### 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)

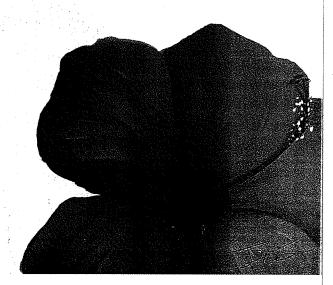
Dominic Dousa, University of Texas at El Paso





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# 2006 Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities

<u>Honolulu, Hawaii</u>

#### Friday

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM

1/13/2006

Room: Oahu Suite

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

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM

1/13/2006

Room: Salon G

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

Time: 4:20 - 5:50 PM

1/13/2006

Room: Salons B & C

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

Time: 8:00 - 9:30 AM

1/14/2006

Room: Ekahi

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

# 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 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

<sup>\*</sup>Texts used with permission. Copyright 1994 by the Estate of Langston Hughes.

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