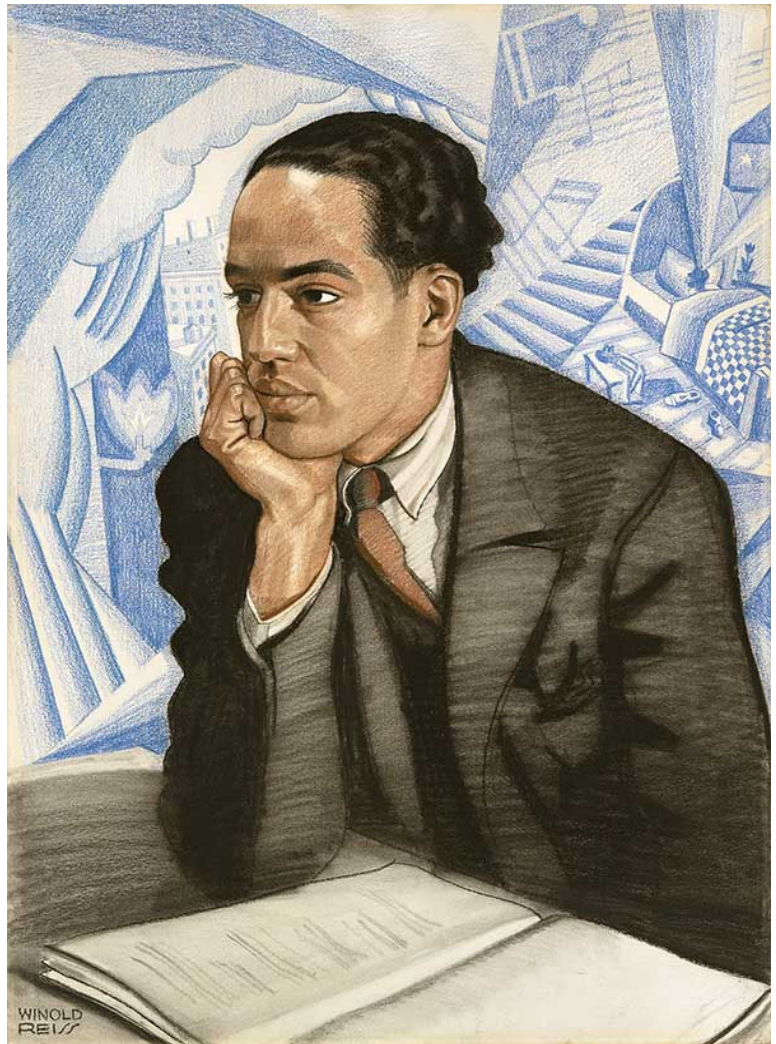


Folks, I'm Telling You

Langston Hughes

SSATB, piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Advice

Folks, I'm telling you,
birthing is hard
and dying is mean —
so get yourself
a little loving
in between.

Langston Hughes

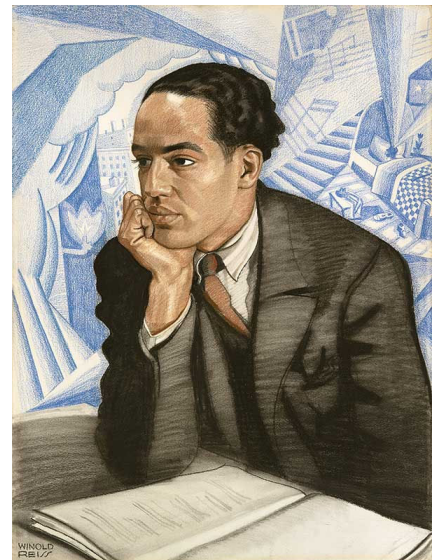
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Composer Note:

Langston Hughes' poems combine hard truth and deep love, creating a space where reality and compassion become a single word. The people he writes about are heartbreakingly vulnerable and infinitely resilient, often in the same breath. When I came across his short, to-the-point poem, "Advice," it simply cried out for edgy rhythms, crunchy chords, and unbridled passion. I loved every minute of writing this song.

Langston Hughes poured the cadences of everyday life into his writing. Like his primary influences Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg, and Walt Whitman, he was a keen observer of life, and particularly of Black American culture and experience. As a young writer, he was a prominent leader in the Harlem Renaissance, creating a lyrical, blues-inflected poetic form that would come to be called jazz poetry. The honesty, warmth and courage that Hughes brought to his many poems, plays and prose works led him to be much beloved by people of all races, ages and backgrounds.

