

# ***Porgy and Bess: “An American Wozzeck”***

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*For Lawrence Stewart on his 80th birthday*

## **Abstract**

George Gershwin greatly admired Alban Berg and his opera *Wozzeck*. He visited Berg in Vienna; the score he owned of *Wozzeck* was reputedly one of his prize possessions; and he traveled to Philadelphia in 1931 to attend the American premiere. This study argues that Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* is heavily indebted to Berg's *Wozzeck*. The debts primarily involve structural processes—understanding structure as patterns of discrete events shared by the two operas. Motives and chords play a small role in the discussion, taking their place alongside musical events that range from the large—a fugue or a lullaby—to the small—a pedal, an *ostinato*, or some detail of counterpoint. Beyond the presence in both operas of a lullaby, a fugue, a mock sermon, and an upright piano, the greater relevance of these parallels and others is to be found in the ways in which Gershwin situated them in comparable musical contexts. Evidence, in the form of an overlooked interview and a previously unknown recollection by one of Gershwin's friends, supports this argument and leads to questions about how we are to understand Gershwin's use of *Wozzeck*.

Unquestionably modern musical America has been influenced by modern musical Europe.  
—George Gershwin, 1930<sup>1</sup>

Why does America continually look to us foreigners for enlightenment and guidance? Our history hardly points to our being fit to lead your blindness anywhere other than into the ditch.

—Maurice Brown, 1930<sup>2</sup>

George Gershwin was the first to admit that he had European models in composing *Porgy and Bess*. Music critic and librettist Leonard Lieblich, who

This article has grown out of my paper “Why ‘It Ain’t Necessarily Soul’: On *Porgy*’s Debts to *Wozzeck*,” read at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Seattle, 2004. I derived the title from Richard Crawford’s “It Ain’t Necessarily Soul: Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* as a Symbol,” *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical* 8 (1972), 17–38. Crawford surveys the rocky critical reception of Gershwin’s American folk opera, examining the work from the standpoint of several critics who for various reasons—artistic, cultural, political—found the work lacking, especially with regard to its portrayals of African American life. My analytical arguments have been greatly buttressed by comments and assistance from Richard Crawford, Raymond Knapp, William Rosar, Wayne Shirley, and Lawrence Stewart. I am grateful to them all.

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<sup>1</sup>George Gershwin, “The Composer in the Machine Age,” in *Revolt in the Arts: A Survey of the Creation, Distribution and Appreciation of Art in America*, ed. Oliver M. Sayler (New York: Brentano’s, 1930), 264.

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Brown, “Suggesting a Dramatic Declaration of Independence,” in *Revolt in the Arts*, ed. Oliver M. Sayler, 207. Maurice Brown was a British playwright, actor, director, and producer who founded the Chicago Little Theater, which he termed the “grandfather” of the New York Theater Guild.

encountered Gershwin on vacation in Saratoga, New York, recalled this racetrack banter:

“How’s the opera coming on?” I inquired.

“Too fast! I’ve got too many ideas and have to keep on scrapping them.”

“What style of music is it?”

“American, of course, in the modern idiom, but just the same, a cross between *Meistersinger* and *Madame Butterfly*. Are those models good enough?”<sup>3</sup>

However “good” Gershwin’s models were, their influence was at least strong enough to be detected by some of the first listeners. As Gershwin’s opera premiered in Boston and New York, music critics immediately cited both of these precedents along with numerous others, especially Bizet’s *Carmen*, Gustave Charpentier’s *Louise*, and various other works of Wagner. The cries of the Strawberry Woman and Crab Man in *Porgy and Bess* reminded several writers of the analogous moment in *Louise*. A critic in Boston heard “very definite indications that the composer recognized a potent quality in the works of his predecessors. Who could listen to the cries of the vendors in Act 2, for instance, without being reminded of *Louise*?” Confirming that she thought the resemblance was purposeful, she added, “Mr. Gershwin has evidently profited by study.”<sup>4</sup> Something of Gershwin’s method, if not also his aspirations, can be gleaned from one of his sketch pages for the chorus “Oh Lawd, I’m On My Way.” At the bottom of the page below several lines of music, he scribbled, “rhythmic figure on top a la Wagner.”<sup>5</sup>

In arguing that Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* is heavily indebted to Berg’s *Wozzeck*, I will primarily explore structural processes, understanding structure not as form—in the sense of ordered tonal centers and thematic repetition in a rondo or sonata-allegro movement—but rather as patterns or a succession of discrete events that are shared by the two operas. Motives and chords play a relatively small role in the discussion, taking their place alongside musical events that range from the large—a fugue or a lullaby—to the small—a pedal, an ostinato, or some detail of counterpoint. For a resemblance to be significant enough to suggest that Gershwin emulated Berg, it needs to occur either in a succession of similar musical events, or in conjunction with a related narrative moment, or preferably both. But unlike the influences quickly heard by critics and other listeners, the structural similarities that I propose are for the most part inaudible, because of the obvious stylistic differences between the two operas. The affinities exist primarily in the background, but are no less meaningful for that. Their frequency is also important, for while isolated

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Liebbling, untitled essay for the memorial volume *George Gershwin*, ed. Merle Armitage (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1938), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Grace May Stutsman, “Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* Produced,” *Musical America*, 10 October 1935. This review and others are quoted in John A. Johnson, “Gershwin’s ‘American Folk Opera’: The Genesis, Style, and Reputation of ‘*Porgy and Bess*’ (1935),” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1996, vol. 1, 144.

<sup>5</sup> This notation is discussed in Johnson, “Gershwin’s ‘American Folk Opera,’” I, 126–27. In chap. 2, “Precursors of *Porgy and Bess* I: European Antecedents,” Johnson gives a comprehensive survey of which European works were cited by critics (102–57). The sketch page is in the Gershwin Collection, Library of Congress, Music Division, Sketch BB.

resemblances ought to be considered coincidental, I maintain that in *Porgy and Bess* the number is sufficiently great for coincidence to be implausible.

Gershwin's admiration for *Wozzeck* and the *Lyric Suite* has been noted by many. From the time of his 1928 visit to Berg in Vienna, Gershwin clearly held Berg in high esteem. He possessed an autograph excerpt of the *Lyric Suite*, along with scores of that work and *Wozzeck*, the latter reputed to be one of his prize possessions.<sup>6</sup> His interest in *Wozzeck* had not diminished in 1931 when he journeyed to Philadelphia specifically in order to hear one of the American premiere performances. Some have commented, usually in passing, on affinities between *Porgy and Bess* and *Wozzeck*. Joan Peyser observes without elaborating, "There is ample evidence in *Porgy and Bess* that *Wozzeck* impressed [Gershwin]."<sup>7</sup> Allen Forte has examined shared features of the lullabies in each opera and Gershwin's use of the octatonic scale, a usage Forte terms "the strongest musical link between Gershwin and Berg." These links are sufficient for Forte to conclude that "Gershwin understood certain features of Berg's music, at least in some very specific, but perhaps partly in an aurally and intuitive way."<sup>8</sup> Other observers, including John Johnson in his dissertation on *Porgy*, have noted that both operas have out-of-tune barroom pianos, fugues, and numerous leitmotives.<sup>9</sup> Raymond Knapp offers a persuasive comparison of how Gershwin and Berg use the onstage piano to depict the poverty and powerlessness of the characters. Because the pianos both enter by repeating the music just played by the orchestra, "the reduction in forces provides implicit commentary, juxtaposing a powerful larger force and its trivial echo within a low-life urban setting."<sup>10</sup> Wayne Shirley has found that, as in *Wozzeck*, in the first production of *Porgy and Bess* there was an onstage band that was subsequently omitted.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond the presence in both operas of a lullaby, a fugue, a mock sermon, and an out-of-tune upright piano, the greater relevance of these parallels and others is to be found in the ways in which Gershwin situated them in comparable musical contexts. Given the ample evidence that Gershwin was acquainted with *Wozzeck*, I assume him to have been aware of the dramatic as well as musical points shared by Berg's opera and his. Indications in his music acknowledge this common ground, regardless of the substantial stylistic differences. My comparison is based on the version Gershwin published in the 1935 piano vocal score and thus does not take

<sup>6</sup> According to Oscar Levant, *A Smattering of Ignorance* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940), "Gershwin treasured the piano score of *Wozzeck* and was deeply impressed by the opera when he journeyed to Philadelphia for the performance under Stokowski in 1931" (155).

<sup>7</sup> Joan Peyser, *The Memory of All That: The Life of George Gershwin* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 230. Steven Gilbert does not specify *Wozzeck*, but he considers Berg's influence strong: "There is another affinity, on the surface less likely but potentially more profound, with a composer [Berg] whose very soul was opera." This is from the conclusion of his chapter on *Porgy and Bess* in *The Music of Gershwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 206.

<sup>8</sup> Allen Forte, "Reflections Upon the Gershwin-Berg Connection," *The Musical Quarterly* 83 (1999): 159 and 165.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, "Gershwin's 'American Folk Opera,'" vol. 1, 152–54.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 199.

<sup>11</sup> Private communication from Wayne Shirley, who informed me that in the first production, the band played onstage at the end of Act 2, sc. 1, R107–18, inclusive.

into account the cuts he made later as a result of rehearsals and performances in Boston and New York.<sup>12</sup> For Gershwin's knowledge of *Wozzeck* there were at least three sources: the piano-vocal score from 1926, Berg's own commentary on the opera, published in English in the November 1927 edition of *Modern Music*, and Willi Reich's article "A Guide to *Wozzeck*," also published in *Modern Music*, November 1931. A fourth source, the American premiere performance on 19 March 1931, that Gershwin attended in Philadelphia, could doubtless be added to this list. Of these sources, the piano-vocal score was certainly the most important, but Reich's "Guide" to it provided Gershwin not only an insightful introduction to *Wozzeck* but also to his thoughts on strategies for composing a successful opera in general.

