banjo Song) PORGY (at window) happily

Oh, I got plen-ty o' nut-tin', An'

mf *R.H.* *p leggiero*

1. Op.cit., p.206.
2. Ibid., p.207.
3. Ibid., p.208.
4. Ibid., p.210.
5. Ibid., p.214.

Act 2 Scene 2 opens with 2 African Drums playing cross rhythms while the Negroes dance in gaiety. Other instruments are added for example, mouth organs, combs, bones, one washboard, and one washtub, as seen earlier.



During the hurricane scene, a deep ominous clang of a bell is heard. Although it is not used to accompany the singing, the percussive quality of the bell is effective in creating the correct scene, as seen earlier.

In the last scene, after the children's song, we hear a muffled drum, followed by the timpani and the African drum, playing different rhythms. This could mean that although the children dance and sing and everyone sings happily;

"How are you dis mornin'
Feelin' fine an' dandy",

something is not right, in that Bess has left Porgy and gone to New York with Sportin' Life.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

So far, we have discussed Negro traits and how they are used in Porgy And Bess in detail, but it goes beyond that. The cast of the production had to be welded into a cohesive unit. Their background varied enormously. Some had had conservatory training for example Porgy, while others could not read a note of music and had to learn their parts by rote eg. Sportin' Life. They had to get used to 'authentic' dialects suitable for Blacks living in Charleston. This was 'ironical irony' in that the job of coaching the cast which was Black, in the Black dialect had to be done by their White associates.

Besides the black performers on stage, and the choral director Dr Eva Jesseye, who claims to have interpreted the music for Gershwin, the entire production was White created and controlled from the composer and librettist to the stage director, the orchestra and the conductor in the pit, the vocal coach and the Theatre Guild staff.

On the other hand, not all White people listen to western classical music, and not all Black people shuffle, boogie, sing spirituals and blues, and move with a beat. But when Negro cultural values have survived as a result of sociological factors, Negro music traditions remain strong and dynamic. When I asked Professor Duncan if the performers 'felt' the part or did they just act it out, he replied: "They felt the part of Catfish Row. They were happy to re-enact Catfish Row, to open the gates of Catfish Row and close them."¹

The Black performers on stage did not know the 'authentic' dialects, but Heyward, being white, wrote the story of the Blacks and also grew up in their environment. Yet Gershwin made a clear distinction between the 'Black' and 'White' people in the opera, by using the spoken dialogue for the white people and the sung recitatives for the Negro, which provides a subtle contrast.

1. See Appendix A.

The parallel that could be drawn is that White people in the opera always stood for authority and what was right, for example, the respectable lawyer Mr Archdale compared to the Black back-door lawyer, Frazier, who was only out to 'do people in';

Frazier :
 Course I sells divorce
 You got no right to laugh,
 But it take expert to divorce
 woman what ain't marry,
 an' it cos' you, ahem,
 dollar an' a half.

So it was in the cast that Blacks had to be taught by White people how to speak and act, and obviously the teacher who was in authority had to be right.

Yet in my interview with Professor Duncan, one of the learned members of the cast said: "True music banishes race, colour, religion and all man-made divisions."²

But, on the contrary, Dr Eva Jesseye said of Gershwin and his Porgy And Bess:

After all, being white you can go only so far into the Black. Sometimes he heard the surface. He hit the surface, the part that was bubbling up. But what came from way down in the ground, of course he couldn't get. But he indicated it. And so I made it my business to surface many things that he indicated. There were many rhythms that Gershwin and the musicians had left out. They were university people. They had no conception of those rhythms and the feelings they expressed. How₃ could they know? Some of them never heard it.

1. G. Gershwin, op. cit.

2. See Appendix A.

3. Michigan Today, April 1989, Vol.21, No.2, p.4.

According to the critics, they couldn't decide whether Porgy And Bess was an opera, a musical comedy or an operetta. Although they apportioned praise, they also made several unfavourable criticisms, which far outweighed the praise. They judged it by the standards of the old-fashioned opera and failed to see that George Gershwin had done something new.

