

Porgy and Bess

A Guide for Educators



The Met
ropolitan
Opera

Paola Kudacki/Metropolitan Opera

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM *PORGY AND BESS*

WHEN GEORGE GERSHWIN SET OUT TO WRITE HIS FIRST OPERA, HE WAS ALREADY A CELEBRITY.

The creator of *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and, together with his brother Ira, some of the most beloved popular songs of the day, Gershwin had already conquered both concert halls and Broadway theaters with his distinctive musical style. For his first foray into grand opera, Gershwin wanted a subject worthy of the genre's depth and richness. As a composer whose work wove together numerous strands from the American musical tapestry, Gershwin also wanted a story that would express a vital aspect of the American experience. He finally found his subject in the loves and losses of a community of working-class African Americans in Charleston.

The resulting opera, *Porgy and Bess*, offered an unprecedented representation of black artists in serious roles on the operatic stage, but it also inevitably carried the baggage of some critics' and audiences' racist assumptions about its characters. Now, more than 80 years later, *Porgy and Bess* can be understood as part of the complex patchwork of American history, in which uplifting moments sometimes lie next to ugly ones. Yet even as audiences' understanding of the work has changed over time, Gershwin's music has consistently offered an abundance of musical riches: soaring melodies, jazz-infused harmonies, and songs of abiding heart and hope.

This guide presents *Porgy and Bess* as a unique cultural statement connected to seminal issues in American life. The materials on the following pages invite students to examine the work's literary imagery, study the distinctly American musical forms that inspired Gershwin's score, and consider the thorny issues of race and interpretation that the opera raises. By delving into the opera's music, drama, and history, this guide will forge interdisciplinary classroom connections, inspire critical thinking, and help students gain an appreciation for the opera's immortal melodies, characters, and themes.

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THE WORK:

PORGY AND BESS

An opera in three acts, sung in English
By George Gershwin, DuBose and
Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin,
Based on the novel *Porgy* by DuBose
Heyward
First performed September 30, 1935,
at the Colonial Theater, Boston

PRODUCTION

David Robertson, Conductor
James Robinson, Production
Michael Yeargan, Set Designer
Catherine Zuber, Costume Designer
Donald Holder, Lighting Designer
Luke Halls, Projection Designer
Camille A. Brown, Choreographer
David Leong, Fight Director

STARRING

Eric Owens
PORGY

Angel Blue
BESS

Golda Schultz
CLARA

Alfred Walker
CROWN

Ryan Speedo Green
JAKE

Latonia Moore
SERENA

Denyce Graves
MARIA

Frederick Ballentine
SPORTIN' LIFE

A co-production of the Metropolitan
Opera; Dutch National Opera,
Amsterdam; and English National
Opera

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ABOUT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE



Johnathan Tichler/
Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world.

The Metropolitan Opera was founded in 1883, with its first opera house built on Broadway and 39th Street by a group of wealthy businessmen who wanted their own theater. In the company's early years, the management changed course several times, first performing everything in Italian (even *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), then everything in German (even *Aida* and *Faust*), before finally settling into a policy of performing most works in their original language.

Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the opera house on 39th Street did not have adequate stage facilities. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September of 1966, was equipped with the finest technical facilities of the day.

Each season the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York. More than 800,000 people attend the performances in the opera house during the season, and millions more experience the Met through new media distribution initiatives and state-of-the-art technology.

This guide includes several sections with a variety of background material on *Porgy and Bess*.

- **The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *Porgy and Bess***
- **A Timeline:** The historical context of the opera's story and composition
- **A Closer Look:** A brief article highlighting an important aspect of the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*
- **Guided Listening:** A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses
- **Student Critique:** A performance activity highlighting specific aspects of this production, and topics for a wrap-up discussion following students' attendance
- **Further Resources:** Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print
- **Glossary:** Common musical terms found in this guide and in the concert hall

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Porgy and Bess*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera or the performing arts. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

In particular, this guide will offer in-depth introductions to:

- The characters and imagery of *Porgy and Bess*
- Issues surrounding the work's history and interpretation
- Gershwin's approximation of blues and spirituals in his operatic score
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists



Tristram Kenton/
English National Opera

SUMMARY

It is a quiet evening in Catfish Row, a neighborhood in Charleston, South Carolina. Men gamble, women gossip, and everybody jokes good-naturedly. The evening takes a turn for the worse, however, when the dockworker Crown and his girlfriend, Bess, arrive. Crown is drunk and belligerent, and when he loses a game of dice, he furiously stabs his opponent and flees, leaving Bess behind to fend for herself. Only one person is willing to help the beautiful but troubled Bess: the disabled beggar Porgy.

With Porgy, Bess discovers a life of stability and happiness. But Crown's hold on Bess isn't easily broken, and when he unexpectedly returns, her sense of safety is shattered. Desperate to protect his beloved Bess, Porgy kills Crown. Yet this murder will soon set in motion a series of unintended consequences—for Bess is haunted by more than one demon, and she faces temptations that will shake the very foundations of her fragile, newfound hope.



