University of Texas at El Paso

From the SelectedWorks of Dominic Dousa

January 13, 2006

The Poetry of Langston Hughes, In Song (presentation of original compositions and other comteporary works)

Dominic Dousa, *University of Texas at El Paso*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/dominic_dousa/1/

hawaii
international
conference on

arts & humanities

January 11th - 14th 2006

Co-sponsored by:

East West Council for Education

Asia Pacific Research Institute of Peking University

University of Louisville - Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods

Friday

1/13/2006

Room: Oahu Suite

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM
Session Topic: Cross-Disciplinary - Workshop
Session Chair: Shaw, Susan

Teaching about Difference, Power, & Discrimination in the Arts and Humanities
Shaw, Susan — Oregon State University
Lee, Janet — Oregon State University

Friday

1/13/2006

Room: Salon G

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM
Session Topic: Music/Performing Arts
Session Chair: Meyer, Jeffery

Mario Davidovsky, Synchronisms No. 6: A Listener's Guide to Ideas, Sounds, and Gestures
Meyer, Jeffery — Central Washington University

Friday

1/13/2006

Room: Salons B & C

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM
Session Topic: Music
Session Chair: Blanchard, Gerald

The Poetry of Langston Hughes, in Song
Blanchard, Gerald — Kellogg Community College
Dousa, Dominic — The University of Texas at El Paso

Mozart's Sonata for Violin and Piano in E Minor, K.304
Eanes, Edward — Kennesaw State University
Watkins, David — Kennesaw State University

Saturday

1/14/2006

Room: Ekahi

Time: 8:00 - 9:30 AM
Session Topic: Visual Arts
Session Chair: Julian, June

Teaching Art in the Blogosphere
Julian, June — The University of the Arts

Do You See What I Hear? : Strategies for Using Multimedia to Interpret Poetry
Hallstrom, Jonathan — Colby College
Moroni, Mario — Colby College

4th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities
Friday, January 13th, 2006

The Poetry of Langston Hughes, in Song

Gerald Blanchard, Kellogg Community College (Battle Creek, MI)
Dominic Dousa, The University of Texas at El Paso

Prayer	Leslie Adams
The Negro Speaks of Rivers	Margaret Bonds
Genius Child	Robert Owens
*Six Songs on the Poetry of Langston Hughes**	Dominic Dousa

1. The Dream Keeper
2. Mother to Son
3. Beggar Boy
4. As I Grew Older
5. Ma Lord
6. Judgment Day

Gerald Blanchard, baritone
Dominic Dousa, piano

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Program notes for *Six Songs on the Poetry of Langston Hughes* from the compact disc "With a Song in My Heart" (Blue Griffin Recording).

Shortly after entering the graduate music program at Central Michigan University, Mr. Blanchard and I discussed the idea of a collaborative project. Mr. Blanchard suggested several poems by Langston Hughes (1902-1967), and almost immediately, the poems inspired ideas for a musical setting. The six poems reflect the soul of an individual with a deep feeling for humanity. With a powerful voice rooted in the African-American experience, Hughes speaks to the spirit of all people through his poetry.

The poems I set to music were published separately in the 1920's. Eventually all were included in a volume of Hughes's poetry entitled *The Dream Keeper*, which was published in 1932. In the song cycle, the poems are not arranged in chronological order, but rather are grouped according to the thematic material of the poetry. The first three songs offer a general reflection on life's struggles. In "The Dream Keeper," the prevailing mood is one of consolation and hope amid the awareness of life's harsh realities. A sense of exhortation to persevere in tough times highlights the second song, "Mother to Son." "Beggar Boy" projects a mysterious, almost contradictory feeling, as the poem depicts an individual who continues to live confidently in a seemingly abject situation. With the fourth song, "As I Grew Older," the focus shifts inward toward personal struggle. The dreams that seemed so hopeful in "The Dream Keeper" now seem far away and out of reach. The middle of this song represents the turning point of the song cycle. After a barren section in which hope appears to be extinguished, slowly the mood is transformed with a new sense of intense resolve to confront adversity and rise above it. "Ma Lord" further bolsters this sense of determination and belief in eventual victory. References to heaven in this song and in the final song, "Judgment Day," underscore the idea that ultimately goodness will prevail. To me, these poems express the inspiring optimism of a man who encountered many obstacles on the road of life as an artist and an African American.

– Dominic Dousa

For more information about the recording of *Six Songs on the Poetry of Langston Hughes* and the compact disc "With a Song in My Heart," featuring Gerald Blanchard's presentation of African American art song, please visit http://bluegriffinrecording.com