

“THE OL’ TUNES”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

You kin talk about yer anthems
An’ yer arias an’ sich,
An’ yer modern choir–singin’
That you think so awful rich;
But you orter heerd us youngsters
In the times now far away,
A–singin’ o’ the ol’ tunes
In the ol’–fashioned way.

There was some of us sung treble
An’ a few of us growled bass,
An’ the tide o’ song flowed smoothly
With its ‘comp’niment o’ grace;
There was spirit in that music,
An’ a kind o’ solemn sway,
A–singin’ o’ the ol’ tunes
In the ol’–fashioned way.

I remember oft o’ standin’
In my homespun pantaloons—
On my face the bronze an’ freckles
O’ the suns o’ youthful Junes—

Thinkin' that no mortal minstrel
Ever chanted sich a lay
As the ol' tunes we was singin'
In the ol'—fashioned way.

The boys 'ud always lead us,
An' the girls 'ud all chime in
Till the sweetness o' the singin'
Robbed the list'nin' soul o' sin;
An' I used to tell the parson
'T was as good to sing as pray,
When the people sung the ol' tunes
In the ol'—fashioned way.

How I long ag'in to hear 'em
Pourin' forth from soul to soul,
With the treble high an' meller,
An' the bass's mighty roll;
But the times is very diff'rent,
An' the music heerd to-day
Ain't the singin' o' the ol' tunes
In the ol'—fashioned way.

Little screechin' by a woman,
Little squawkin' by a man,
Then the organ's twiddle—twaddle,
Jest the empty space to span,—
An' ef you should even think it,
'T is n't proper fur to say

That you want to hear the ol' tunes
In the ol'-fashioned way.

But I think that some bright mornin',
When the toils of life air o'er,
An' the sun o' heaven arisin'
Glads with light the happy shore,
I shall hear the angel chorus,
In the realms of endless day,
A-singin' o' the ol' tunes
In the ol'-fashioned way.