Tristram Kenton/English National Opera

THE SOURCE: THE NOVEL *PORGY* BY DUBOSE HEYWARD

Once hailed as the harbinger of a new type of Southern novel, DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* (1925) emerged at a time of rapid social change. Against a backdrop of urbanization, industrialization, and the mass exodus (known as the "Great Migration") of African Americans from the rural South to northern cities, Heyward's novel depicts a black Charleston community and its residents with a sympathy and depth of emotion that were groundbreaking for the time. Like many writers of the literary Southern Renaissance of the 1920s, Heyward explored themes of family, community, and religion, all intertwined with the convoluted forces of race and historical inheritance. White critics of the day saw *Porgy* as an authentic and universal portrayal of Southern black life, and they attributed this "authenticity" to Heyward's own family history. Born to an old Charleston society family of constrained finances, Heyward spent time among the black laborers on his aunt's plantation, sold burial insurance in Charleston's black neighborhoods, and worked as a clerk for a shipping line, where he came into contact with the black stevedores on the waterfront. But perhaps most influentially, in his youth, his mother helped support the family by collecting (and performing for tour groups) folk tales drawn from the region's Gullah community.

When George Gershwin read *Porgy* in 1926, he was immediately struck by the novel's operatic potential: He had long considered stories of the black South to be the truest representation of American folklore and a necessary foundation for his first full-length opera. By the time Gershwin was ready to begin composing in 1933, DuBose Heyward and his wife, Dorothy, had already adapted the novel into a wildly successful stage play, and many of their alterations are retained in the libretto that the Heywards, Gershwin, and Gershwin's brother Ira developed for the opera. As in the play, Sportin' Life takes on a larger and more malign role than in the novel, Bess is less pitiful, and the work arguably ends on a more optimistic note, with *Porgy* transformed by his resolve to follow Bess to New York. But above all, it is Gershwin's music, with its jazz rhythms and irresistible melodies, that elevates Heyward's constrained character types into vividly realized people whose loves and hopes now live on in operatic productions across the globe.



Charleston's Cabbage Row, the real tenement in Charleston that inspired Porgy's "Catfish Row," photographed in 1928 by John Bennett.

Image from the Charleston Museum

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *Catfish Row, a tenement neighborhood of Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1920s*

The inhabitants of Catfish Row relax after a day's work. Clara sings a lullaby to her baby, imagining a future free from hardship. The drug dealer Sportin' Life; Clara's husband, Jake; and some of the other men play craps under the disapproving eye of Serena, whose husband, Robbins, is also gambling with the group.

Porgy arrives and is about to join the game when Crown and his partner Bess appear. The fiery-tempered Crown joins the dice game. Drunk and high on drugs, he loses, starts a fight, and kills Robbins with a cotton hook. Crown runs off, telling Bess that he'll be back for her. The community shuns Bess as they await the arrival of the police. Sportin' Life offers to take her to New York with him, but she refuses. Only Porgy is sympathetic, offering Bess shelter and protection, which she gratefully accepts.

The following evening, Robbins's widow, Serena, leads the mourners in prayers. A collection plate is passed around to raise money for Robbins's burial. Porgy and Bess enter, and Bess offers Serena a contribution. Serena refuses the money, assuming that it comes from Crown, but when Bess explains that the money is actually Porgy's, Serena accepts it.

When the police arrive, they accuse Peter of Robbins's murder. Peter tells them that Crown was responsible, but the police unfairly take him away as a material witness. Serena convinces the undertaker to bury Robbins for less than his usual fee, and Bess leads everyone in an exultant spiritual.

A month later, Porgy and Bess have fallen in love. As he watches Jake and the other fishermen mend their nets, Porgy happily reflects that although he is poor, he has everything he needs: a woman he loves, God, and song. Sportin' Life enters, but before he has an opportunity to peddle any of his "happy dust," Maria, the matriarch of Catfish Row, chases him away. The "lawyer" Frazier sells Bess a divorce; the fact that she and Crown were never married is just a "complication."

Everyone is preparing to leave for a church picnic on nearby Kittiwah Island. Sportin' Life again asks Bess to come with him to New York. He offers her drugs, but she refuses, and Porgy chases him off, telling him to leave Bess alone. Porgy and Bess celebrate their newfound happiness and look forward to being together forever. Porgy insists that Bess should go to the picnic without him. At first, she refuses, not wanting to leave him alone, but eventually she joins the others as they set off for the picnic.

On Kittiwah Island, the community is in high spirits. Sportin' Life describes his cynical view of religion until Serena chastises him. When the steamboat whistle announces that the time has come to leave, everyone starts to pack up their belongings. Bess hurries back to the ship—until Crown, who has been hiding on the island since Robbins's murder, calls out to her. He wants Bess, whom he still views as his property, to run away with him. Bess explains that she now has a new life with Porgy, but Crown, resorting to brutality and violence, forces her to remain with him.

ACT II

A week later, ominous weather threatens the coast, but the fishermen of Catfish Row still leave at dawn for their day's work at sea. Bess, meanwhile, is heard talking deliriously from Porgy's room. She has been feverish and ill ever since returning from Kittiwah Island. Peter, released from police custody that morning, advises Porgy to take her to the hospital, but Serena invites her friends to pray for Bess's recovery instead. Bess finally emerges into the courtyard. She explains to Porgy that she wants to stay with him but Crown has threatened to take her away. Bess is terrified. Porgy promises to protect her, no matter what. Suddenly, a clanging bell warns of an approaching hurricane. The fishermen are still at sea.

The following morning, as the hurricane rages outside, everyone cowers together in Serena's room to pray for deliverance from the storm. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door: It's Crown, seeking shelter and looking for Bess. Bess refuses to go with him, insisting that she wants to stay with Porgy. Crown mocks Porgy and drowns out everyone's prayers with a vulgar song. At the storm's height, Clara sees Jake's boat floating upside down on the water and rushes out to save her husband. Bess begs the men to go after Clara. Throwing his strength and bravery in everyone's face, Crown heads out into the storm.