Many of the musical resemblances mark elements of drama that are present in both plots (Appendix 1 presents a list of similarities between the two operas). Because the story of *Porgy and Bess* was based on the novel *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward (1925) and the subsequent play that Heyward and his wife, Dorothy, staged in 1927, many of these dramaturgical moments existed before the operatic version. These include such central moments in the stories as the murders, which are accompanied in both operas by lengthy pedals (Appendix 1, no. 5). Likewise, the drownings (Appendix 1, no. 11): as *Wozzeck* slips into the lake, Berg supplied chromatic rising six-note chords in quintuplets; for Jake's drowning, Gershwin wrote storm music that grows to a climax with chromatic six-note chords in sextuplets. Above the chromaticisms played in the orchestra, the singers onstage speak: Clara cries out, "Oh Jake, Jake," and the Doctor and Captain (Hauptmann) comments on suspicious sounds coming from the lake. Dramatically the settings have completely opposite characters: in *Porgy* the storm music is fast and loud, and in *Wozzeck* the scene is a clear, still moonlit night; thus the dynamics never get above *pianissimo*. For each of these moments, Gershwin's musical debts to Berg involve significant turns of plot that were already present in *Wozzeck* and in both the novel and play versions of *Porgy*.

In some cases, however, Gershwin constructed musical links to *Wozzeck* at moments of the narrative that had not existed in the Heywards' *Porgy*, suggesting that Gershwin drew on dramatic as well as musical ideas from *Wozzeck*. The mock sermon (Appendix 1, no. 8) is one such moment; another is signaled by one of Gershwin's few motivic allusions to *Wozzeck*, an allusion made despite the vast stylistic gulf between Gershwin's melodic world and Berg's. After Bess has given in to Crown's violent advances, she sings, "I wants to stay here, but I ain't worthy," to the motive that Berg had assigned Marie, in exactly the same circumstance; namely, remorse after having been forced to have sex with a violent man. As shown in Example 1, Marie sings "Bin ich ein schlecht Mensch" (Am I a bad person?) to four rising thirds that span a major ninth.

When she returns within moments to answer her own question, "Ich bin doch ein schlecht Mensch" (I am indeed a bad person), she sings the motive in retrograde with the same pitches later used by Gershwin, excepting one chromatic inflection, D-flat in place of C. Motive, text, and context (to which I will return) are all at

<sup>12</sup> On these cuts, see Charles Hamm, "The Theatre Guild Production of *Porgy and Bess*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40/3 (Autumn 1987): 495–532.

Marie *aufbegehrend:*

Bin ich ein schlecht Mensch?

**Example 1a) Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act 2, sc. 1, mm. 105–106**

Bess *mf (with great feeling)*

I wants to stay here, but I ain't wor-thy,

**Example 1b) Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess*, Act 2, sc. 3, R210**

Marie *p*

(allein) Ich bin doch ein schlecht Mensch.

**Example 1c) *Wozzeck*, Act 2, sc. 1, mm. 126–28**

**Example 1.** Examples 1a and 1c from Berg *WOZZECK* © 1931 by Universal Edition A.G., Vienna. English Translation © 1952 by Alfred A. Kalmus, London, W1. © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G. Vienna. Example 1b from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, Dubose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing.

play in this allusion.<sup>13</sup> Gershwin was clearly capable of appreciating the retrograde treatment, since he devised a retrograde theme of his own in the crap game music. Neither this text nor any other expression of unworthiness occurred at this point in the novel and play *Porgy*. As such it is a moment in which the musical and dramatic influence of *Wozzeck* is particularly evident.

Aside from individual musical gestures such as these, *Porgy and Bess* also contains extended passages that combine related dramatic events with a more encompassing indebtedness of musical structure and context. Appendix 1 is a list of the numerous similarities between the two operas, including those between the lullabies, the fugues, the sermons, and the scenes in which Bess and Marie are attacked sexually. To summarize:

- The lullabies each follow music played onstage in fast duple meter and, at their conclusions, a new motive of central importance is briefly introduced, a motive that later accompanies death; further, the lullabies recur multiple times, with analogous variations introduced in their reprises.
- The fugues are preceded by extended music in which the fugal ideas are presented and developed in advance.
- The mock sermons share internal details and occur in the midst of dancing and choral singing.
- Bess and Marie are coerced into having sex in scenes that relate in pacing, pitch, and counterpoint.

<sup>13</sup> For this to have been an actual allusion requires that Gershwin had access to a translation (or translator) of the libretto for *Wozzeck*. The program for the Philadelphia production included a full translation into English by Reginald Allen. See Barry Brisk, "Leopold Stokowski and *Wozzeck*: An American Premiere in 1931," *Opera Quarterly* 5/1 (Spring 1987): 71–82, esp. 76–77.

Evidence that Gershwin intended these debts to *Wozzeck*, that he expressed a desire to compose an “American *Wozzeck*,” will lead in turn to the critical issue of how we are to understand his use of *Wozzeck*. In what sense did Berg’s opera serve Gershwin as a model? It is one thing for Gershwin to use an earlier work as a technical or pedagogical aid to help him in this ambitious and, for him, new undertaking, but quite another to exploit it for a source of allusions that would affect how *Porgy and Bess* might be understood. The distinction is not simply a matter of deciding whether or not Gershwin sought assistance in matters of compositional technique or allusive sources for his music ideas; the distinction also has implications for speculation about whether Gershwin’s intention was that some of his audience would recognize moments of indebtedness.

### The Lullabies

Of all the moments that can be compared, the richest is between the lullabies “Summertime” and “Mädel, was fangst Du jetzt an?” that Clara and Marie sing to their infants as they rock them. Allen Forte has examined certain connections in detail, beginning with the observation that the two arias “share certain characteristics. Of these, perhaps the most apparent are the two-chord oscillation and the contour similarity of the opening melodic figures that set ‘Summertime’ and ‘Mädel,’ respectively. Moreover, the voice leading of the oscillating chords is similar: those of Gershwin progress by parallel whole steps . . . while Berg’s are connected by half step, the two upper parts moving in contrary direction to the lower two.”<sup>14</sup> Forte shows as well that one of the chords occurs in both, “the first chord in ‘Summertime’ and the harmony that sets ‘du’ in the Berg lullaby (B, D, F-sharp, G-sharp, plus C-sharp in the Berg).”<sup>15</sup> To these characteristics I will add the following: both lullabies have two verses, and verse two is set to a varied repeat that commences at roughly the same moment (Berg’s in m. 17, Gershwin’s in m. 18).

These resemblances are of limited interest in part because they are themselves limited: clearly, Gershwin did not need assistance writing a lullaby, and the style of a German expressionist lullaby would be of no great relevance to the African American milieu Gershwin wanted to create. But additional traits suggest what Gershwin felt he could learn from Berg. First, both lullabies return more than once in the opera, and because these returns each make analogous adjustments, the ways in which they return are significant (Appendix 2 compares the lullabies and their reprises). Second, the lullabies have comparable musical-dramatic settings. They are preceded by music that ensures maximum contrast: in *Porgy*, Clara sings the lullaby after the “Jasbo Brown Blues” in cut C, performed with an onstage piano, while in *Wozzeck* Marie’s lullaby follows the military music, a raucous march in 4/4 with an onstage band.<sup>16</sup> The blues grow in intensity and volume from *piano* to *fortissimo*, while the military march crescendos rapidly from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* and eventually *fff*. Berg and Gershwin provide short introductions to their lullabies, Berg for nine slow measures, Gershwin for thirteen fast measures,

<sup>14</sup> Forte, “Reflections,” 153–54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Although Gershwin referred to “Jazzbo Brown,” I follow the spelling “Jasbo” used in the typescript libretto, the published score, and earlier references by Heyward.



although the music shifts definitively nine measures before, just as the stage lights focus on Clara. Both composers prepare the first note of the lullaby by sustaining it beforehand, Berg for seven measures, Gershwin for five and a half, and both conclude the introduction with two high pitches orchestrated to achieve the same sort of color: Berg scores his for celesta and Gershwin for theater-pit bells. This orchestration returns to begin the second verse.

The parallels in approach to the lullabies are followed by others at the conclusion. While Marie and Clara sing their final measures, the orchestra (and in *Porgy and Bess*, also the choir) descend by half step, either for a fifth or a tritone (*Wozzeck*, Act 1, mm. 398–403; *Porgy*, Act 1, R21+2). Following the last cadence, the arias exploit a fragment of the opening melody as the source of an instrumental coda. The melodic fragment appears twice and then quickly twice more in a compressed, elided form pitched an octave lower. Berg and Gershwin then introduce a motive of central importance that eventually becomes associated with death. As Willi Reich described it for *Wozzeck*, from the instrumental coda “a cadential transition . . . is developed as an ending, one of the most important motifs of the opera. The open fifths represent the somewhat aimless waiting of Marie, a waiting that is terminated only by her death.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this is the motive to which Berg returns just as *Wozzeck* stabs Marie in the neck with a knife and gasps “Todt!” Reich further observes, “The repetition of [this motif] is interrupted by the swiftly intruding figure of *Wozzeck* suddenly knocking at the window.”<sup>18</sup> Gershwin, in turn, follows his lullaby with the first statement of the fight music, the motive that soon enough builds to Crown’s murder of Robbins and, later in Act 3, to Porgy’s murder of Crown. But in its initial statement, as in *Wozzeck*, this motive breaks off for Mingo, Sporting Life, and others to play craps. This is one of the best examples of a practice that Steven Gilbert observed in *Porgy and Bess*: “The later emergence of motives and themes from material stated early in the opera. These motives and themes not only recur; they *precur*.”<sup>19</sup> Reich’s detailed analysis of *Wozzeck* provided an explanation of a process Gershwin found useful for his own purposes.