The audiences, however, were wildly enthusiastic. In my interviews with Professor Duncan, he said:

Once the public got inside the theatre, they were lost. We had won the battle. It was the musicologists and musical critics who stayed away. The audience applauded and applauded. Oh! They applauded.

But the question arises, how many of them were Blacks? How many blacks could even afford to visit the theatre at that time? What about the Gullahs from James Island that furnished Gershwin and Heyward "with a laboratory in which to test our theories as well as an inexhaustible source of people material"²?

1. See Appendix A.

2. C.Schwartz, op. cit., p.260.

CONCLUSION

It is the people element that is the strong suit of the opera, an epic of Negroes, mostly a picture of the lower depths of Negro life. The tragic love of Porgy and Bess is incidental to the humour and pathos, the emotional turbulence, social maladjustments, the childlike terror, the violence and tenderness of the much-abused Negro in a Southern city. Gershwin portrayed them in all their varied facets by making extensive use of musical materials basic to the Negro people. His recitatives are moulded after the inflections of Negro speech. His songs are grounded either in Negro people music or in those American popular idioms that sprang out of Negro backgrounds. His street cries simulate those of Negro vendors in Charleston. His choral pages are deeply rooted in spirituals and 'shouts'.

Gershwin assimilated and absorbed the elements of Negro song and dance into his own writing, without quoting a single line from outside sources. This enabled him to produce a musical art, basically Negro in spirit, expressive of the heart and soul of an entire culture.

The Negro people culture in the opera is deeply rooted in: the wake scene beginning with the lament; "He's A Gone, Gone, Gone" and continuing through the stirring choral, "Overflow, Overflow" to Bess' ecstatic spiritual, "Oh The Train Is At The Station", the poignant street cries of the honeyman, crabman and the strawberry woman; Jake's work song, "It Take A Long Pull To Get There"; the moving choral exhortation to Clara on the death of the husband, "Oh Lawd, Oh My Jesus", "Rise Up An' Follow Him Home"; and the final hymn, "Oh Lawd I'm On My Way".

George Gershwin said:

All of these are, I believe, lines that come naturally from the Negro. They make for people music.¹ Thus Porgy And Bess becomes a people opera.

In conclusion, I add that Porgy And Bess is indeed a people production.

1. A.Kendall, op.cit., p.156.

APPENDIX AMY INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR TODD DUNCAN AT HIS HOME, IN
WASHINGTON D.C., U.S.A., ON 16 AUGUST 1989

Q: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH GEORGE GERSHWIN?

A: Olin Downes, a music critic, who had heard me sing, told George Gershwin about me. George wasn't interested in anyone who sang classical opera, and I did. He had auditioned many singers for the part of Porgy and he wasn't happy with any of them. He, very reluctantly, asked me to audition. All the others had sung negro spirituals for him, and I sang an Italian aria, "*Lungi dal caro bene*" from Santi's opera "Giulio Sabino". And when I had finished, George Gershwin asked me: "Will you be my Porgy?".

Q: WHAT WERE GEORGE GERSHWIN'S FEELINGS ABOUT "PORGY AND BESS"?

A: It was his life, his blood, his bone, his very being. He lived it.

Q: WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT "PORGY AND BESS" AFTER LISTENING TO IT?

A: George Gershwin was a musical genius. His music was as old as the hills, new as mankind, ingredients of living forever. Ecstatic, sheer genius in writing.

Q: WAS IT VERY DIFFERENT TO ANYTHING YOU HAD HEARD BEFORE?

A: Yes, Yes, of course. It was a new idiom. A new way of saying the same fundamental things.

Q: WOULD YOU CONSIDER "PORGY AND BESS" A TRUE AMERICAN JAZZ OPERA?

A: It is true jazz. It is opera. It has the first act, second, third and intermission. The form is the same.

Q: HOW DID THE PERFORMERS REACT TO "PORGY AND BESS" BEING A 'BLACK' OPERA?

A: True music banishes race, colour, religion, and all man-

made divisions.

Q: DID THE PERFORMERS 'FEEL' THE STORY OR WERE THEY JUST ACTORS ON A STAGE?

A: They felt the part of Catfish Row. They were happy to re-enact Catfish Row, to open the gates of Catfish Row and close them.