By the following night, the storm has passed. The women grieve for those who have been lost, including Jake, Clara and, they assume, Crown. Sportin' Life appears, mocks their weeping, and hints that Crown is still alive. Bess sings a lullaby, comforting Clara's baby. Under the cover of darkness, Crown steals in and approaches Porgy's door, but Porgy, who has been waiting for him, strikes and kills Crown.

The next afternoon, the police detective returns to Catfish Row, accompanied by the coroner. They are investigating Crown's murder. Serena and the other women pretend to know nothing about it. The police then go to Porgy's room and tell him he must come with them and identify Crown's body. Horrified by the idea of looking at Crown's dead face, Porgy refuses to go. The police drag him off.

With Porgy gone, Sportin' Life sees an opportunity to get Bess for himself. He convinces her that Porgy will be locked up indefinitely and tells her that if she follows him to New York, he can offer her a wonderful new life. At first, Bess spurns him, but when he convinces her to take some "happy dust," he knows that she will soon be dependent on the drug—and him.

A week later, the inhabitants of Catfish Row greet each other as a new day dawns. Porgy returns from jail in a jubilant mood, distributing gifts that he bought with money he won playing dice in jail. Unaware of his friends' unease, he calls out for Bess—but there is no answer. Eventually, Serena and Maria reveal that Bess has gone to New York with Sportin' Life. Hearing this, Porgy calls for his crutch and sets out to find Bess as if on his way to the Promised Land.

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian "mezzo"=middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

WHO'S WHO IN *PORGY AND BESS*

Character		Voice Type	The Lowdown
Porgy ("POR-ghee")	A disabled beggar	bass-baritone	A kind man possessing stoic patience as well as profound devotion, Porgy feels isolated and alone until Bess comes into his life.
Bess	A beautiful but troubled woman	soprano	Bess looks forward to a stable future with Porgy, but her addiction and her susceptibility to bad advice will soon wreak havoc on her newfound happiness.
Crown	A dockworker, Bess's lover	baritone	Brutal, with a taste for drink and drugs, Crown relishes violence and won't easily give up his hold on Bess.
Clara	A new mother	soprano	Clara envisions an idyllic future for her child; her lullaby is the opera's refrain of hope.
Jake	A fisherman, Clara's husband	baritone	Jake's aspirations for his family lead him to risk his life at sea.
Serena	A pious woman	soprano	Serena's faith inspires the opera's musical prayers of mourning and healing.
Sportin' Life	A drug dealer	tenor	Sportin' Life is Catfish Row's proverbial snake in the grass: He tempts Bess with drugs and wants to lure her away for himself.
Maria	Matriarch of Catfish Row	contralto	The moral center of the community, Maria upholds Catfish Row's sense of decency—and doesn't hesitate to pronounce judgment on Bess.
Residents of Catfish Row	Other fishermen, dock workers, tradespeople, and laborers	sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, tenors, baritones, and basses	The chorus amplifies the opera's action with their prayers and expressions of mourning and joy.

- 1898** George Gershwin is born on September 26 in Brooklyn, New York, the second son of Moishe Gershovitz and Rose Bruskin, both Russian Jewish immigrants. Around the time of his arrival in the U.S., Moishe adopts the name of Morris Gershwin. He and Rose become naturalized citizens in 1898.
- 1910** The Gershwins embrace the trappings of middle-class America and purchase a piano. According to family lore, as soon as it is set in place, George sits at the instrument and plays a popular tune. He soon begins piano lessons in the family’s neighborhood on the Lower East Side.
- 1914** Always an indifferent student outside of his piano lessons, Gershwin drops out of high school and takes a job working for a music publisher in Tin Pan Alley on 28th Street, the center of sheet music production for consumption by the general public. Gershwin works as a “song pluggler,” tasked with playing and singing the firm’s songs for prospective customers.
- 1917** Gershwin leaves Tin Pan Alley and begins working on Broadway, initially as a rehearsal pianist but soon as a song composer. His first full score is for the slapstick musical comedy *La-La-Lucille!*, which opens on Broadway in 1919.
- 1921** *Shuffle Along*, an all-black musical comedy by a quartet of African American vaudeville performers, premieres on Broadway. The show is a sensation, attracting sold-out audiences and launching the careers of Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson. Attended by George and Ira Gershwin, as well as many of the other Broadway celebrities of the day, *Shuffle Along* proves that musicals with African American casts can be financially successful, and it inspires a succession of all-black musicals throughout the 1920s.
- 1922** Gershwin composes *Blue Monday*, a one-act opera for six African American characters and chorus.



A postage stamp celebrating Porgy and Bess

- **1924** Gershwin's first extended concert work, *Rhapsody in Blue*, premieres at New York's Aeolian Hall with the composer himself at the piano. The work immediately wins acclaim for the way it melds the sounds of jazz with the classical piano concerto, and Gershwin calls it "a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness."
- **1925** DuBose Heyward, a little-known poet from Charleston, publishes his first novel, *Porgy*.
- **1926** Gershwin receives a copy of Heyward's *Porgy* from Ira's sister-in-law and finds in it his long-sought source for a truly American operatic story. He contacts Heyward and the two begin conversations about turning it into an opera.
- **1926-1927** Dorothy Heyward, together with her husband, adapts *Porgy* for the stage. The play premieres at New York's Guild Theatre on October 1, 1927, and will prove to be one of the greatest theatrical successes of the 1920s.
- **1933** Gershwin and Heyward begin work on the opera via correspondence. Heyward and Ira Gershwin collaborate closely on the lyrics.
- **1934** Heyward invites Gershwin to spend time in the Carolinas to learn some of the region's music. Gershwin has already visited Heyward twice (bookending a New Year's vacation to Palm Beach with short stints in Charleston the previous winter), but the five weeks he spends with Heyward in the summer of 1934 offer him a chance to make serious progress on the opera. While in Charleston, Gershwin attends a number of spiritual performances and prayer meetings. In January 1935, Gershwin completes a condensed score.
- **1935** *Porgy and Bess* premieres on September 30 at the Colonial Theater in Boston; the show is nearly four hours long. Knowing that an opera of this length will be extremely grueling for Broadway singers (who typically perform eight shows a week), Gershwin agrees to make cuts to the score before its opening in New York the following month. On October 10, *Porgy and Bess* has its Broadway premiere at the Alvin Theatre.
- **1937** Gershwin begins suffering from headaches. Doctors discover a brain tumor and perform emergency surgery, but Gershwin dies on July 11. At his funeral, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise remarks, "There are countries in Central Europe which would have flung out this Jew. America welcomed him and he repaid America by singing America's songs with the gusto of a child, with a filial tenderness of a son."