Both operas thus have the following events in succession: a dance or march played on stage in loud 4/4 or cut time, followed by a lullaby (with various points in common) and subsequently a brief truncated statement of a central motive. These introductory statements then give way to an extended segment of music without arias, songs, or any of Berg’s repetition-based instrumental forms. After Reich describes the interruption of the motive associated with Marie, he continues: “From here on the musical structure abandons all formal schemes of unity and suggests the free, unconstrained technique of composition of the post-Wagnerian style, which was so prone to develop long stretches of the text in this manner, using the leitmotif only as a means of support. I emphasize this particular idiosyncrasy here, because it is the only place in *Wozzeck* where it occurs.”<sup>20</sup> Gershwin reacted accordingly. Between the introduction of the fight motive and the next large vocal

<sup>17</sup> Willi Reich, “A Guide to *Wozzeck*,” *The Musical Quarterly* 38/2 (1952): 10. This had previously been published in *Modern Music*, November 1931.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert, *The Music of Gershwin*, 194.

<sup>20</sup> Reich, “A Guide to *Wozzeck*,” 10–11.

number (Jake's "A Woman Is a Sometimes Thing"), he wrote 182 measures of small units, either recitative or melodic segments of up to twenty-one measures. His leitmotives figure heavily in this section.

In *Porgy and Bess*, the next two statements of the lullaby were additions to the opera; that is, in the play *Porgy* the lullaby had appeared only twice, once each in the first and final acts. The kindred variations between the multiple reprises of the lullabies by Berg and Gershwin thus introduce into *Porgy* dramatic as well as musical elements from *Wozzeck*. Although less prolonged, Gershwin's musical shadowing of Berg is nevertheless evident because of some changes that appear in both operas, shown in Appendix 2. At the first return there is only one verse, sung against an active, blatantly intrusive counterpoint (impassioned craps shooters in *Porgy and Bess*, a *fortissimo* violin line marked "wild" in *Wozzeck*), and the lullaby fails utterly; that is, the baby does not fall asleep. Also, in this reprise and the next, the orchestral preparation of the singer's first note is shortened, and shortened comparably: one or two measures for the first reprise, three for the second (Appendix 2, no. 3).

The second reprises also have musical interjections, in this case disconnected outbursts that import sounds from the surrounding musical context: in *Porgy*, the lullaby follows a musical depiction of wind, gusts of wind then arise every few measures within the lullaby, and the wind resumes momentarily at the end. This device emulates a sequence in *Wozzeck* in which a polka precedes Wozzeck's parodistic rendition, the pianist repeatedly attempts to play during Wozzeck's singing, and the polka starts anew when Wozzeck breaks off. Lastly, the final reprises of the lullaby are sung not by Clara and Marie but by Bess and Wozzeck. Since this vocal transfer also occurred in the play, it does not by itself indicate anything about Berg's potential influence on Gershwin. But significantly, Gershwin and Berg once again exit the lullaby as they had the first time, by recalling the same portentous motives they had introduced after the first lullabies. Moreover, another detail of Berg's last reprise is taken over literally by Gershwin, namely the segue to the lullaby from an out-of-tune onstage piano playing 2/4 music. This sequence he adopted for the first statement in *Porgy*, Act 1, sc. 1.

### The Fugues

Although the "crap game fugue" has justifiably been compared to the fight fugue in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, it also shares several elements with the fugue in *Wozzeck* (Appendix 1, no. 3b).<sup>21</sup> Like Wagner's fugue, it has incessant, strongly accented sixteenth-note motion in the orchestra while the singers react to the onstage tussle. Wagner's fugue was perhaps dramatically better than Gershwin's for being shorter, 79 mm. of 2/4 rather than 111, but in its extended length, Gershwin's fugue had roughly the same dimensions as Berg's, which runs for sixty mm. of 4/4. More significant, Berg and Gershwin both precede their fugues with extended free-form introductions of the themes that appear in the fugue (Appendix 1, no. 3a). Berg labeled this scene "Fantasia and Fugue" and presented three themes for development in the fantasy before bringing them together in the fugue. The crap game fugue in *Porgy* also has two of its themes presented in an extended fantasylike treatment immediately before fusing them together in the fugue. In both operas

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, "Gershwin's 'American Folk Opera,'" vol. 2, 525 n. 145.



Example 2a) *Porgy*, Act 1, sc. 1, R93 – 4

Example 2b) *Wozzeck*, Act 1, sc. 1, mm. 4-6

**Example 2.** Example 2a from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing. Example 2b from Berg *WOZZECK* © 1931 by Universal Edition A.G., Vienna. English Translation © 1952 by Alfred A. Kalmus, London, W1. © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G. Vienna.

one of the leitmotives treated in this pre-fugal section belongs to a male adversary, that is, Crown (the motive first introduced in Act 1, R83+10) and the Captain (*Hauptmann*); moreover, Gershwin, like Berg, presents precisely this motive once in inversion against itself (*Wozzeck*, Act 2, m. 322, *Porgy and Bess*, I, R107+6ff). The dimensions of the fantasies are comparable: the 254 measures in *Porgy* are primarily in 2/4 and *Wozzeck* has 115 measures of 3/4 and 4/4. The developmental fantasies lead into the fugues with a pedal, 3 measures of 4/4 in *Wozzeck* and 6 measures of 2/4 in *Porgy*; and both of these pedals culminate in a major seventh with a singer adding a minor second above the lower pedal tone.

Gershwin's less pervasive counterpoint is difficult to compare to Berg's, but in addition to presenting Crown's leitmotive in inversion, Gershwin's crap game theme includes a melodic palindrome that compares to the retrograde figures heard in *Wozzeck*. Indeed, this idea loosely echoes Berg's *Hauptmann* motive, especially in the rhythms and pitches of the last notes, shown in Example 2. Wayne Shirley, who has noticed the resemblance between these two themes, concluded that this motivic debt was highlighted by Gershwin, by virtue of how he emulated Berg's orchestration. While Berg assigned the motive to an English horn, Gershwin scored it for several instruments, but almost always assigned the English horn "one dynamic level higher than the other instruments" (a shading no recorded performance has achieved).<sup>22</sup> Also suggestive is that when this theme returns in augmentation in the fantasy and fugue, it has a palindromic shape that may have inspired Gershwin's retrograde treatment, shown in Example 3.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Wayne Shirley to the author, 18 January 2005. I am very grateful to Shirley for sharing with me his thoughts and also several pages from his yet unpublished edition of the opera. Shirley also has compared the retrograde use of this theme to Berg's retrograde techniques in the third movement of the *Lyric Suite*. In his "Rotating *Porgy and Bess*," in *The Gershwin Style: New Looks at the Music of George Gershwin*, ed. Wayne Schneider (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34

*All laugh at Robbins.*

cent an' he can't take no chanc-es with bad luck.

94

BESS

That's all right hon-ey boy,

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics 'cent an' he can't take no chanc-es with bad luck.' and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The second system starts at measure 94, with the vocal line in treble clef and lyrics 'That's all right hon-ey boy,' and the piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

**Example 3a) *Porgy*, Act 1, sc. 1, R94 – 4: Crap game theme with retrograde**

Der Hauptmann und der Doktor begegnen sich

H  
Gg  
p  
(Fag.)

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piano and fagotto. It features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The piano part is in the upper register, and the fagotto part is in the lower register. The score includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'H'.

**Example 3b) *Wozzeck*, Act 2, sc. 2, mm. 171–73**

**Example 3.** Example 3a from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing. Example 3b from Berg *WOZZECK* © 1931 by Universal Edition A.G., Vienna. English Translation © 1952 by Alfred A. Kalmus, London, W1. © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G. Vienna.

## Sermons and Abductions

Like the fugue, the mock sermon “It ain’t necessarily so” is an addition to the opera that had not existed in the novel or in the play, and is one of the Broadwaysque song texts that Ira Gershwin wrote, evidently with little or no input from Heyward. *Wozzeck* seems musically and textually a model. Gershwin’s marking that this sermon should be sung “Happily, with humour” may have been influenced by Reich’s description of Berg’s setting as a “good-natured parody of a sermon,”<sup>23</sup> and so, in order to create a mood appropriate for these irreverent spoofs, the sermons

n. 30, Shirley noted his first impressions of seeing Gershwin’s sketches: “When I first saw sketch B I immediately thought of this section of the *Lyric Suite*.”

<sup>23</sup> Reich, “A Guide to *Wozzeck*,” 16.

both take place in the context of dancing and choral singing. The African American counterpart of the dance and stage band in *Wozzeck* is the dance accompanied by African drums; and as Berg's choir sings "Halli, Hallo," Gershwin's vocalizes on "Ha da da." Leading in to the sermon itself, the composers both write a brief section in 5/4 to accompany two vocal lines that are essentially one voice, Gershwin's because the two parts sing in unison, Berg's because the two voices seldom sing together. For this section Berg composed a bass ostinato that repeats twelve times in sixteen measures, Gershwin a midrange ostinato that repeats nineteen times in twenty-two measures (Appendix 1, no. 8).

The poetic structure of the mock sermons is in both cases a succession of examples that illustrate an initial thesis. In the sermon that George Gershwin commissioned from his brother Ira, *Sporting Life* presents five improbable stories from the Bible as evidence of why "it ain't necessarily so." In *Wozzeck*, the First Apprentice asks rhetorically "Why, then is man?" and answers, "It is good so." He then lists occupations that depend on other human beings: the farmer, the caskmaker, the tailor, the doctor, etc. The sermons are both in 4/4 time and include quarter-note triplet motion, Gershwin pervasively, Berg twice. Berg and Gershwin also create duple syncopations within triplets by adding grace notes to a line that in any case already oscillates between two notes. After listening to the sermon the dancers resume. This event leads in *Wozzeck* to the idiot's omen of death and in *Porgy and Bess*, to Serena shaming the dancers while the orchestra plays an additive rhythmic motive (in the right hand of the piano vocal score) that is related to the rhythmic-chordal motive that accompanies the deaths of Crown and Robbins.