The son of a German painter who specialized in insightful depictions of everyday people, **Winold Reiss** immigrated to the United States in 1913 to learn about and draw the people of America. He traveled to Montana in 1919 where he befriended the Blackfoot, who gave him the honorary name "Beaver Child" and inducted him into their tribe. In Mexico he spent a year drawing workers and revolutionaries. His portraits of African-Americans such as James Weldon Johnson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston helped usher in and document the Harlem Renaissance. Over his prolific career Reiss drew portraits of people from all over North, Central and South America, including over 250 portraits of Indigenous Americans.



"Langston Hughes"
Pastel by Winold Reiss (1925)

for Common Chords Chorus

Folks, I'm Telling You

SSATB, piano

Langston Hughes

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 80-88) With grit

The musical score is arranged for five parts: Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano. The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with a tempo of 80-88 beats per minute. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) shows the piano accompaniment with dynamics *mp* and *Ped.* markings. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the piano accompaniment with dynamics *mf* and *Ped.* markings. The third system (measures 9-12) introduces the vocal parts with the lyrics "Folks, I'm tell - in' you," and dynamics *p*. The piano accompaniment in the third system includes a *f* dynamic marking. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

8

S I

S II

A

mp

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

10

Ped. * Ped. 4 * Ped.

12

S I

S II

A

T

B

Folks, —

Folks, —

Folks, —

p

Folks, I'm tell - in' you, —

p

Folks, I'm tell - in' you, —

sf

sf

sf

Ped. Ped. Ped.

14

S I
I'm tell - in' you,

S II
I'm tell - in' you,

A
I'm tell - in' you,

T

B

mp
Ped. * Ped. *

16

S I

S II

A

T

B

mf sf sf sf sf
Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

19

S I *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

S II *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

A *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

T *mf* Folks,

B *mf* Folks,

sf *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

22

S I Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

S II Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

A Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

T I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

B I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

sf *sf*

Ped. * *Ped.* *

24 *f* *sfz-p*

S I birth - in' is hard, and

S II birth - in' is hard, and

A birth - in' is hard, and

T birth - in' is hard, and

B birth - in' is hard, and

f

sfz-p

ped. (pedal with right hand)

27 *sfz-p*

S I dy - in' is mean,

S II dy - in' is mean,

A dy - in' is mean,

T dy - in' is mean,

B dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

sfz-p

ped. ped. ped. ped.

30

S I *sfz-p* birth - in' is hard, and

S II *sfz-p* birth - in' is hard, and

A *sfz-p* birth - in' is hard, and

T *sfz-p* birth - in' is hard, and

B *sfz-p* birth - in' is hard, and

Ped. *(pedal with right hand)*

33

S I *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

S II *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

A *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

T *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

B *sfz-p* dy - in' is mean,

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and scrum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hakan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and scrum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

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**...and some of it
was even mine.**

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Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

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44

S I

S II

A

T

B

p

Ped. *

46

Ped. *

48

p *mp*

S II

Ooo... a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

50

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

52

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

p *mp*

A

Ooo a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

54

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

A

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

56

S I

p *mp*

Ooo a lit - tle lov - in',

S II

lov - in', lov - in',

A

lov - in', lov - in',

Ped. *

58

S I lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

S II lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

A lov - in', Get a lit - tle lov - in',

Red. * *Red.* * *Red.* * *Red.* *

60

S I Solo: *mf* with a little edge in the voice [slide]
Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in',

mf

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

64

S I Tutti:
a lit - tle lov - in',

S II *mf*
a lit - tle lov - in',

A *mf*
a lit - tle lov - in',

Red. * *Red.* * *Red.* * *Red.* *

66 *mp*

T lov - in', lov - in',

p subito

Ped. *

68

T lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

B Ooo a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in',

p *mp*

Ped. *

71

T Get a lit - tle lov - in',

B Get a lit - tle lov - in',

Ped. *

73 *mf*

T Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

B Folks, I'm tell - in' you,

mf *gutsy*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

77 *mf*

S I Birth - in' is hard, is

S II Birth - in' is hard, is

A Birth - in' is hard, is

T

B Birth - in' is

81 *ff*

S I hard, (d)

