

The Robert E. and Jean Ann Titus Family Recital

LAWRENCE BROWNLEE

with

Myra Huang

Song Texts and Translations

Sunday, January 21, 2024, at 2:00 pm

Desire, Op. 13

Text by Langston Hughes (1901-1967)

1. Desire

Desire to us was like a double death,
desire to us was like a double death,
Swift dying of our mingled breath,
evaporation of an unknown strange perfume between us quickly in a naked room.

2. Dream

Last night I dreamt this most strange dream and everywhere I saw—
What did not seem could ever be: you were not there with me!
Awake, I turned and touched you asleep, face to the wall.
I said how dreams can lie! But you were not there at all!

3. Juliet

There are wonder and pain and terror, and sick and silly songs of sorrow,
And the marrow of the bone of life smeared across her mouth.
The road from Verona to Mantova is dusty with the drought.

4. Man

I was a boy then—I did not understand
I thought that friendship lay in the grip of hand to hand
I thought that love must be her body close to mine
I thought that drunkenness was real in wine.
But I was a boy then, I didn't understand the things a young lad learns so soon,
when he's a man, a man, a man.

April Rain Song

Text by Langston Hughes

Let the rain kiss you
Let the rain beat up on your head with silver liquid drops
Let the rain sing you a lullaby
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk
The rain makes running pools in the gutter
The rain plays a little sleep song on our rooftop at night
And I love the rain.

Lost Illusions

Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880–1966)

Oh, for the veils of my far away youth,
Shielding my heart from the blaze of the truth,
Why did I stray from their shelter and grow
Into the sadness that follows—to know!

Impotent atom with desolate gaze,
Threading the tumult of hazardous ways—
Oh, for the veils, for the veils of my youth,
Veils that hung low o'er the blaze of the truth!

Southern Mansion

Text by Arna Bontemps (1902–1973)

Poplars are standing there still as death
And ghosts of dead men
Meet their ladies walking
Two by two beneath the shade
And standing on the marble steps.

There is a sound of music echoing
Through the open door
And in the field there is
Another sound tinkling in the cotton:
Chains of bondmen dragging the ground.

The years go by with an iron clank,
A hand is on the gate,
A dry leaf trembles on the wall,
Ghosts are walking.
They have broken roses down
And poplars stand there still as death.

Silver Rain, Op. 11

Text by Langston Hughes

1. In time of silver rain

In time of silver rain,
The earth puts forth new life again;
Green grasses grow and flowers lift their heads,
And over all the plains the wonder spreads of life, of life, of life.

In time of silver rain,
The butterflies lift silken on wings to catch a rainbow cry;
And trees put forth new leaves to sing in joy beneath the sky.
As down the roadway passing boys and girls go singing too,
in time of silver rain when spring and life are new.

2. Fulfillment

The earth-meaning, like the sky-meaning, was fulfilled.
We got up and went to the river, touched silver water, laughed and bathed in the sunshine.
Day became a bright ball of light for us to play with,
Sunset a yellow curtain, night a velvet screen,
The moon, like an old grandmother, blessed us with a kiss and sleep took us both in
Laughing, laughing, laughing.

3. Night Song

In the dark before the tall moon came,
Little short dusk was walking along.
In the dark before the tall moon came,
Little short dusk was singing a song.
In the dark before the tall moon came,
A lady named day fainted away in the dark.

4. Silence

I catch the pattern of your silence before you speak.
I do not need to hear a word.
In your silence ev'ry tone I seek is heard.

5. Carolina Cabin

Hmm hmm hmm hmm
There's hanging moss and holly and tall, straight pine about this little cabin in the wood.
Inside a crackling fire, warm red wine, and youth and life and laughter that is good.
Outside the world is gloomy, the winds of winter cold, as down the road a wandering poet
must roam.
But here there's peace and laughter and love's old story told where two people make a home
hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm

6. Songs

I sat there singing her songs in the dark.
She said, I do not understand the words.
I said, there are no words.

7. Sleep

When the lips and the body are done she seeks your hand, touches it, and sleep comes
without wonder and without dreams.
When the lips and the body are done.

Nocturne

Text by Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905)

Süß duftende Lindenblüte
in quellender Juninacht.
Eine Wonne aus meinem Gemüte
ist mir in Sinnen erwacht.
Als klänge vor meinen Ohren
leise das Lied vom Glück,
als töne, die lange verloren,
die Jugend leise zurück.
Süß duftende Lindenblüte
in quellender Juninacht.
Eine Wonne aus meinem Gemüte
ist mir zu Schmerzen erwacht.

Selige Nacht

Text by Otto Erich Hartleben

Im Arm der Liebe
schliefen wir selig ein,
Am offenen Fenster
Lauschte der Sommerwind,
Und uns'rer Atemzüge
Trug er hinaus
In die helle Mondnacht.
Und aus dem Garten tastete
Zagend sich ein Rosenduft
An uns'rer Liebe Bett
Und gab uns wundervolle Träume.
Träume des Rausches
So reich an Sehnsucht.