The scenes in which Crown forces sex on Bess and the Drum Major does the same to Marie have some of the closest dramatic parallels between the two operas (Appendix 1, no. 9). Reich's description of this scene's significance in *Wozzeck* befits the situation in *Porgy*: "It is the most important in the development of the plot, for here Marie is seduced by the Drum-Major, an event that is the immediate cause of the conflict and tragic catastrophe."<sup>24</sup> Gershwin's portrayal of Bess succumbing to Crown has numerous points in common with the rapid-paced structure that Berg devised to depict the struggle between the Drum Major and Marie. The indebtedness commences at the outset when Marie and Bess meet their seducers, but is particularly strong at the violent moments when the women desperately attempt to break away. When Marie and the Drum Major start to talk, Berg creates a sense of foreboding by composing the beginning of the scene over a bass line that descends steadily by step, usually a half-step or two, each measure. As shown in Example 4, there are really two descents, one across twenty measures, another over six. Likewise from the moment Bess meets Crown, Gershwin's bass line sinks gradually over forty-one measures, also in two segments, the first of which uses an octatonic scale.

By the end of this section, Berg has arrived at the turning point when Marie tries to defend herself, a pivotal moment that takes longer to reach in *Porgy and Bess*. Thus whereas each segment of Berg's setting has a counterpart in Gershwin's, *Porgy and Bess* also contains a lengthy middle section that has no model in *Wozzeck*. Berg's influence resumes as Bess sings, "Take yo' hands off me," and Marie "Lass mich!" Both

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Andante affettuoso

Example 4a) *Wozzeck*, Act 1, sc. 5, bass line reduction

Example 4b) *Porgy and Bess*, Act 2, sc. 2, bass line reduction

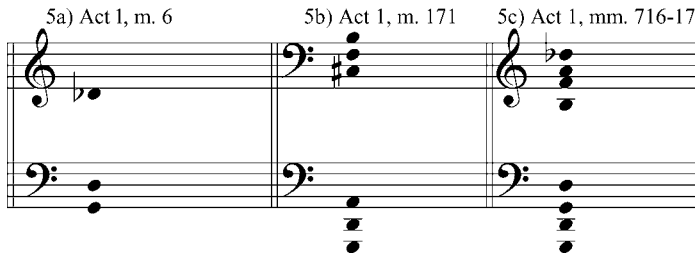
**Example 4.** Example 4a from Berg *WOZZECK* © 1931 by Universal Edition A.G., Vienna. English Translation © 1952 by Alfred A. Kalmus, London, W1. © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G. Vienna. Example 4b from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing.

women enter on high F-sharp, and the intense brief struggles commence. Doubtless symbolic of the women's resistance, Berg and Gershwin follow these exclamations with imitative counterpoint at the third, both writing motives essentially on scale degrees 5 and 1, with four entries over rhythmic chordal pedals. At the moment the women yield, the thirds come together and the texture shifts to a scale of parallel triads accompanied by triplets moving in the same direction. Throughout this section, the musical dimensions are virtually identical: the matching stage directions "Her arms close around him" and "sie stürzt in seine Arme" lead rapidly to exit, curtain fall, and scene end. Gershwin's studious attention to Berg's handling of this dramatic encounter extends, as Example 1 shows, to the arias that follow, where Bess and Marie sing nearly identical motives to express unworthiness and remorse.

## Other Parallels

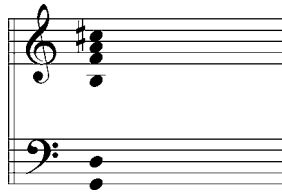
The influence of Willi Reich's commentary is evident in two other Bergian aspects of *Porgy and Bess*: harmony and relative balance of the three acts. Many writers have noted the complexity of Gershwin's harmonic vocabulary in *Porgy and Bess* and in works written in the preceding years. The thickening of dissonance has been attributed to Joseph Schillinger's teachings, but it had begun before then, in the 1920s, about the time Gershwin discovered the music of Stravinsky, Debussy, and Ravel. I agree with David Schiff that in *Porgy and Bess* "the harmony often sounds like Berg's," an assessment that need not be limited to *Wozzeck* but could encompass other works such as the *Lyric Suite*, which Gershwin knew well.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, one chord from *Wozzeck* warrants particular scrutiny, both because of Reich's reference

<sup>25</sup> David Schiff, *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 38.



**Examples 5a, 5b, and 5c) *Wozzeck*, recurring chord**

**Example 5.** From Berg *WOZZECK* © 1931 by Universal Edition A.G., Vienna. English Translation © 1952 by Alfred A. Kalmus, London, W1. © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G. Vienna.



**Example 6a) *Porgy*, recurring chord, Act 1, R11**



**Example 6b) *Porgy*, chord in Act 1, R83 + 2; Act 2, R169; Act 2, R255 + 2**

**Example 6.** From *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing.

to it and because of the use Gershwin made of it. A central sonority in *Wozzeck*, as Allen Forte, George Perle, and others have recognized, is a seventh or ninth chord with an added sharp 4, often spelled as a G-major chord made dissonant with a C-sharp or D-flat. Perle termed this G9 sharp11 chord (also G-flat9 sharp11) the “principal referential chord of the work as a whole.”<sup>26</sup> It begins and ends the first scene and each of the three acts, as shown in Example 5, Act 1, m. 6; m. 171; and the end of Act 1, mm. 716–17. Reich had already labeled this chord the equivalent of a tonal center for the opera, pointing out that Berg made each act “steer its way toward one and the same final chord in a sort of cadence to rest there as on a tonic.”<sup>27</sup>

This chord is also prominent in *Porgy and Bess*, where it often appears spelled on G with a C-sharp or D-flat. Occurring first in the Jasbo Brown Blues that begin Act 1 (Example 6a, Act 1, R11), it returns frequently as the first chord of the motive associated with Crown and death (Example 6b, Act 1, R83+2; Act 2, R169; and Act 2, R255+2).

<sup>26</sup> George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg*, vol. 1, *Wozzeck* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 133; and Forte, “Reflections upon the Gershwin-Berg Connection,” 159.

<sup>27</sup> Reich, “A Guide to *Wozzeck*,” 4.

When this motive accompanies Crown's murdering Robbins and later Porgy's killing Crown, Gershwin transposes the chord to E-flat and A, emphasizing its tritone symmetries. Granted, Gershwin and other composers had discovered this chord before *Porgy and Bess*, and it can also be related to the Petrushka chord, which Gershwin had used years earlier in *An American in Paris* (1928).<sup>28</sup> But the influence of Berg lies as much in the use of the chord as in the actual notes. While it is not "the principal referential chord" of the opera—that distinction goes instead to the fourth chord that begins and ends the opera and many individual scenes—it turns up at many of the opera's most dramatic moments.

Reich also discussed the relative length of the acts and something of their ABA formal relationship to each other: "The first and third acts reveal definite structural parallels. [They are] shorter by far than the weightier middle act. . . . While the second act. . . is a completely integrated musical structure from the last to the first measure, the form of the first and third is much freer."<sup>29</sup> In comparison, the middle act of *Porgy and Bess* is the longest and has the most arias and duets (nine), and Acts 1 and 3 have structural parallels, including a return to the opening music near the end. As Lawrence Starr remarked, "Scene 1 of the last act presents a recapitulation of the most important, and directly associated, musical and dramatic ideas presented in scene 1 of the first act."<sup>30</sup> These outer acts have as well a greater percentage of recitative-like and arioso passages.

The model of Berg may have extended beyond the actual writing of the opera. Once the performances had begun, Gershwin pursued two promotional steps that Berg had taken before him: a public written statement of his goals in composing *Porgy and Bess*, and an orchestral suite of excerpts from the opera. Berg had written a brief account of what he had hoped to achieve with *Wozzeck*, an essay published in English as "A Word about *Wozzeck*."<sup>31</sup> Berg, motivated by a desire to answer critics, denied accusations that he had attempted to reform "the structure of opera."<sup>32</sup> Several key points that Berg makes in this essay find echoes in the short explanatory article Gershwin contributed to the *New York Times*.<sup>33</sup> Self-conscious modernists that they both were, they emphasized the newness of their achievements while at the same time qualifying that claim to avoid any suggestion that they had created novelty for novelty's sake.

Berg: "The appearance of these forms in opera was to some degree unusual, even new. Nevertheless novelty, pathbreaking, was not my conscious intention."

<sup>28</sup> On Gershwin's use of the Petrushka chord, see Forte, "Reflections Upon the Gershwin-Berg Connection," 161–62.

<sup>29</sup> Reich, "A Guide to *Wozzeck*," 4.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Starr, "Toward a Reevaluation of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*," *American Music* 2/1 (Spring 1984): 32.

<sup>31</sup> Alban Berg, "A Word about *Wozzeck*," *Modern Music* (1927); repr. as a postscript to Reich, "A Guide to *Wozzeck*," 20–21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> "Rhapsody in Catfish Row: Mr. Gershwin Tells the Origin and Scheme for His Music in That New Folk Opera Called 'Porgy and Bess,'" *New York Times*, 20 October 1935; repr. in Armitage, *George Gershwin*, 72–77.



Gershwin: "[*Porgy and Bess*] brings to the operatic form elements that have never appeared in opera. . . . If, in doing this, I have created a new form, which combines opera with theatre, this new form has come quite naturally out of the material."

And they both assert their goal of writing "good" music that was music "for the theater."

Berg: "I simply wanted to compose good music. . . . Other than that. . . my only intention. . . was to give to the theater what belongs to the theater."

Gershwin: "I am not ashamed of writing songs at any time so long as they are good songs. In *Porgy and Bess* I realized I was writing an opera for the theatre."

More important than the similarity of the individual thoughts expressed here is the unprecedented step—for Gershwin—of answering his critics publicly, a step he may have taken in the awareness that Berg had also responded in print to journalistic criticism.