A postage stamp depicting Ira and George Gershwin

SINGING AMERICA

According to DuBose Heyward, *Porgy* was never meant to be a political work of art. Instead, he hoped that the novel and play would offer a “colorful setting” of “the old Southern slum ... without using the story as a vehicle for propaganda or discussion of the race problem.” But although Heyward presented his intentions as honorable, in 1920s Charleston, the “race problem” was inescapable, and Heyward’s own views were by no means neutral. As much as he created serious, emotionally complex characters in his novel, he also placed them in a world devoid of class diversity, education, or activism. These elements were ascendant at the time, but in Heyward’s nonfiction writings, he them found to be of little benefit to Low Country African Americans. Instead, Heyward valued “the old, uncomplicated pattern of life” over “the forces of advancement” that lure African Americans “from our fields, fired with ambition.”

The reality of segregation, although it appears only obliquely in *Porgy and Bess*, cannot be separated from the history of the opera. For instance, when the opera toured to Washington, D.C., in 1936, the scheduled venue, the National Theatre, was segregated. It was only after the cast refused to perform there and unions threatened to boycott the theater that the management agreed to allow black patrons to sit anywhere in the audience. This arrangement, moreover, held only for performances of *Porgy and Bess*; afterwards, the theater reverted to its previous policy of segregation. Eight years before, when Heyward’s stage play *Porgy* had come to the National, the management turned away an entire troupe of black actors when they arrived with their tickets and even went so far as to employ “spotters” to identify African Americans and remove them from the theater. The complex awareness of racial exclusion heard in Langston Hughes’s landmark 1926 poem “I, Too, Sing America” was surely familiar to the performers of *Porgy* as well as *Porgy and Bess*.

Given the inescapable imagery of blackface minstrelsy in the portrayal of African Americans on stage at the time, it was inevitable that some audiences and critics would interpret Gershwin’s opera through that lens. Reviewers understood the characters of *Porgy and Bess* as variations of minstrelsy stock characters (e.g., the uneducated and lazy plantation slave, the promiscuous “mulatto” woman, the city dandy, the mammy, etc.), no matter how complex Gershwin’s characters were in the actual opera.

Yet the characters of *Porgy and Bess* too sing America. Finely hewn individuals with opera-sized emotions and desires, they live, yearn, love, fail, and rise again as operatic heroes just as moving as any Mimi or Desdemona. One can appreciate the “entire fabric made out of all these individuals,” in the words of James Robinson, director of the Met’s production, without forgetting that fabric’s source.



A photo of George Gershwin that first appeared in *Vanity Fair* in 1927

Image from the Library of Congress

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, teachers will need access to a recording of *Porgy and Bess* and a libretto. Time stamps in the following activity correspond to the audio clips available at metopera.org/education.

"SUMMERTIME"

While the men of Catfish Row rib each other good-naturedly over a game of craps, the young mother Clara sings a lullaby to her baby. Nearly the first number of the opera, it serves to establish both the opera's setting and one of its main themes: On Catfish Row, life moves with the slow rhythm of summer, but the lullaby also uses "summertime" as a metaphor for a happier future.

What to listen for:

- The aria's simple two-verse form
- Gershwin's slow harmonic accompaniment
- The use of pentatonic and whole-tone inflections

- (00:00) An oscillating G# - A# motif in the bells sets a bucolic tone for the scene. Invite students to listen carefully for this motif, which occurs in various instruments throughout the aria. This aria is in b minor, but these opening bars do not point to any specific key, since the oscillating whole-step motif implies a static whole-tone scale rather than the drive to the tonic typical of major and minor keys.
- (00:05) Clara enters, singing the first word of the song, "Summertime," near the top of her soprano range. At the downbeat, the oscillating G# - A# can be heard in the strings. The instrumental accompaniment is built on a series of parallel fifths, while the vocal line is built on a pentatonic scale.
- (00:20) Clara continues with the second half of her line, "fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high." As she sings this sentiment of ease (when cotton crops are tall, they can be harvested without bending over), the strings swirl beneath her in an undulating, rising chromatic line. At the close of this line, the harmony becomes clearer and ends on an F# major chord—the dominant in the key of b minor. But Gershwin promptly muddies the waters again with a slithery, chromatic line in the English horn.
- (00:33) With the second line of text, "Oh your daddy's rich, and your ma is good lookin'," Gershwin repeats the melody and harmony of the first line. The second half of the line, "So hush, little baby, don't you cry," brings the verse to a quiet close on the tonic (b minor).
- (01:02) The second verse begins with a return to the oscillating G# - A# pattern. The voice enters, singing the same melody from the beginning of the song. The harmonic accompaniment from the beginning of the song also reappears, but now with the addition of an aimlessly meandering figure in muted, pianissimo violins.
- (01:57) At the close of the second verse, the harmony once again resolves clearly on b minor. As the voice holds a final b, the chorus enters with a wordless chromatic accompaniment. In some performances, the soloist raises her line by an octave before singing a slow glissando back down to the original note. Have students pay attention to whether the singer in the recording embellishes the line in this manner.

