

For Randy

Sorrow for a Midget

LANGSTON HUGHES

NO GROWN MAN WORKS in a hospital if they can help it—the pay is too low. But I was broke, jobs hard to find, and the employment office sent me there that winter.

Right in the middle of Harlem.

Work wasn't hard, just cleaning up the wards, serving meals off a rolling table, bulling around, pushing a mop. I didn't mind. I got plenty to eat.

It was a little special kind of hospital and there was three private rooms on my floor, and in one of them was a female midget. Miss Midget—a little lady who looked like a dried up child to me. But they told me (so I wouldn't get scared of her) that she was a midget. She had a pocketbook bigger than she was. It laid on a chair beside her bed. Generous, too—nice, that little midget lady. She gave me a tip the first day I was there.

But she was dying.

The nurses told me Countess Midget was booked to die. And I had never seen nobody die. Anyhow, I hung around her. It was profitable.

"Take care of me good," she said. "I pay as I go. I always did know how to get service." She opened her big fat pocketbook, as big as she was, and showed me a thick wad of bills. "This gets it anytime, anywhere," she said.

It got it with me all right. I stuck by. Tips count up. That's how I know so much about what happened in them few days she was in that hospital room, game as she could be, but booked to die.

"Not even penicillin can save her," the day nurse said, "not her." That was when penicillin was new.

Of course, the undertakers that year was all complaining about penicillin. They used to come to the hospital looking for corpses.

"Business is bad," one undertaker told me. "People don't die like they used to since this penicillin come in. Un-huh! Springtime,

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Langston

Randy - your note came today - Saturday - the day after your concert - because it was addressed the wrong, to West
 the market place gallery *instead of east 127th street. But it could not have come anyway, on*
 presents

Harold Jackman
Memorial Lectures on
Afro-American Literature

February thru June, 1962
Langston Hughes - Lofton Mitchell, Hosts
George Bass, Chairman

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH
Fifth Avenue at 127th Street, N. Y.
The Rev. Irving Anthony, Rector

account of this - as I had to introduce

friday, february 23 - 8 p.m. *Mrs. George.*
ZELMA GEORGE
The Negro Spirituals as Literature

The dynamic ZELMA GEORGE, during a global tour under State Dept. sponsorship, lectured on THE NEGRO SPIRITUAL — theme of her doctoral dissertation. Dr. George gained national attention as the star of Menotti's THE MEDIUM and, in 1960, was a member of the U.S. Delegation to the XV General Assembly of the United Nations.

Langston
friday, march 16 - 8 p.m.

WILLIAM B. BRANCH
The Afro-American Dramatist

A gifted and prolific playwright, WILLIAM BRANCH was, in 1960, a Guggenheim Fellow. His drama, A WREATH FOR UDOMO, opened in London last season. Mr. Branch received the Robert E. Sherwood Award for his play, LIGHT IN THE SOUTHERN SKY, based on the life of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune.

friday, april 13 - 8 p.m.
ARNA BONTEMPS
The Negro Renaissance

One of the stalwarts of the Negro Renaissance, ARNA BONTEMPS has had a distinguished career as a chronicler of Negro history through the medium of drama, history, poetry and fiction. Librarian at Fisk University, Mr. Bontemps is a Fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters.

friday, may 18 - 8 p.m.
LAWRENCE D. REDDICK
Afro-American Writers and the Mainstream

Presently Chairman, Division of Social Sciences, Coppin's State Teachers College, Baltimore, Dr. Reddick was formerly a distinguished curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature. He is the author of CRUSADER WITHOUT VIOLENCE and co-author of THE SOUTHERNER AS AMERICAN.

friday, june 15 - 8 p.m.
Tribute to
LANGSTON HUGHES

The writings of LANGSTON HUGHES in retrospect plus a musical narrative, VOICE OF HIS PEOPLE, by George Bass, performed by VOICES, INC. (William Barron, George Bass, Henry Doswell, Jesse De Vore, Josephine Jackson, Sylvia Jackson, Inez Kerr, Bernard Moore and Anne Smith).

Series Tickets For 5 Programs \$6.50 Single Admissions \$1.50 Students 75c.

I enclose \$..... for Series Tickets at \$6.50.
 I enclose \$..... for Single Admission Tickets at \$1.50 each.
 Please make check payable to M. Moorman, treasurer, and mail with self-addressed stamped envelope to Market Place Gallery, 2305 - 7th Avenue, New York 30, N. Y.
 Telephone reservations: AU 1-8104, 7 to 10 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 2 - 6 p.m.

LANGSTON HUGHES

20 EAST 127TH STREET
NEW YORK 35, N. Y.

July 10, 1961

Dear Randy:

I am enclosing catalogue notes on my forthcoming book of poems, ASK YOUR MAMA.

The publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. is planning quite a promotion campaign so they tell me. It will probably include a publication date party at the Village Gate in early October. If so, I hope you can be a part of it and that I can read a portion of the poem with your group accompanying.

Aside from this, however, I have converted a condensed version of the poem into a dance script to be performed by a narrator and two dancers. I am sending a copy of this for you and wonder if perhaps you (or you and Melba) might like to compose a ballet score for this, perhaps to be danced by a team like Alvin Ailey and Carmen De Lavallade to whom I have also sent scripts, since Alvin has asked me to give him some material for possible use by his group.

If you were to do such a score, it should also be written so it could serve as an interesting performance piece with or without dancers and one that might lend itself to recording. If you create such a score we could have its world premiere at the book party and Knopf would see that it is well publicized.

Let me know what you think about such a possibility.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Langston
Langston Hughes

Mr. Randy Weston
204 East 13 Street
New York 3, N. Y.

RANDY: Since Ailey is interested in possibly choreographing ASK YOUR MAMA, it might be a good idea to discuss it with him:

Mr. Alvin Ailey,
524 West 46th Street,
New York 36, N. Y.
(Ju. 2-3372)

July 30, 1961

COPY

Langston

Dear Alvin:

Randy Weston, who works with his arranger, Melba Liston, has written me that he intends shortly to begin doing a jazz score for ASK YOUR MAMA. It might be wise if you would talk this over with Randy in case you have some dance ideas that might be helpful to him:

Randy Weston,
204 East 13th Street,
New York City
(GR. 5-2141)

You've probably heard Randy's music. I did the lyrics for his recent African Percussion LP, UHURU AFRIKA, Roulette R-65001. And Abbey Lincoln sings one of the songs from it on her new STRAIGHT AHEAD, Candid 8015 (Stereo 9015).

Soon as I get my book done, I'll be seeing you.

Cardial regards,

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes