



[Gorgeous Gershwin](#)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Stefano Bollani piano and Clark Rundell conductor

by [Denis Joe](#) □ July 2011

at [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic](#)

Overture, Strike up the band!

Gershwin Songs

Piano Improvisation

Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture

Rhapsody in Blue

Higuchi: “If only the whole world would listen to Gershwin”

[*Wild Life* – Shinji Aoyama]

As part of the RLPO’s Summer Pops season this concert of Gershwin music was more than just entertainment and certainly more deserved of the adjective ‘gorgeous’, than the former MP for Bethnal Green and Bow. This was an evening divided between the populist Gershwin and the serious composer. But even in the opening orchestral piece, ‘Strike up the band!’, one could detect the hint of American serious art music. Whilst the first opening bars of the piece echo Sousa’s marches their pomposity is quickly ditched in favour of lush cosmopolitanism and hedonism.

‘Strike up the band!’ was based on a political satire that would gladden the heart of many of today’s conspiracy theorist, who would see nothing silly in the idea of a Swiss cheese maker wanting to maintain his market in the United States by trying to get the government to declare war on Switzerland. During its original 1927 pre-Broadway run, the musical closed after a Saturday night performance in Philadelphia, fulfilling original librettist's George S. Kaufman's definition of satire as "what closes on Saturday night". In 1930 Gershwin joined forces with the original author, Morrie Ryskind, to ‘soften’ the storyline and emphasise the romantic element. The musical went on to have a Broadway run of 191 performances.



