



## George Gershwin: Porgy & Bess

aud 23.405

EAN: 4022143234056



Gramophone (David Gutman - 2019.03.01)

GRAMOPHONE

### Gershwin's Porgy and Bess

The 'great American opera' continues to cause controversy, on stage and on disc. David Gutman assesses the available recordings.

[...] More remarkable is the recently disinterred German radio tape of Blevins Davis and Robert Breen's famous all-black touring production, again under Smallens. Sponsored by the US State Department, this 'contradictory cultural symbol' reached Moscow late in 1955, albeit losing its initial lustre as original cast members moved on. Even if the 1952 recording is heard today as textually unsatisfactory (provoking the particular ire of Nikolaus Harnoncourt), it has noisy theatrical energy and provides the earliest evidence of the limitless vocal potential of Leontyne Price. Her then husband William Warfield occasionally sounds strained or lightweight but it should be recognised that he was singing from a kneeling position, authentically confined to Porgy's goat cart. The multi talented Cab Calloway as Sportin' Life is a powerful presence too, transmuting the 'dandified' stereotype into something more compelling in his celebrated rendition of 'It ain't necessarily so'. The mono sound has come up superbly. Absent however are such key elements as the glorious orchestral coda of Act 1 scene 1 when Porgy takes in Bess after Robbins's murder. The pivotal 'Buzzard Song' can hardly suggest a world turning to its dark side when it's patched into the final scene. Supporting roles are less strongly taken; the three acts become two.

Flawed as it is, this astonishingly vivid off-air recording conveys the excitement of a classic touring production featuring one of the 20th century greatest voices at the start of her career.



The 'great American opera' continues to cause controversy, on stage and on disc. **David Byrne** reviews the sublime recordings

moving history. In any case, the book is a welcome addition to the history of science in general, and the history of astronomy in particular. *John J. O'Connor, University of Oklahoma, Norman*

**THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN EYE**, by David R. Hunt, with the assistance of Charles A. J. Hoeft. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Pp. 304. \$49.95. ISBN 0-19-508300-9.

For the past century or so, the history of the human eye has been a neglected area of research. The field has been dominated by the clinical and diagnostic aspects of the eye, and little attention has been paid to the history of the eye as a whole. This book is a welcome addition to the literature. It is a comprehensive history of the eye, from its earliest origins to the present. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is easy to read. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of the human eye.

**THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN EYE**, by David R. Hunt, with the assistance of Charles A. J. Hoeft. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Pp. 304. \$49.95. ISBN 0-19-508300-9.

For the past century or so, the history of the human eye has been a neglected area of research. The field has been dominated by the clinical and diagnostic aspects of the eye, and little attention has been paid to the history of the eye as a whole. This book is a welcome addition to the literature. It is a comprehensive history of the eye, from its earliest origins to the present. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is easy to read. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of the human eye.

**SELECTED DISOGRAPHY**

[illegible]