Berg's precedent is important as well for the orchestral suite based on the opera. As Berg assembled three concert excerpts from *Wozzeck*, the *Drei Bruchstücke aus "Wozzeck,"* so Gershwin also extracted several numbers as an orchestral composition, which he never published, however. He titled this five-movement composition "Suite from *Porgy and Bess*," incorporating many of the segments he had cut from the Boston and New York performances, such as the "Jasbo Brown Blues" leading in to "Summertime," portions of the fugue and hurricane music, and the children's chorus.<sup>34</sup> These sections are all among those that had been modeled on *Wozzeck*. Johnson has noted that Gershwin passed up an opportunity to cobble together a medley of the most popular hits from the opera, instead unconventionally selecting many of the more intellectually challenging passages: "The unusual shape of the *Suite* suggests that he had particularly strong feelings about this material."<sup>35</sup> For his *Suite*, which was likely inspired in part by Berg's example, Gershwin drew together some of his most Bergian moments.

Gershwin's numerous debts to Berg's music necessitate a reevaluation of what Gershwin might have learned at the hands of New York City's composition guru, Joseph Schillinger. Many stylistic details that have been presumed to originate in study sessions with Schillinger can now also be attributed to the example of Berg, not only the music of *Wozzeck* but also that of the *Lyric Suite*. In an article reviewing the claims of Schillinger's influence on *Porgy and Bess*, Paul Nauert concludes that the evidence for Gershwin's debt to Schillinger was strongest "in the cyclic harmony of 'Gone, Gone, Gone' and the elaborate rhythmic patterning of 'Leavin' for the Promise' Lan.'" Other moments, such as the fugue, the additive chords leading up to "Summertime," and various rhythmic devices also have possible sources in Schillinger's method.<sup>36</sup> But if Gershwin studied *Wozzeck* closely enough

<sup>34</sup> See Johnson, "Gershwin's 'American Folk Opera,'" vol. 2, 597–99. This work has been known as the "*Catfish Row Suite*" since Ira Gershwin gave it that name in 1958.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 598.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Nauert, "Theory and Practice in *Porgy and Bess*: The Gershwin-Schillinger Connection," *The Musical Quarterly* 78/1 (Spring 1994): 9–33. See also Warren Brodsky, "Joseph Schillinger (1895–1943): Music Science Promethean," *American Music* 21 (2003): 45–73.

to learn from his structural designs, then surely Berg offers an alternative, or more likely a complementary, source for many of the ideas usually credited to Schillinger.<sup>37</sup> Schillinger's attraction for Gershwin may have been enhanced by the obvious overlap in Berg's style and Schillinger's system, a possibility that Forte has also suspected: "Gershwin hoped his studies with Schillinger might bring him closer to the kind of modern concert music he so obviously admired in the works of Berg."<sup>38</sup> Gershwin's aspirations to compose with an American voice that was the technical equal of his European contemporaries (or his European-educated American contemporaries) predated his studies with Schillinger by many years; these aspirations are also not the result of his 1928 pilgrimage to Europe in the hopes of studying with Ravel or Berg. Rather it was his fascination with dissonant counterpoint and modernist rhythmic patterns that led him first to Berg and subsequently to Schillinger.

For much of *Porgy*, Gershwin had no need to ask what Berg had done before him. Because he was setting English rather than German, because he needed to draw on American popular and folk musical forms rather than on German forms, Gershwin had nothing to learn from Berg about melody and text setting. In these areas he was already an acknowledged master. The examples that I have presented here suggest that Gershwin carefully studied Berg's approach to scene construction (i.e., how to integrate a song into an evolving, ongoing musical context), and his techniques of unification across great stretches of time (i.e., how to repeat ideas, whether motives or larger units). He turned to *Wozzeck* for musical guidance at several dramatically significant moments of the opera. The murder of Robbins, the drowning of Jake, the lullaby and its reprises, the abductions of Bess and Marie, the fugue and crap game music, and several other events all derive details of structure from *Wozzeck*. That some of these moments had not existed in either Heyward's novel *Porgy* or the subsequent play further suggests that Gershwin considered these elements to have been particularly effective. The mock sermon in *Porgy and Bess* has no precedent in the Heyward play *Porgy*, nor do the multiple repetitions of the lullaby or the importance of children (and children's chorus) at the end. For these and for numerous musical details, Berg was Gershwin's model.

Corroboration for this conclusion comes from two previously uncited sources: a recollection by William Rosar and an interview with Gershwin. First, a secondhand

<sup>37</sup> Among these are the following: the additive fourth chords preceding "Summertime" appear in *Wozzeck* (I, mm. 621–23) over a similar syncopated rhythm; chromatic wedges with outer voices spreading outward by half step are common in both, but the first instances in each opera share numerous pitches (*Porgy and Bess*, I, sc. 1, beginning at R7+1; and *Wozzeck*, I, mm. 252–56); also occurring frequently, rhythmic deceleration (or acceleration) in which note values increase (or decrease) incrementally, as when triplet sixteenths slow to triplet eighths and then to a pair of eighth notes (e.g., *Porgy and Bess*, I, sc. 2, R187–2; and *Wozzeck*, I, m. 711); what Schillinger calls "interference between melodic grouping and attack rhythm," a technique present in both operas in a variety of disjunct patterns, as when a four-note melodic figure repeats within a rhythmic sextuplet pattern, so that the attack-point continually shifts within the pattern (e.g., *Porgy and Bess*, II, sc. 4, R238+5; and *Wozzeck*, III, mm. 278–79); and complex metric textures, as triplet sixteenths against thirty-second notes grouped in fours (e.g., *Porgy and Bess*, I, sc. 1, beginning at R108–1; and *Wozzeck*, III, beginning at m. 90. In this case there are other links of motive and pattern, including their graphic representation on three staves in the piano-vocal score).

<sup>38</sup> Forte, "Reflections," 164.

report from Rosar, a scholar of film music and an acquaintance of Edward B. "Eddie" Powell, a Hollywood orchestrator who was a confidant of Gershwin's during the period in which Gershwin began to compose *Porgy and Bess*. In the 1930s Powell, along with Gershwin, was a student of Joseph Schillinger, and also according to Rosar, the person Gershwin hired to orchestrate his musical *Let 'Em Eat Cake*.<sup>39</sup> Rosar also claims that Gershwin wanted Powell to orchestrate *Porgy* for him as well, but that Powell instead went to Hollywood in summer 1934 when he was offered work there by Eddie Cantor. Decades later Rosar and Powell went together to a performance of *Porgy and Bess* that the Houston Grand Opera staged in Los Angeles on 18 June 1977. Based on notes Rosar made immediately after this performance, Rosar remembers Powell saying that Gershwin "wanted to write it like *Wozzeck*, an American *Wozzeck*." Rosar's communication to me needs to be quoted more fully:

Going over my notes just now, I finally remembered Powell's exact words with respect to *Porgy*: "He [Gershwin] wanted to write it like *Wozzeck*, an American *Wozzeck*." I remember how perplexed I was by that. In fact, I didn't believe him, because I remembered reading how Gershwin boasted that he was influenced by Ravel and Debussy in writing *An American in Paris*, but, as someone commented, for all intents and purposes the influence was imperceptible, and it just seemed like Gershwin was name-dropping.<sup>40</sup>

Rosar's recollection, it must be noted, is secondhand information with a presumed lapse of forty or more years between Gershwin's alleged comment to Powell (their discussion would have taken place either in 1933 before Powell left New York or a few years later in Los Angeles) and then an additional twenty-seven years between Powell's statement to Rosar and Rosar's e-mail to me. Whether or not Rosar has remembered Powell's exact words—and after so many years that hardly seems likely—the import of Powell's revelation was memorable because its claim was so improbable; and it is credible both because it accurately describes the relationship of *Porgy and Bess* to *Wozzeck* and because of Gershwin's documented esteem for Berg and *Wozzeck*.

Second, buttressing our knowledge of Gershwin's high regard for Berg in general and *Wozzeck* in particular is an overlooked interview with Gershwin that took place on 19 June 1928, immediately upon Gershwin's return from Europe. The interview was reported the very next day in the *New York Morning Telegraph*, under a headline that is extraordinary because it already refers to Berg as an opera composer: "Gershwin Finds Great Opera Artist," and, in smaller print, "Returning on Majestic Composer Tells of Thrills Abroad."<sup>41</sup> The article begins:

<sup>39</sup> Powell's own interest in Berg at the time (communicated to me by William Rosar) may explain an observation about the orchestration of *Let 'Em Eat Cake* made by Robert Kimball and Alfred Simon in *The Gershwins* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 155: "The *Let 'Em Eat Cake* overture [1933] is particularly adventurous, recalling in its opening some of the orchestral color and near-atonal harmonies of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*." My thanks to Richard Crawford for calling this to my attention.

<sup>40</sup> William Rosar to the author, 24 November 2004. I am indebted to Rosar for a series of e-mails about Powell and Gershwin. Rosar has already written about what Powell and Gershwin may have learned from Joseph Schillinger; see his letter to the editor of *The Musical Quarterly* 80/1 (Spring 1996): 182–84.

<sup>41</sup> *Morning Telegraph*, 20 June 1928, 1. My thanks to Lawrence Stewart for his transcription of this 1928 article.

Like a chap who first has seen the wonders of Paris and its mysteries came George Gershwin yesterday on the steamer *Majestic*. He said he had the time of his life, meeting everybody in music.

When he was asked about how he felt at Paris, when the concerto [in F] was played with orchestra, he said that Dimetri [*sic*] Tiomkin had been wonderful, first in arranging for the performance with Goltschmann conducting, and then in the way he had played it. In the second movement, he said that he had a thrill when he heard how beautifully the woodwinds and brasses played.

In other words, Gershwin was more excited by the way Tiomkin had played and the orchestra had worked than he was about George Gershwin being heard at the Paris Opera.