Nocturne

Sweet-scented linden blossom
in swelling June night,
a delight from my soul,
awakened to my mind.
As if the song of joy
sounded softly in my ears,
as if long-lost youth
resounded quietly back to me.
Sweet-scented linden blossom
in swelling June night;
a delight from my soul
awakened as pain.

Blissful Night

In the arms of love
we slumbered blissfully.
At the open window
the summer wind listened;
and carried away the peacefulness
of our breathing
into the moonlight.
And from the garden
the fragrance of roses cautiously
swept over our bed of love
and gave us wonderful dreams.
Dreams of desire,
so full of longing.

Die Elfe

Text by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788–1857)

Bleib bei uns!
Wir haben den Tanzplan im Tal
bedeckt mit Mondesglanze,
Johanneswürmchen erleuchten den Saal,
die Heimchen spielen zum Tanze.
Die Freude, das schöne leichtgläubige Kind,
es wiegt sich in Abendwinden:
Wo Silber auf Zweigen und Büschen rinnt,
da wirst du die Schönste finden.

Christbaum

Text by Ada Christen (1839–1901)

Hörst' auch du die leisen Stimmen
Aus den bunten Kerzlein dringen?
Die vergessenen Gebete
Aus den Tannenzweiglein singen?
Hörst' auch du das schüchternfrohe,
Helle Kinderlachen klingen?
Schaust' auch du den stillen Engel
Mit den reinen weissen Schwingen?
Schaust' auch Du Dich selber wieder,
Fern und fremd dich wie im Traume?
Grüßt auch dich mit Märchenaugen
Deine Kindheit aus dem Baume?

Hat dich die Liebe berührt

Text by Paul Heyse (1830–1914)

Hat dich die Liebe berührt,
Still unterm lärmenden Volke,
Gehst du in goldner Wolke,
Sicher vom Gotte geführt.

Nur wie verloren, umher
Lässest die Blicke du wandern,
Gönnt ihre Freuden den Andern,
Trägst nur nach einem Begehr:

Scheu in dich selber verzückt,
Möchtest du leugnen vergebens,
Daß nun die Krone des Lebens,
Strahlend die Stirn dir schmückt.

The Elf

Stay with us!
We have covered a clearing in the dell
with moonlight for the dance;
fireflies illuminate the hall
and crickets are playing dance-music.
Joy, the fair, overcredulous child,
is lulled by the evening winds;
where silver runs on branch and bush
you will find the fairest girl.

Christmas Tree

Do you also hear the soft voices
Coming from the colorful little candles?
The forgotten prayers
Singing from the little branches of the fir tree?
Do you also hear the timid but happy
Bright laughter of children ringing?
Do you also see the silent angel
With the pure white wings?
Do you also see yourself again?
Strangely, from a distance like a dream?
Does your childhood greet you
Like a fairy-tale from the tree?

If Love Has Touched You

If love has touched you softly,
among the noisy folk,
amid a cloud of gold,
you're led by God safely.

Only as one thus bemused,
you let your gaze depart.
you do not envy the joy of others.
only one desire is yours.

Shyly delighted with yourself,
though you would deny it,
now adorns your brow
the gleaming crown of life.

Peace

Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson

Peace on a thousand hills and dales,
Peace, Peace in the hearts of men
While kindness reclaims the soil
Where bitterness, Where bitterness has been.
Peace, Peace, Peace

The night of strife is drifting past,
The storm of shell has ceased.
Disrupted is the cordon fell,
Sweet charity released.
Peace, Peace, Peace, Peace

Forth from the shadow, swift we come
Wrought in the flame together.
All men as one beneath the sun
In brotherhood forever
(ooh) Peace (ooh)

Invocation

Text by Claude McKay (1889-1948)

Ancestral Spirit, hidden from my sight
By modern Time's unnumbered work and ways
On which in awe and wonderment I gaze,
Where hid'st thou in the deepness of the night?
What evil powers thy healing presence blight?
Thou Who from out the dark and dust didst raise
The Ethiop standard in the curtained days,
Before the white God said: let there be light!
Ancestral Spirit hidden from my sight
By modern Time's unnumbered works and ways
On which in awe and wonderment I gaze.
Bring ancient music to my modern heart
Bring ancient music to my modern heart,
Ancestral Spirit hidden from my sight, Ancestral Spirit hidden from my sight
Let fall the lights upon my sable face,
That once gleamed on the Ethiopian's art;
Lift me to thee out of this alien place, So I may be thine exiled counterpart,
The worthy singer of my world and race,
The worthy singer of my world and race.
Ancestral Spirit, Ancestral Spirit.