"WHERE IS BROTHER ROBBINS"

Crown has killed Robbins in a fight over a dice game. The following evening, the community gathers in the home of Robbins's widow Serena to mourn together. Serena leads the mourners in prayers and spirituals as they surround Robbins's body, which lies on a bed in the center of their tiny room on Catfish Row. "Where is Brother Robbins" is an example of Gershwin's interpretation of the African American spiritual, which he studied during a stay on the Sea Islands of South Carolina during his composition of *Porgy and Bess*.

What to listen for:

- The recitative-like musical style of the solo voices
- Gershwin's use of a brief choral refrain in a call and response style

- (00:00) As the curtain rises on the scene, the orchestra sets the mournful tone with a plodding, funereal figure, punctuated by chimes. The instruments land on a sustained chord, which is then held in a drone-like style as the solo voice enters. The soloist asks, "Where is brother Robbins?" Gershwin indicates in the score that the line should be sung religiously and freely, musical directions that can be heard in the singer's free rhythmic interpretation of the line.
- (00:26) The chorus responds together: "He's a-gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone." The line functions as a response to the soloist's call. ("Call and response" refers to the back-and-forth performance of musical material so that different groups of singers seem to respond to one another. It is a common feature of spirituals as well as jazz.) Notice the piquant harmonies on the repetitions of the word "gone," as well as the melody's descending shape.
- (00:36) The soprano soloist enters again in an improvisatory, recitative-like style, remarking, "I seen him in the mornin' with his work clothes on," followed by another response by the chorus.
- (00:57) A baritone soloist continues the solemn recitation of Robbins's final day of life: "And I seen him in the noon-time, straight an' tall. But death a-come a-walkin' in the evenin' fall." The chorus responds once again with its mournful refrain.
- (01:24) With an expressive gesture in the strings, the soprano soloist concludes, "An' death touched Robbins with a silver knife," and the chorus agrees, "An' he's gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone, gone."
- (01:40) The musical atmosphere shifts as the baritone soloist reflects on Robbins's redemption: "An he's sittin' in the garden by the tree of life." A new lyricism steals into the orchestral accompaniment, with flutes and oboes outlining the major mode. But the unrelenting chorus responds as ever with the bitterness of loss. For the remainder of the excerpt, the chorus continues with their mournful responses to the ever-changing solo "calls."

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the *My Highs & Lows* reproducible handout found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *PORGY AND BESS*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

ENCOURAGING STUDENT RESPONSE IN ATTENDING THE FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

The enclosed performance activity is called "Opera Review: *Porgy and Bess*." The reproducible handout for this activity, available at the back of this guide, will invite students to think of themselves as opera critics, taking notes on what they see and hear during the performance and critiquing each singer and scene on a five-star scale. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. When you return to class, students can use their "Opera Review" sheets as they review and discuss their experience.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they like? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? This discussion should be an opportunity for students to review their performance activity sheets and express their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production, the singers' performances, and *Opera's* music and story.

When Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* premiered in 1935, black thinkers were sensitive to the portrayal of African Americans on the theatrical stage. They strongly believed that dramatic artworks could be powerful tools for uplifting their race—in 1925, *The Messenger*, an influential black literary publication of the Harlem Renaissance, had published an entire issue on the role of the arts in the social and political improvement of African Americans—but they were also aware that, if misused, art could be a means for perpetuating ugly stereotypes. When Gershwin's opera premiered, black critics celebrated the opera's all-black cast and chorus, which was then—as it is even today—a rare occasion for significant black representation on the opera stage. They also praised the artistry of the opera's singers and noted their educational pedigrees from Juilliard, the New England Conservatory, and Columbia University. But as for the work itself, many critics found its purported "authenticity" to be dubious; some opined that Gershwin hadn't created an authentic black opera so much as a Broadway musical with a black veneer.

These viewpoints invite a consideration of the ways that artworks incorporate influences from outside their creators' own culture. You might prompt students with the following questions:

- Who is qualified to tell a culture's story? Members of that culture? Scholars of it? Anyone?
- When might the use of artifacts or images from a culture outside your own be offensive?
- What types of representation should be avoided? Can you think of examples from movies or sports that are offensive? Why are they offensive?
- How can artists and authors demonstrate respect for a culture outside their own while still incorporating aspects of it into their own work?

Continue the conversation by shifting the discussion to *Porgy and Bess*. Have students apply their observations on the above questions to the following topics:

- Gershwin's musical idiom and its inspirations in jazz, blues, and spirituals
- The story's basis in DuBose Heyward's novel, a work which portrays a selectively narrow slice of life in the segregated South
- Gershwin's time spent researching black spirituals, prayer meetings, and Gullah culture in South Carolina while composing the opera
- Gershwin's insistence that *Porgy and Bess* feature an all-black cast and chorus

In conclusion, observe that the notion of cultural appropriation is a hot topic, inspiring conversations on everything from hair styles and fashion to cafeteria food. Encourage students to develop a critical apparatus for engaging in these conversations respectfully, honoring the distinctive attributes of cultures outside their own and the right of those cultures to preserve aspects they find meaningful, while also allowing for a free flowering of creativity across cultures and histories.