There was no affectation about this. It was the real artist.

Then he glowingly told of the discovery he had made abroad. He had found a great composer! Alban Berg is his name, a pupil of Schoenberg, and the composer of an opera, but more particularly of a new string “Lyric Quartette.” He went all over Europe talking about Berg and he will continue to do so in America. Already he has interested Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, to play some works of Berg.

The significance of the last paragraph is twofold: Gershwin knew of *Wozzeck* and admired it long before beginning studies with Schillinger; and Gershwin’s attendance at the Philadelphia premiere of *Wozzeck* was spurred by more than idle curiosity. He may have been the first to urge Stokowski to perform it.<sup>42</sup>

What does Gershwin’s desire to compose an “American *Wozzeck*” mean for how we interpret the many points of correspondence? A few years before beginning *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin described how he learned to compose songs, and his remarks from 1930 suggest that his emulation of *Wozzeck* was primarily pedagogical: “I learned to write music by studying the most successful songs published. At nineteen I could write a song that sounded so much like Jerome Kern that he wouldn’t know whether he or I had written it. But imitation can only go so far. The young songwriter may start by imitating a successful composer he admires, but he must break away as soon as he has learned the maestro’s strong points and technique.”<sup>43</sup> What served a young songwriter in his teens worked as well for a novice composer embarking on his first opera. Indeed, despite the quantity and subtlety of Gershwin’s musical debts, relatively few of them may be considered musical allusions. If an allusion were simply an intentional reference to another work made by means of a resemblance, then all of Gershwin’s references to *Wozzeck* would qualify, because the scope is sufficient to indicate that they are the result of Gershwin’s knowledge of Berg’s piano vocal score. But an allusion is also a reference made with the intention of shaping the meaning conveyed to any who recognize the reference. Both the intent to shape meaning and the expectation of writing for an audience are important conditions. Relatively few of Gershwin’s debts to *Wozzeck* easily satisfy these criteria.<sup>44</sup> When Bess sings “I wants to stay

<sup>42</sup> But he was not the last. Barry Brisk reports that Stokowski’s assistant conductor Sylvan Levin claims credit for suggesting to Stokowski that he stage *Wozzeck*. It is easy enough to imagine that both Gershwin and Levin, and perhaps others as well, independently lobbied Stokowski on behalf of Berg. See Brisk, “Leopold Stokowski and *Wozzeck*,” 71.

<sup>43</sup> Gershwin, “Making Music,” in the New York *Sunday World Magazine*, 4 May 1930; repr. in *Gershwin in His Time: A Biographical Scrapbook, 1919–1937*, ed. Gregory R. Suriano (New York: Gramercy Books, 1998), 77.

<sup>44</sup> See Christopher Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion: Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). I elaborate on this definition on pp. 5–7.

here, but I ain't worthy," the context and the audibility of the motive make it a straightforward allusion to Marie's motive at "Bin ich ein schlecht Mensch" (shown in Example 1). There is an audience—however small—capable of recognizing this allusion and enjoying Gershwin's wit. But is this also true of the first lullaby (including its preparation and the music which follows it) or of the scene in which Crown assaults Bess, both of them scenes with extended parallels in *Wozzeck*?

There are other instances of influence and indebtedness in *Porgy and Bess* that can be brought to bear on this question. Two non-motivic debts have already been mentioned: the cries of the Strawberry Woman that many recognized early on as influenced by an analogous moment in Charpentier's *Louise*; and the crap game fugue, which Johnson has compared to Wagner's fight fugue in *Die Meistersinger*. That neither involves motives or themes is irrelevant for the question of allusion, because motives are but one means of marking a resemblance; similarities of musical structure and dramatic moment convey enough information for listeners to note the resemblance and to assess the significance of that resemblance for their interpretation. It is reasonable to conclude in both of these cases that Gershwin makes assimilative allusions to the earlier works, that he accepts the meanings and the authority of Charpentier's cries and Wagner's fugue and creates moments similar enough for others to make the connection.

Two additional references have not been recognized previously. Both, like these just discussed, are strongly assimilative, one of them close enough in motive to be considered a quotation. Among Eastwood Lane's *Five American Dances for Piano* is one titled "The Crap Shooters: A Negro Dance."<sup>45</sup> The main theme of this dance provided Gershwin with a model for the beginning of his crap game theme, for the three measures that precede the Bergian motive he also presents in retrograde. As shown in Example 7, these measures compare closely in key (C minor and E-flat major), in tempo, and in dynamic (*piano*). The motive is a syncopated sixteenth-note figure that occurs three times. As in the allusions to Charpentier and Wagner, Gershwin's music adheres to the original association, in this case, a crap game. That Gershwin knew of Eastwood Lane (1879–1951) is beyond question. Lane also resided in Manhattan, working as a pianist, composer, and from 1914 to 1935, as an assistant director at the Wanamaker Auditorium concerts. Paul Whiteman performed several of Lane's works, including three arranged by Ferde Grofé at a Carnegie Hall concert on 17 November 1924 that featured the *Rhapsody in Blue* with Gershwin at the piano. The next day the critic of the *New York Times*, Olin Downes, lambasted this concert because, arriving late, he had missed Lane's pieces, which he had particularly wanted to hear.<sup>46</sup>

The other motivic debt, almost a quotation, is to Alfred Newman's film score for the King Vidor film *Street Scene* (1931). A faithful rendition of Elmer Rice's Pulitzer Prize-winning play from 1929, *Street Scene* takes place in a run-down Manhattan

<sup>45</sup> Eastwood Lane, *Five American Dances for Piano* (New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1919).

<sup>46</sup> Don Rayno, *Paul Whiteman: Pioneer in American Music, 1890–1930*, vol. 1 (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 100, 103, and 398. See Olin Downes's choleric review in the *New York Times*, 16 November 1924, 30. Much of this review is quoted in Rayno, *Paul Whiteman*, 103.

**Lively and well accented**

**Example 7a) Eastwood Lane, "The Crap Shooters: A Negro Dance," mm. 1-3**

All throw down money.  
**Moderato con moto** ♩ = 132

**Example 7b) Porgy, Act 1, R91, beginning of crap game theme**

**Example 7.** Example 7a from *Five American Dances*, by Eastwood Lane. © 1919 J. Fischer, New York. Example 7b from *Porgy & Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and DuBose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing.

brownstone during the heat of summer. It depicts working-class life in New York City in the kind of unglamorous, unsentimentalized light that ten years later came to typify film noir. A woman's affair leads to a bloody end when her alcoholic husband returns home unexpectedly and shoots her and her lover dead. After directing several Gershwin shows on Broadway during the 1920s, Newman composed the Gershwinesque score for *Street Scene* soon after he moved to Hollywood in 1930 to become director of music for United Artists. His score became as successful as the film itself, appearing soon in an arrangement for piano,<sup>47</sup> subsequently as an orchestral composition called "Sentimental Rhapsody," and then recycled in other movies. The bluesy principal theme of the movie and the piano arrangement is very close to the main theme of Porgy's imposing Act 2 love duet with Bess, "Bess, You Is My Woman Now" (Examples 8a and b). Both are primarily in D major, in 4/4 and marked by Newman *Quasi Andante* and by Gershwin both as *Andante cantabile* (in the full score) and *Andantino cantabile* (in the piano vocal-score).<sup>48</sup> As in his allusion to Eastwood Lane's composition, the text of the allusive source provides fertile imagery for interpreting the parallel context of the motive's use

<sup>47</sup> Alfred Newman, *Street Scene* (New York: Robbins Music Corporation, 1933).

<sup>48</sup> Thanks again to Wayne Shirley for information about the full score. Gershwin's text, which was not present in the Heyward play or novel and was written primarily by his brother Ira, may also allude to *Street Scene*. The phrase "Mornin' time an' ev'nin' time," is set to a falling fifth with repetitions on the lower note, a motive that Newman uses as his first contrasting theme; moreover, the film is also organized around different times of day, an organization reflected in the piano arrangement by the parenthetical designations "Morning," "Afternoon," and "Night." For an analysis of the duet, see Lawrence Starr, "Gershwin's 'Bess, You Is My Woman Now': The Sophistication and Subtlety of a Great Tune," *The Musical Quarterly* 72/4 (1986): 429–48.



Quasi andante

*p*

*poco rit. rubato*

*a tempo*

The score is for a piano accompaniment in D major. It begins with a tempo marking of 'Quasi andante' and a dynamic of 'p'. The music features a melodic line in the right hand with some triplet figures and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The tempo changes to 'poco rit. rubato' and then back to 'a tempo'.

8a) Alfred Newman, *Street Scene*, main theme

98

Tempo I. molto cantabile

BESS

Por - gy, I's yo' wo - man now,

*mf* più espressivo

The score shows a vocal line for Bess and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is 'Tempo I. molto cantabile'. The vocal line has the lyrics 'Por - gy, I's yo' wo - man now,'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'mf più espressivo' and features a complex harmonic texture with many chords and moving lines in both hands.

8b) *Porgy*, Act 2, R98, at return of main theme in D major

**Example 8.** Example 8a from *Street Scene*, by Alfred Newman. © 1933 Robbins Music Corporation. Example 8b from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin. © 1935 (Renewed 1962) George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, and Dubose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund Publishing.

within *Porgy and Bess*. Certainly the association lends a perilous, foreboding tinge to the love duet that fits well with the expectations that Dubose Heyward's narrative has already created. We know, after all (or at least can surmise), that Bess will soon enough be singing a duet with Crown, and that murder will follow.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast to these few assimilative allusions, most of the structural debts listed in Appendix 1 show no indication of being designed to affect how a sensitive listener might interpret individual scenes in *Porgy and Bess*. On the contrary, evidence of Gershwin's attempts to obscure his indebtedness abounds, but lies chiefly in his avoidance of motivic or thematic references. When Robert Schumann devised allusions that distanced themselves from the original by careful variation of dynamics, tempo, meter, character, and the like, he did so to create contrastive allusions, allusions that allowed for an ironic or other oppositional reading.<sup>50</sup> There is little comparable evident in Gershwin's efforts to distance *Porgy* from *Wozzeck*, with the result that, taken one by one, the indebted moments and scenes in *Porgy and Bess* often do not strike me as allusive—at least, individually. There is nothing in Berg's sermon that leads me to a different interpretation of Gershwin's; nothing in Berg's Lullaby that will make one hear Gershwin's in a different light; nothing in the drowning in *Wozzeck* that alters the impact of that in *Porgy*.