I Know My Soul

Text by Claude McKay

I plucked my soul out of its secret place,
And held it to the mirror of my eye.
To see it like a star across the sky,
A shining body quivering in space
A spark of passion shining on my face.
And I explored it to determine why
This awful key to my infinity
Conspires to rob me of sweet joy and grace.
And if the sign may not be fully read,
If I can comprehend, but not control,
I need not gloom my days with futile dread.
Because I see a part and not the whole.
Contemplating the strange, I'm comforted by this narcotic thought:
I know my soul!

The Dance of Love

Text by Countee Cullen (1903-1946)

Ah! Ah! Ah!
All night we danced upon our windy hill,
Your dress a cloud of tangled midnight hair, Ah!
And love was much too much for me to wear
My leaves: the killer roared above his kill,
But you danced on, and when some star would spill
Its red and white upon you whirling there,
I sensed a hidden beauty in the air;
Though you danced on, my heart and I stood still.

But suddenly a bit of morning crept
Along your trembling sides of ebony;
I saw the tears your tired limbs had wept,
And how your breasts heaved high, how languidly
Your dark arms moved; I drew you close to me;
We flung ourselves upon our hill and slept.

Beauty That Is Never Old

Text by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

When buffeted and beaten by life's storms,
When by the bitter cares of life oppressed,
I want no surer haven than your arms,
I want no sweeter heaven than your breast.

When over my life's way there falls the blight
Of sunless days, and nights of starless skies;
Enough for me, the calm and steadfast light
That softly shines within your loving eyes.

The world, for me, and all the world can hold
Is circled by your arms; for me there lies,
Within the lights and shadows of your eyes,
The only beauty that is never old.

The Gift to Sing

Sometimes the mist overhangs my path,
And blackening clouds about me cling;
But, oh, I have a magic way
To turn the gloom to cheerful day—
I softly sing.

And if the way grows darker still,
Shadowed by Sorrow's somber wing,
With glad defiance in my throat,
I pierce the darkness with a note,
And sing, and sing

I brood not over the broken past,
Nor dread whatever time may bring;
No nights are dark, no days are long,
While in my heart there swells a song,
And I can sing.

To America

How would you have us, as we are?
Or sinking 'neath the load we bear?
Our eyes fixed forward on a star?
Or gazing empty at despair?

Rising or falling? Men or things?
With dragging pace or footsteps fleet?
Strong, willing sinews in your wings?
Or tightening chains about your feet?

Romance

Text by Claude McKay

Ah...ooo...ooo...ah...mmm...ooo...ooo...mmm...

To clasp you now and feel your head close-pressed,
Scented and warm against my beating breast;

To whisper soft and quivering your name,
And drink the passion burning, burning in your frame;

To lie at full length, taut, with cheek to cheek,
And tease your mouth with kisses mmm...till you speak

Love words, mad words, dream words, sweet, sweet oh, sweet words, senseless words,
Love words, mad words, dream words, sweet words, senseless words,
Melodious like notes of mating birds;

To hear you ask if I shall love always,
And myself answer: Till the end of days;

To feel your easeful sigh of happiness
When on your trembling lips I murmur: Yes;

It is so sweet. So so sweet, so sweet, so sweet, so so sweet
We know it is not true.
What matters it? The night must shed her dew.

We know it is not true, but it is sweet
It is sweet ooo... it's sweet
The poem with this music is complete.

Supplication

Text by Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr. (1895–1919)

I am so tired and weary,
So tired of the endless fight,
So weary of waiting the dawn
And finding endless night.

That I ask but rest and quiet—
Rest for days that are gone,
And quiet for the little space
That I must journey on.

Compensation

Text by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)

Because I had loved so deeply,
Because I had loved so long,
God in His great compassion
Gave me the gift of song.

Because I have loved so vainly,
And sung with such faltering breath,
The Master in infinite mercy
Offers the boon of Death.

My People

Text by Langston Hughes

Dream-singers,
Story-tellers,
Dancers,
Loud laughers in the hands of Fate—
My People...
Dish-washers,
Elevator-boys,
Ladies' maids,
Crap-shooters,
My People...
Cooks,
Waiters,
Jazzers,
My People...
Nurses, nurses of babies,
Loaders, loaders of ships,
Rounders,
My People...
Number writers,
Comedians in vaudeville
And band-men in circuses—
Dream singers all,—
My People.
Storytellers all—
My People,
and dancers—
God! What dancers!
Singers—
God! What singers!
Singers and dancers,
Dancers and laughers.
Laughers?
Yes, Laughers! Laughers...
Hahahahahahaha HA! HA! HA! hahaha... Laughers...
Ha... HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! Hahaha
Dream-singers,
Story-tellers,
Dancers, dancers, dancers,
And loud-mouthed laughers in the hands...
Loud-mouthed laughers in the hands of Fate—My People!