IN PRINT

Block, Geoffrey. *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

A careful study of American musical theatre from the 1920s through Sondheim, including a substantive chapter on Porgy and Bess.

Heyward, DuBose. *Porgy*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1925.

Heyward's novel is the origin of Gershwin's opera, although its story differs in several important ways.

Pollack, Howard. *George Gershwin: His Life and Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

A comprehensive biography of the composer, from his childhood to his meteoric rise to fame, celebrity, and tragic early death. Includes detailed analyses of his works spanning Broadway and Hollywood, jazz, and art music.

ONLINE

Billie Holiday. "I Loves You, Porgy."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpxfZKeqw48>

An example of the continued life of Gershwin's opera through jazz performance.

Leontyne Price. "Summertime"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9z5nfHjJG60>

The legendary American soprano sings "Summertime" in recital on October 8, 1978.

Metropolitan Opera. "James Robinson, Eric Owens, and Angel Blue on Porgy and Bess."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtdNM10rzfs>

A preview of the Met's new production of Porgy and Bess, featuring commentary by director James Robinson, baritone Eric Owens, and soprano Angel Blue.

PBS NewsHour. "New Interpretation of 'Porgy and Bess' Provokes as it Continues to Resonate."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wr_D6J1VocU

A NewsHour report on Diane Paulus's adaptation of Porgy and Bess, including commentary on the work's history of controversy and perceived racism, as well as details on Paulus's changes to Gershwin's original work.

Playbill. "Director's Cut: The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess — Diane Paulus & Audra McDonald, Part 1."

<http://www.playbill.com/video/directors-cut-the-gershwins-porgy-and-bess-diane-paulus-audra-mcdonald-part-1>

A conversation between Tony Award–nominated director Diane Paulus and Tony-winning leading lady Audra McDonald about the character of Bess, filmed during McDonald's starring role in Paulus's Broadway adaptation of Porgy and Bess in 2012.

act/scene

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and each opera will typically include from two to five acts. Acts can be subdivided into scenes, which are often differentiated by a change in setting or characters.

adagio

Literally “at ease,” adagio is a tempo marking that indicates a slow speed. An adagio tempo marking indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style.

allegro

Italian for “cheerful” or “joyful,” allegro is the most common tempo marking in Western music, indicating a moderately fast to quick speed.

aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting musically on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest arias in opera consist of music sung with different stanzas of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, the da capo aria, became common by the eighteenth century and features the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. Nineteenth-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the first section (the cantabile) to the second section (the cabaletta).

articulation

The smoothness or hardness with which a note is begun and ended. Articulation is a way of indicating the degree to which each note connects to the next, and can be seen while watching the bow of a stringed instrument player. A note can be attacked sharply and made short, or it can flow smoothly into the next note.

baritone

Literally “deep sounding,” a baritone is what a typical male voice sounds like—the term refers to a male singer with a low but not extremely low vocal range. A baritone will sing notes that are higher than those sung by a bass and lower than those sung by a tenor. Uncommon until the nineteenth century, baritone roles have grown in popularity in opera since the works of Verdi, who often reserved the voice type for villains.

Baroque

A designation for music and art produced roughly between the years 1600 and 1750. In music history, the beginning of the Baroque period coincides with the invention of opera as a genre, and its end coincides with the death of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Originally, the word “baroque” was a term for oddly shaped pearls; it was first applied to music in the 1730s by critics who preferred a simpler, less-ornamented style and thus found the intricate counterpoint of seventeenth-century music to be reminiscent of these bizarre natural gems.

bass

The lowest sounding line in music. Bass also refers to the lowest singing range for the male voice. Opera composers often choose a bass voice to sing one of two opposite types of roles: comic characters or dramatic and serious characters. For example, Mozart and Rossini wrote comic parts for bass voice, using musical repetition and low register for comic effect. Wagner and Mozart wrote serious parts for bass voice, focusing on the gravity that a low register can contribute to the overall musical texture.

bel canto

Referring to the Italian vocal style of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bel canto singing emphasizes lyricism and ornamentation in order to showcase the beauty of the singer's voice. Its focus on lyrical embellishment directly contrasts with a contemporary Germanic focus on a weighty, dramatic style. Bel canto singing is most closely associated with the music of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti.

cadenza

An ornamented musical elaboration played in a free style by a soloist to display his or her virtuosity. Cadenzas are typically improvised—that is, created by a performer on the spot—though they can also be written out in advance. They most frequently occur near the end of a piece, at a point of harmonic tension when the piece is about to conclude.

chorus

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Most choruses include at least four different vocal lines, in registers from low to high, with multiple singers per part. The singers are typically from a particular group of people who play a certain role on stage—soldiers, peasants, prisoners, and so on. Choruses may offer a moral, comment on the plot, or participate in the dramatic action.

