

Poems used in the choral cycle *I've Known Rivers* (2007)

Poetry by Langston Hughes
Music by Gwyneth Walker

My Soul Has Grown Deep

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Troubled Water

Between us, always, loved one,
There lies this troubled water.
You are my sky, my shining sun
Over troubled water.

I journey far to touch your hand.
The trip is troubled water.
We see yet cannot understand
This fateful troubled water.

Deep hearts, dear, dream of happiness
Balked by troubled water.
Between us always—love, and this—
This sea of troubled water.

Jump Right In!

I went down to the river,
I set down on the bank.
I tried to think but couldn't,
So I jumped in and sank.

I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.

But it was Cold in that water! It was cold!

I took the elevator
Sixteen floors above the ground.
I thought about my baby
And thought I would jump down.

I stood there and I hollered!
I stood there and I cried!
If it hadn't a-been so high
I might've jumped and died.

But it was High up there! It was high!

So since I'm still here livin',
I guess I will live on.
I could've died for love--
But for livin' I was born

Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry--
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!

In a 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 plain
The wonder spreads
 Of Life,
 Of Life,
 Of life!

In time of silver rain
The butterflies lift silken 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.