Q: HOW DID THE PUBLIC REACT TO THE PRODUCTION?

A: Once the public got inside the theatre they were lost. We had won the battle. It was the musicologists and musical critics who stayed away. The audience applauded and applauded. Oh! They applauded.

Q: WHAT WERE THE REVIEW OF THE CRITICS?

A: They thought that Gershwin could not write opera. They thought that it was partially opera and partially music drama. They thought that "Porgy And Bess" was a play with music. They didn't want to give him credit. After fifty four years Metropolitan Opera bows and give their first performance of "Porgy and Bess".

Q: DID YOU EVER THINK AFTER IT HAD BEEN REJECTED BY THE MUSICOLOGISTS AND MUSICAL CRITICS THAT IT WOULD BE A LANDMARK IN THE HISTORY OF MUSIC OF JAZZ?

A: Frankly, no. I didn't have sense enough to see it after fifty-four years.

Q: WHAT ABOUT TODAY? DO YOU STILL HEAR OF "PORGY AND BESS" BEING PERFORMED?

A: Yes, the Metropolitan Opera Company is giving it again. There were recent performances in May and June, 1989.

Q: IN CLOSING, HAVE YOU SEEN MANY DIFFERENT PRODUCTIONS OF "PORGY AND BESS" IN THE LAST TWENTY FIVE YEARS, AND WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEM?

A: I have seen many productions. I've been guest of honour across the country. I've also been advisor of building casts to some cities and productions.

Some productions have been wonderful. The Houston production stands out as superb. The Metropolitan production, as far as the chorus, was superb, and some of the characters. Some of the leads have not been good, and my main sadness is when performers take it upon themselves to be composers - putting in extra notes and taking out extra notes, instead of serving the lyrics. I have no faith and no patience in such sloppy goings on and I hope it will not continue. Sing what's on that white page with black notes, have respect for the music of Gershwin. He knew exactly what he wanted to do.

APPENDIX B

MY INTERVIEW WITH DR EVA JESSYE AT HER HOME IN ANN ARBOR,
MICHIGAN, U.S.A. ON 18 AUGUST, 1989

Q: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH GEORGE GERSHWIN?

A: What about it?

Q: WELL, WHAT KIND OF A MAN WAS HE?

A: Oh, I liked him very much. He's a very plain man, very appreciative.

Q: WHAT WERE GEORGE GERSHWIN'S FEELINGS ABOUT "PORGY AND BESS"?

A: I guess he got his feelings of syncopation from my interpretations

Q: WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT "PORGY AND BESS" AFTER LISTENING TO IT?

A: It's native and it's natural.

Q: DO YOU THINK THAT "PORGY AND BESS" REALLY DEPICTED BLACK LIFESTYLE THEN?

A: Well, "Porgy And Bess"; some of it is really black. It has the intonation of Black. There were a lot of superstitions that were true, like the 'Buzzard Song'.

Q: WOULD YOU CONSIDER "PORGY AND BESS" A TRUE AMERICAN JAZZ OPERA?

A: Some of some jazzy tunes; not jazz but syncopated.

Q: HOW DID THE PUBLIC REACT TO THE PRODUCTION?

A: They love it everywhere. It's tuneful, melodious, rhythmic.

Q: WHAT WERE THE OPINIONS OF THE CRITICS?

A: Critics didn't know what to call it. It was a new medium. Could call it 'syncopated opera'.

Q: DID YOU EVER THINK THAT "PORGY AND BESS" WOULD HAVE LIVED

ON TILL TODAY?

A: I don't know if I did or not.

Q: HAVE YOU SEEN MANY DIFFERENT PRODUCTIONS OF "PORGY AND BESS" IN THE LAST TWENTY FIVE YEARS, AND WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEM?

A: I've seen it in Germany, Vienna, London.
Depends. Sometimes the characters and sometimes the atmosphere makes a good performance.

Q: DO YOU THINK WE'LL BE SEEING MUCH OF "PORGY AND BESS" IN THE FUTURE?

A: As long as there's a man and there's a woman there's still gonna be "Porgy And Bess". It's beautiful, it's human nature. As long as a man loves a woman and a woman loves a man, it goes down as a legend.

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