<sup>49</sup> Among other potential sources of influence, the African American dialect songs of Lily Strickland, a South Carolinian, seem particularly close to Gershwin's style, particularly in the recitative-like sections.

<sup>50</sup> See Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, chap. 4, "Contrastive Allusions."

But on a global level, the effect of scene after indebted scene creates a different impression. The allusive sum is greater than that of its component parts. Although Carolyn Abbate's analysis of Debussy's debt to *Tristan und Isolde* addresses a different degree of dependence, it is still relevant: "It [*Tristan*] was manipulated by the composer to become a sort of hidden commentary on *Pelléas*, and thereby became more than merely an obvious model for the later opera."<sup>51</sup> A "hidden commentary" is too much to claim for the bond between Gershwin's *Porgy* and Berg's *Wozzeck*, less for the greater distance between the musical languages than for an important distinction between the intended audiences. Debussy could assume that many, if not most, of his listeners would know Wagner's operas, and Gershwin, writing for a less classically literate public, wrote for an audience that would have virtually no knowledge of Berg's music. The audiences for the two operas, culturally separate for several generations, have only recently begun to overlap. Also, I have the impression that at least in some of his Berg-inspired moments, Gershwin did aim to create a contrastive statement, one that he articulated in his *New York Times* essay. Implicitly contrasting American opera and culture with European, Gershwin stressed the role of humor: "Humor is an important part of American life, and an American opera without humor could not possibly run the gamut of American expression."<sup>52</sup> As with the mock sermon, the Banjo Song "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" can be heard as a lighthearted counterpart to a grimly significant moment in *Wozzeck*, namely, Wozzeck's aria "Wir arme Leut." An anguished cry, this "air" has a text that begins with a declaration of poverty ("Poor folk like us! Money, you see, Sir, money! With no money . . ."), shifts to an argument about how easy it is for wealthy people to be virtuous ("If I were a gentleman, Sir, and wore a top hat . . ."), and concludes with a bleak prophecy that even in heaven poor people will have it hard: "But I'm only a simple soul. Folk like us always are unfortunate in this world and the other world! I think if we got into heaven, we'd have to be thunder-makers."<sup>53</sup> Porgy's ode to pennilessness could not be more different. Porgy happily admits his state ("Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin', An' nuttin's plenty fo' me"), then pities the fate of wealthy people who necessarily live in fear ("De folks wid plenty o' plenty got a lock on dey door/Seems wid plenty you sure got to worry how to keep de debble away"), and concludes with his own view of life in heaven: "I got my gal, got my song, got Hebben de whole day long. No use complainin'!" Nothing in the music signals this allusion. Only in the context of the other similarities is it possible to suggest that Berg inspired both Gershwin's, George and Ira.

It is no surprise that Gershwin created a work billed as an American folk opera by lifting ideas from a quintessentially Germanic opera: first because by the 1930s the lines of artistic influence had long been crossing the Atlantic in both directions; and second because Gershwin had from the beginning of his education been schooled in European traditions. Louis Gruenberg, among others, was also attempting to mix black music with musical innovations from Europe (*The Daniel Jazz* and

<sup>51</sup> Carolyn Abbate, "Tristan in the Composition of *Pelléas*," *19th-Century Music* 5/2 (1981): 141.

<sup>52</sup> George Gershwin, "Rhapsody in Catfish Row," *New York Times*, 20 October 1935; repr. in Armitage, *George Gershwin*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> This translation is by Eric Blackall and Vida Harford, from Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*, English National Opera Guide 42 (London: J. Calder, 1990), 62–63.

*The Creation* are both written for a modified *Pierrot* ensemble in the immediate aftermath of Gruenberg conducting the New York premiere of *Pierrot Lunaire*. Gershwin's friend Isaac Goldberg broached this issue when he described Gershwin's special musical position in this country. "As Gershwin does not 'condescend' to popular music, neither does he 'aspire' to the higher forms; music, to him, is music."<sup>54</sup> Goldberg's then commonplace equation of 'low' with popular and 'high' with serious might be paraphrased: because Gershwin does not condescend to American music, neither does he aspire to European music. In light of Gershwin's dependence on Berg, it seems more accurate to say that Gershwin esteemed both American popular and European art music for different reasons. As his ambitions as a "composer" evolved (as distinct from his identity as a "songwriter"), so did his aspirations to be worthy of comparison to the likes of Ravel and Berg. *Porgy and Bess* is evidence that Gershwin believed a European post-Wagnerian voice was essential to tell the story of African Americans in South Carolina properly. Because *Porgy and Bess* is, as Raymond Knapp put it, "at bottom a story told *by* whites and *for* whites," the European voice is inevitable. Because the Gershwins and the Heywards were white, the novel and the opera were quickly criticized by African Americans for engaging in racial stereotyping, a criticism that Gruenberg also experienced in his setting of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1933).<sup>55</sup> Against these accusations Berg's opera offered Gershwin no protection, no model. The poor and destitute of Buechner's tale were culturally and racially indistinct from author and composer; thus Berg faced no charges of condescension or cultural appropriation.

Gershwin aimed to write music that would survive, as he stated unambiguously in his 1935 *New York Times* essay on *Porgy and Bess*. "I chose the form I have used for *Porgy and Bess* because I believe that music lives only when it is in serious form. When I wrote the *Rhapsody in Blue* I took 'blues' and put them in a larger and more serious form. That was twelve years ago and the *Rhapsody in Blue* is still very much alive, whereas if I had taken the same themes and put them in songs they would have been gone years ago."<sup>56</sup> The notion that music that "lives" only when it is serious was for Gershwin a long-held belief. He had expressed virtually the same thought five years earlier: "An entire composition written in jazz could not live," and also "the only kinds of music which endure are those which possess form in the universal sense and folk music. All else dies."<sup>57</sup>

Here in one sentence is Gershwin's explanation of why *Porgy and Bess* can be at once an American folk opera *and* an American *Wozzeck*. Only by combining American folk content with "form in the universal sense" could he create a music that he felt would endure. Charles Hamm, discussing the problems of creating an image of Gershwin that goes beyond the protective biographical accounts of family

<sup>54</sup> Isaac Goldberg, *George Gershwin and American Music: From Tin Pan Alley to Opera House and Symphony Hall* (Girard, Kans.: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1936), 27.

<sup>55</sup> Knapp, *The American Musical*, 196. David Metzler discusses representations of race in Gruenberg's opera in "A Wall of Darkness Dividing the World': Blackness and Whiteness in Louis Gruenberg's *The Emperor Jones*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7/1 (March 1995): 55–72.

<sup>56</sup> George Gershwin, "Rhapsody in Catfish Row," *New York Times*, 20 October 1935; repr. in Armitage, *George Gershwin*, 74.

<sup>57</sup> Gershwin, "The Composer in the Machine Age," 267 and 266.

friends and acquaintances, also cited Gershwin's *New York Times* article on *Porgy* as well as his essay on "The Composer in the Mechanical Age," concluding that "nothing more than these tantalizing scraps of information are available to help us reconstruct Gershwin's ideology."<sup>58</sup> But a score the size of *Porgy and Bess* reveals a great deal about the ideals and methods of its composer: one who found inspiration in Berg, Wagner, Charpentier, and Ravel, as well as composers such as Eastwood Lane and Alfred Newman; who carefully studied a variety of black American musics; who found no contradiction in juxtaposing the learned written contrapuntal techniques of the musical avant-garde and the sophisticated oral contrapuntal practices of unschooled descendants of slaves; who believed with many on the political left that the plight of the dispossessed was worthy material for an opera. Evident in all is a belief that musical assimilations of this magnitude were a fitting expression of an American culture of assimilation.

## Appendix 1

### *Comparison of Musical Parallels Between Porgy and Bess and Wozzeck*

The events are ordered according to their appearance in *Porgy and Bess*. Locations within the piano-vocal scores are specified by rehearsal number in *Porgy* and by measure number in *Wozzeck*.

<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	<b>Wozzeck</b>
<p>1. I, sc. 1 (R17–24): Clara's Lullaby follows Jasbo Brown Blues (cut C) with onstage piano, music crescendos from <i>p</i> to <i>ff</i> introduction begins 13 (9) mm. before lullaby first note prepared 6 mm. intro ends with 2 high notes played by bells (and piano) opening chords similar/same (Forte) varied repeat after 17 mm. ends with chromatic descent in orch and choir instr. coda based on beginning motive 4 statements (1+1+2 shortened, elided) leads to first "fight" (death) motive; interrupted lengthy period without formal schemes</p> <p>2. I, sc. 1 (at R51–54): Clara's Lullaby reprise first note prepared 1½ mm. one verse only sung against active counterpoint baby does not fall asleep</p> <p>3a. I, sc. 1 (at R91–127), "Fantasy" and Fugue Crap game "fantasy" on 2 fugue themes includes Crown motive</p>	<p>I, sc. 3 (372–416): Marie's Lullaby follows military march (4/4) with onstage band, music crescendos from <i>pp</i> to <i>fff</i> introduction begins 9 mm. before lullaby first note prepared 7 mm. intro ends with 2 high notes played by celesta opening chords similar/same (Forte) varied repeat after 16 mm. ends with chromatic descent in orchestra instr. coda based on beginning motive 4 statements (1+1+2 shortened, elided) leads to first "Marie's Aimless Waiting" (death) motive; interrupted lengthy period without formal schemes</p> <p>II, sc. 1 (43–59): Marie's Lullaby reprise first note prepared 2½ mm. one verse only sung against active counterpoint baby does not fall asleep</p> <p>II, sc. 2 (171–285), Fantasia and Fugue Fantasia on 3 fugue themes includes Hauptmann motive</p>

<sup>58</sup> Hamm, "Towards a New Reading of Gershwin," in *The Gershwin Style: New Looks at the Music of George Gershwin*, 10.