Classical

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1750 to 1830, bordered by the earlier Baroque period and the later Romantic period. Contrasting with the ornamentation common to the preceding Baroque period, Classical music is characterized by simple and elegant melodies, regular harmonic accompaniment, and contrasts between melodic themes. The composers most closely associated with the Classical period include Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, particularly common in operas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases the virtuosity of a singer by featuring repeating melodic figures, rapid scales, trills, and other embellishments.

conductor

The person who directs the orchestra, setting the tempo, giving interpretive directions to the musicians, and generally holding all the musical elements of a performance together. The conductor typically stands in front of the players and uses a baton to communicate the meter and tempo; their non-baton hand indicates dynamics, phrasing, and articulation to the musicians. The gestures of a conductor can thus be likened to a non-verbal language that the musicians understand.

contralto

A deep female voice, with a vocal range that extends lower than that of a mezzo-soprano. Contraltos are known for having a very wide range and for the power and depth of sound with which they can sing. As is the case for roles for basses, many of the earliest roles in opera for contraltos are comic roles, though nineteenth-century composers also wrote dramatic roles for female singers with a lower range.

crescendo

A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music crescendos, the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and become incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, the Rossini crescendo, includes an increase in volume together with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments in order to create a particularly dramatic effect.

diminuendo

A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. During a diminuendo, the performers begin at a louder dynamic level and become incrementally softer.

dynamics

A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. During the eighteenth century, composers began indicating their desired intensity of volume in music by writing words such as *piano* (soft) and *forte* (loud) into the musical score. Dynamics encompass a spectrum from *pianissimo* (very soft) to *piano* (soft) to *mezzo piano* (moderately soft), all the way up to *fortissimo* (very loud). Music can shift to another dynamic level either suddenly or gradually, through a crescendo or diminuendo.

ensemble

A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. Types of ensembles include duets (for two soloists), trios (for three soloists), and quartets (for four soloists). Sometimes singers will respond directly to one another during an ensemble. At other times, singers will each sing to themselves as if the other singers were not on stage. In ensembles, multiple characters may simultaneously express very different emotions from one another.

finale

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany escalating dramatic tension. Finales frequently consist of multiple ensembles with different numbers of characters. When it occurs at the end of an early act in the opera, a finale may create a messy situation—and the resolution of this situation will only happen in subsequent acts. One type of finale common in comic operas, a chain finale, features characters entering or exiting from the stage to create unexpected combinations of characters, in turn increasing the opera's dramatic tension.

forte

Meaning “loud” or “strong” in Italian, forte is a dynamic level in music that indicates a loud volume. Adding the suffix “-issimo” to a word serves as an intensifier—since forte means “loud,” fortissimo means “very loud.”

harmony

The simultaneous sounding of pitches to produce chords, and the relationship between different chords as they succeed one another. Throughout much of Western music, systems of rules govern these progressions to help create our sense of musical tension, expectation, and conclusion. Tonal harmony is based on progressions of chords in relationship to a tonic (or home) key. In the 19th century, as composers sought novel sounds to reflect the originality of their invention, they began to employ chords and progressions of greater dissonance and greater distance from the home key. As such dissonances moved beyond mere sound effects into the musical structure itself, the traditional theory of tonal harmony began to become insufficient as a way to understand and describe musical structure.

intermission

A break between acts of an opera. At the beginning of an intermission, the curtain will fall (that is, close) on stage, and the lights in the auditorium, called the house lights, will become brighter. Intermissions provide audiences with a chance to walk around, talk with one another, and reflect on what they have seen and what could happen next. The break in the performance may also correspond with a change of time or scene in the story of the opera—the next act may take place hours or months later, or be set in a different location. Usually lights will dim and a bell may sound to indicate that the intermission is drawing to a close and the opera is about to resume.

legato

A type of articulation in which a melody is played without any spaces or gaps between the notes, thereby creating a smooth line. In contrast, a passage that is played “staccato” features notes played in a separated manner.

Leitmotif

From a German term meaning “leading motive,” a Leitmotif is a recurring musical idea, or motive, that represents a particular person, object, idea, emotion, or place. This musical idea is usually a few seconds in length and can occur in the music’s melody, harmony, or rhythm—or a combination of the three. Leitmotifs are most closely associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, where they are used repeatedly throughout the opera to provide unity; they also appear (although less frequently) in the operas of other composers, including Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Strauss.

libretto

The text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers. Until the early eighteenth century, a composer would frequently set music to a pre-existing libretto, and any given libretto could thus be set to music multiple times by different composers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collaboration between the author of the libretto, known as the librettist, and the composer became more frequent. Some opera composers, most notably Richard Wagner, are known for writing their own text.

maestro

A title of respect used to address a conductor.

melody

A succession of pitches that form an understandable unit. The melody of a piece consists of the tune that a listener can hum or sing. During arias, the singer will usually sing the main melody, though other instruments may play parts of the melody. Sometimes, such as during ensembles, multiple melodies can occur simultaneously.

mezzo-soprano

A female voice with a range between that of a contralto and soprano. A mezzo-soprano's voice is slightly deeper than that of a soprano, so mezzo-sopranos are often cast in supporting roles as older women, including nurses, confidantes, or maids.

opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life and addresses a light or sentimental subject, concluding with a happy ending.

opera seria

An eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Italian opera employing a noble and serious style. The plot of an opera seria often upholds morality by presenting conflicting emotions such as love versus duty, or by modeling enlightened rulers.

operetta

Featuring spoken dialogue, songs, and dances, an operetta is a short theatrical piece. Shorter in duration than operas, operettas typically feature light subject matter, spoken dialogue, and melodies composed in a popular style. Most popular from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the genre is the precursor of the American musical.

ornamentation

An embellishment to the melody, rhythm, or harmony of music, intended to make a melody more expressive or ornate. Ornamentation can be either indicated through symbols written into the music or improvised by the performer.

overture

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. After the conductor enters the orchestra pit and takes a bow, the music for the overture begins. Most overtures are a few minutes in duration, and set the mood for the opera—even featuring musical themes that will occur later in the opera.