S II hard, (d)

A hard, (d)

T hard, (d)

B hard, (d)

85 *mp moaning*

A Dy - in', Dy - in',

T *mp moaning*
Dy - in' is mean, Dy - - - in',

B *mp moaning*
Dy - in' is mean, Dy - - - in',

89 *mp*

S I *mp*
Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you,

S II *mp*
Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you,

A *mp*
Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell-in' you, tell - - in' you,

93 Solo or Tutti: *p*

T A lit - tle lov - in', a lit - tle lov - in', a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

97 *mp dolce, legato*

S I So get your - self a lit - tle

S II *mp dolce, legato*
So get your - self a lit - tle

A *mp dolce, legato*
So get your - self a lit - tle

101 *Tutti: mf warmly*

T Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

B *mf warmly*
Get your - self a lit - tle lov - - - - in',

Get your - self a lit - tle lov - in', lov - in', lov - in',

105 *Solo: f with abandon*

S I get your-self a lit - tle bit of lov - in' in___ be - tween,___

mp

109 *sfz*

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.*

111 Solo: *mp darkly*

B Birth - in' and dy - in', hard and mean.

115

mp

Lead. * Lead. * Lead. *

117

sfz

Lead. Lead. Lead. Lead. Lead. Lead.

119 *mf*

S I Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

S II *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

A *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

T *mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

B *Tutti: mf* Folks, I'm tell - in' you, Folks, I'm tell - in' you, tell - in' you,

f

Lead. Lead. Lead.

122

f *sfz-p*

S I birth - in' is hard, and

f *sfz-p*

S II birth - in' is hard, and

f *sfz-p*

A birth - in' is hard, and

f *sfz-p*

T birth - in' is hard, and

f *sfz-p*

B birth - in' is hard, and

Ped. (pedal with right hand)

125

sfz-p

S I dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

S II dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

A dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

T dy - in' is mean,

sfz-p

B dy - in' is mean,

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

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**...and some of it
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Elizabeth Alexander

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134

mp *f*

S I Birth - in' and dy - in' Hard and mean,

mp *f*

S II Birth - in' and dy - in' Hard and mean,

mp *f*

A Birth - in' and dy - in' Hard and mean,

mp *f*

T Birth - in' and dy - in' Hard and mean,

mp *f*

B Birth - in' and dy - in' Hard and mean,

mf *f*

Red. *Red.* *Red.*



138

p

B So get your - self a lit - tle

mf *f*

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *

141

p

S I A lit - tle lov - in',

p

S II A lit - tle lov - - - in',

p

A A lit - tle lov - - - in',

p

T A lit - tle lov - - - in',

B lov - - - in',

mp

Ped.

145

S I lov - in', lov - in',

S II lov - in', lov - in',

A lov - in', lov - in', in be -

T lov - in', lov - in',

B lov - in', lov - in',

mp

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

** 1/4*

149

S I

S II

A

T

B

tween,

mp

I'm tell - in'

mp

I'm tell - in'

mp

Red. *



151

S I

S II

A

T

B

mp

mf

Folks, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

mp

mf

Folks, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

Tutti: mf

I'm tell - in' you,

mf

you. I'm tell - in' you,

you.

mf

154

f

S I I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

S II I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

A I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

T I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you,

B I'm tell in' you, I'm tell in' you,

157

ff

S I I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, folks!

S II I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, folks!

A I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, folks!

T I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, folks!

B I'm tell - in' you, I'm tell - in' you, folks!

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SSA, piano • SEA-014-02

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Let it Matter (Alexander)
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1-4 part choir, soloist, piano • SEA-141-03

...or a musician (Philip Dacey)
SATB, orchestra • SEA-007-00

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SA, piano • SEA-014-00
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01

Praise Wet Snow Falling Early (Denise Levertov)
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SSAA • SEA-091-00

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Song of Kabir (Kabir)
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The Gate is Open (Sister Peronne Marie Thibert)
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They Have Freckles Everywhere (Alexander)
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To Make a Prairie (Emily Dickinson)
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SATB • SEA-070-01
SSA • SEA-070-02
TBB • SEA-062-03

When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled (Thurman)
SATB • SEA-062-00
TTBB • SEA-062-02
SSAA • SEA-062-04
SATB, flute • SEA-062-05

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