- Crap game motive resembles Hauptmann motive and is scored for Eng. horn  
 254 mm. (mostly 2/4)  
 fugue preceded by 6 mm. pedal  
 which intensifies to M7 (D–C-sharp)  
 with a sung m2 (E-flat) above pedal
- 3b. "Fight" Fugue (at R127–45) = 111 mm. of 2/4  
 "fantasy" and fugue on same motives  
 "fantasy" includes counterpoint by inversion  
 on Crown motive
4. I, sc. 1 (at R118–R118 + 3) motivic allusion  
 Triadic recitative over G-major triad  
 Triad lasts 4 mm. of 4/4  
 Porgy prays for craps win  
 Line steps down from B–F-sharp  
 B-flats on triplets  
 Dynamics: *fp*  
 marked "*colla parte*"
5. I, sc. 1 (at R139+4 –144): Murder of Robbin  
 low pedal (C-sharp–D) for 24 mm.  
 after Crown kills Robbins
6. I, sc. 1 (at R145–48): bass ostinato  
 15 mm. under a dialogue  
 moderate tempo (*Andante con moto*)  
 ostinato scored for strings
7. II, sc. 1 (beginning–R1): imitative motive  
 G, D, F, E-flat, E, B-flat (5 of 6 notes = identical)  
 returns (at R6–12), (at R 61–63)  
 Canonic entries at minor third (G, B-flat, D, E)  
 at first appearance, last notes held
8. II, sc. 2 (begin): Mock Sermon and Context  
 Dance, African drums (beginning of scene—R129)  
 Chorus and Dance (at R129–131)  
 Chorus and Dance (at R131–32)  
 in 5/4 ("Ha da da")  
 Mock Sermon (at R132–137 + 13)  
 4/4 with triplet quarter notes (*passim*)  
 duplets in triplets with grace notes (R137)  
 Dance continues (R137)  
 Serena shames "wicked chillen of the devil"  
 (at R137 + 14)
9. II, sc. 2: Crown abducts Bess  
 (at R145–150 + 7, beginning):  
 duet over stepwise descending bass
- \* \* \*
- (at R165–70+4, scene end):  
 Bess from high F-sharp: "Take yo' hands off me"  
 6 mm.: canon at m3 over G pedal  
 4 entries  
 Bess yields: ascending parallel triads  
 9 mm.: last lines of dialogue
- Hauptmann motive with Eng. horn  
 115 mm. (mostly 3/4 and 4/4)  
 fugue preceded by 3 mm. pedal  
 which intensifies to M7 (A–G-sharp)  
 with a sung m2 (B-flat) above pedal
- Fugue (286–362) = 60 mm. of 4/4  
 fantasy and fugue on same motives  
 fugue includes counterpoint by inversion  
 on Hauptmann motive
- II, sc. 1 (116–23)  
 Triadic recitative over C-major triad  
 Triad lasts 8 mm. of 2/4  
 Wozzeck hands Marie his wages  
 Line steps down from B–D-sharp  
 B-flats on triplets  
 Dynamics: sudden shift from *fff-pp*  
 marked "*ganz frei im Takt*"
- III, sc. 2 (97–121): Murder of Marie  
 low pedal (B) for 25 mm.  
 as and after Wozzeck kills Marie
- II, sc. 4 (589–605): bass ostinato  
 16 mm. under a dialogue  
 moderate tempo (*Mässig*)  
 ostinato scored for strings
- III, sc. 1 (3–7): imitative motive  
 G, D, F, E-flat, G, B-flat  
 returns (10–13), and at Fugue (52–57)  
 Fugal entries on G, E-flat, G, B-flat  
 at first appearance, last notes held
- II, sc. 4: Mock Sermon and Context  
 Dance, stage band (480–559)  
 Chorus (560–89) 7/4 ("Halli, Hallo")  
 Dance (589–603) over duet in 5/4
- Mock Sermon (605–35)  
 C, triplet quarter notes (606–8, 618)  
 duplets in triplets, grace notes (621–2)  
 Dance continues (650–84)  
 Idiot smells blood and foretells death  
 (665–68)
- I, sc. 5: Drum Major abducts Marie  
 (667–93, scene beginning):  
 duet over stepwise descending bass
- (692–717, scene end):  
 Marie from high F-sharp: "Lass mich!"  
 5½ mm.: imitation at M3 over F-sharp  
 pedal 4 entries
- 10 mm.: last lines of dialogue  
 Marie yields: descending parallel triads

- exit into woods: 6 mm. (2/4) to curtain  
5 mm. from curtain to end of scene
10. II, sc. 3 (R210–212ff): Bess’s remorse  
Bess: “I wants to stay here, but  
I ain’t worthy” (F–A–C–E–G)
11. II, sc. 3 (at R224–29): Hurricane, Jake drowns  
Begins four-note chromaticisms  
Climax on six-note chromaticisms  
Clara speaks over orchestra  
Preceded by 7 mm. pedal on E  
and migrating ostinato (up a m3)  
4 statements (1+1+2 shortened)  
under last sung lines before drowning
12. II, sc. 4 (at R240–43): Clara’s Lullaby reprise  
preceded by 3 mm. pedal on first note  
Follows musical depiction of wind  
wind music continues in lullaby  
and resumes at end
13. III, sc. 1 (at R18–21): Clara’s Lullaby reprise  
Sung by Bess  
Follows death of Clara  
As first time: leads to “fight” (death) motive  
(at R22ff)
14. III, sc. 3 (at R112–16) Children’s Chorus  
near beginning of last scene after Bess leaves
- exit into house: 3½ mm. (4/4) to curtain  
curtain falls over last 2½ mm. of scene
- II, sc. 1 (105–106): Marie’s remorse  
Marie: “Bin ich ein schlecht Mensch?”  
(E–G-sharp–B-sharp–D-sharp–F-sharp)
- III, sc. 4/iii (284): Wozzeck drowns  
Begins six-note chromaticisms  
(= Invention on six-note chord)  
Doktor and Hauptmann speak over orch.  
Preceded by 6 mm. pedal on C  
and migrating ostinato (up a m3)  
4 statements (1+1+2 shortened)  
under last sung lines before drowning
- III, sc. 3 (145–153): Marie’s Lullaby  
Sung by Wozzeck, parodistic  
preceded by 3½ mm. pedal on first note  
Follows polka onstage piano  
stage piano interjects in lullaby  
and polka resumes at end
- III, sc. 3 (145–53): Marie’s Lullaby  
Sung by Wozzeck, parodistic  
Follows death of Marie  
As first time: leads to “Marie’s Aimless  
Waiting” (death) motive (152–53)
- III, sc. 5 (372–75) Children’s Chorus  
begins last scene after Wozzeck’s death

## Appendix 2

### *Comparison of the Lullabies and Their Reprises*

#### Porgy and Bess

1. I, sc. 1 (at R17–24): Clara’s Lullaby  
follows Jasbo Brown Blues (cut C)  
with onstage piano, music  
crescendos from *p* to *ff*  
introduction begins 13 (9) mm. before  
lullaby first note prepared 6 mm.  
intro ends with 2 high notes played by  
bells (and piano)  
opening chords similar/same (Forte)  
varied repeat after 17 mm.  
ends with chromatic descent in orch and choir  
instr. coda based on beginning motive  
4 statements (1+1+2 shortened, elided)  
leads to first “fight” (death) motive;  
interrupted  
lengthy period without formal schemes
2. I, sc. 1 (at R51–54): Clara’s Lullaby reprise  
first note prepared 1½ mm.  
one verse only

#### Wozzeck

- I, sc. 3 (372–416): Marie’s Lullaby  
follows military march (4/4)  
with onstage band, music  
crescendos from *pp* to *fff*  
introduction begins 9 mm. before  
lullaby first note prepared 7 mm.  
intro ends with 2 high notes played by  
celesta  
opening chords similar/same (Forte)  
varied repeat after 16 mm.  
ends with chromatic descent in orchestra  
instr. coda based on beginning motive  
4 statements (1+1+2 shortened, elided)  
leads to first “Marie’s Aimless Waiting”  
(death) motive; interrupted  
lengthy period without formal schemes
- II, sc. 1 (43–59): Marie’s Lullaby reprise  
first note prepared 2½ mm.  
one verse only



<p>sung against active counterpoint baby does not fall asleep</p> <p>3. II, sc. 4 (at R240–43): Clara’s Lullaby reprise</p> <p>preceded by 3 mm. pedal on first note Follows musical depiction of wind wind music continues in lullaby and resumes at end</p> <p>4. III, sc. 1 (at R18–21): Clara’s Lullaby reprise Sung by Bess Follows death of Clara As first time: leads to “fight” (death) motive (at R22ff)</p>	<p>sung against active counterpoint baby does not fall asleep</p> <p>III, sc. 3 (145–153): Marie’s Lullaby Sung by Wozzeck, parodistic preceded by 3½ mm. pedal on first note Follows polka onstage piano onstage piano interjects in lullaby and polka resumes at end</p> <p>III, sc. 3 (145–53): Marie’s Lullaby Sung by Wozzeck, parodistic Follows death of Marie As first time: leads to “Marie’s Aimless Waiting” (death) motive (152–53)</p>
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(Segue from onstage piano playing 2/4 music to lullaby occurs also in *Porgy*, Act 1, sc. 1)

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