piano

Abbreviated *p* in a musical score, piano indicates a soft dynamic level. Musicians may achieve a piano sound by using less bow, less air, or less force. In opera, soft music will often correspond with emotions of sadness or moments in the plot when a character is reflecting on a course of action or emotional state. Pianissimo is “very soft,” and can be so quiet that an audience may need to listen carefully in order to discern its melody and harmony.

pitch

The quality of a musical sound corresponding to its perceived highness or lowness. Scientifically, pitch can be measured as the number of vibrations (or repetitions) of a sound wave per second, which is called its frequency. A sound with a low frequency, like a bass drum, will sound low and have a low pitch, while a sound with a high frequency, like a siren, will sound high.

prima donna

Meaning “first lady” in Italian, the prima donna is the leading female role in an opera. The term may apply to the role or to the singer herself, who usually sings in the soprano register and is the star of the show. Since the nineteenth century, the term has also been applied to a singer of any gender with a self-centered and demanding personality.

recitative

A type of vocal writing between speech and song that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative may be accompanied either by keyboard or by the whole orchestra.

rhythm

Rhythm refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music. Rhythm is perceived in relation to an underlying beat and within the context of a meter. Western musical notation indicates to the performer the exact duration of each note or rest.

Romantic

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1830 to 1900. Beginning in literature and later adopted by composers, romanticism reflected a newfound focus on individuality, nature, and emotional extremes. Music from the Romantic period often explores music’s redemptive power, focusing on the sublimity of nature, love, and the mysterious. Romantic composers revised standard musical forms, devised new musical forms, and added more expressive harmonies to their works to convey the originality of their musical vision.

score

The complete musical notation for a piece, the score includes notated lines for all of the different instrumental and vocal parts that unite to constitute a musical composition. In an opera orchestra, the conductor follows the score during rehearsals and performances, while each performer follows his or her individual part.

Singspiel

Literally “sung play,” a Singspiel is an opera with spoken dialogue. Singspiels are typically in German and are from the Classical or early Romantic eras. The plot of a Singspiel is usually comic in nature, and its music may include songs, choruses, and instrumental numbers that are separated by spoken dialogue.

solo

A piece, musical passage, or line for a lone singer or other performer, with or without instrumental accompaniment. The most common type of solo in opera is the aria, which is composed for a single voice with orchestral accompaniment.

soprano

The highest singing range for the female voice. Roles composed for soprano singers are typically among the leading roles in the opera and require soprano singers to show off their virtuosic flexibility and range.

tempo

Literally “time” in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a piece of music. Tempo is indicated in a score by a variety of conventional (often Italian) words—such as *allegro*, *adagio*, *vivace*, *moderato*, *grave*, and many more—that not only provide direction on the composer’s desired rate of speed, but also carry associations of gesture and character. For instance, *vivace* indicates not only a brisk speed but also a lively spirit. Additional tempo markings may indicate when a composer asks for a section of music to be sped up (such as “*accelerando*”) or slowed down (such as “*rallentando*”).

tenor

The highest natural male vocal range. By the nineteenth century, the tenor had become the most common vocal range for male leading roles in operas. Tenor roles often feature high-pitched notes for male voice in order to showcase the singer’s range and power. A related voice type is the countertenor, with a range above that of a tenor and similar to that of a contralto.

theme/motive

Themes are the melodic ideas that are musical building blocks for a piece. A theme is often recognizable as a distinct tune and may reappear in its original form or in altered form throughout the piece. A motif (or motive) is a brief musical idea that recurs throughout a musical work. Motives can be based on a melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic component, and their repetition makes them recognizable to the listener. In opera, musical motives are often symbolically associated with specific characters or dramatic ideas.

timbre

Pronounced TAM-bruh, a French word that means “sound color.” It refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, operatic singing voices are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Listeners can also identify orchestral instruments by their timbre without being able to see them. The creative combination of different instrumental timbres is one of the artistic aspects of orchestration.

trill

A rapid alternation between two pitches that are adjacent to one another. Trills are a type of ornamentation, serving to embellish the melodic line, and appear regularly within coloratura passages. Trills also may appear near the end of a piece in order to prolong the musical tension before the music concludes.

verismo

A movement in Italian theater and opera in the late 19th century that embraced realism and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: the poor, the lower-class, and the criminal. Musically, verismo operas react against the forced ornamentation of the *bel canto* style and instead emphasize a more natural setting of the text to music. Before its exploration on the operatic stage, the verismo aesthetic first developed within the realm of literature.

Reviewed by _____

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Porgy and Bess*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design, and rate each of the star singers. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about Handel's opera and this performance at the Met!

THE STARS:	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
Eric Owens as Porgy	*****	
Angel Blue as Bess	*****	
Golda Schultz as Clara	*****	
Alfred Walker as Crown	*****	
Ryan Speedo Green as Jake	*****	
Latonia Moore as Serena	*****	
Denyce Graves as Maria	*****	
Frederick Ballentine as Sportin' Life	*****	
Conductor David Robertson	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Saturday night in Catfish Row			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A summertime lullaby			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A dice game goes awry			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Porgy takes Bess in when no one else will			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The community mourns one of its own			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Porgy sings of his simple life			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Bess obtains a “divorce” from Crown			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Sportin’ Life tempts Bess			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Porgy and Bess pledge their love			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
High spirits at the church picnic on Kittiwah Island			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
An unwelcome intruder detains Bess			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Bess’s delirium and a fervent prayer for healing			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Bess confesses her fears to Porgy			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A desperate vigil during the hurricane			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Crown returns for Bess and meets his end			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The authorities investigate Crown’s murder			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Sportin’ Life tempts Bess again			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Porgy finds Bess gone and sets out after her			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5