The CONGO

Poem by YACHEL LINDSAY

Music by ARTHUR BERGH

A Cycle of Songs

OLIVER DITSON COMPANY
A CYCLE OF SONGS FOR BARITONE

THE CONGO

POEM BY
VACHEL LINDSAY

MUSIC BY
ARTHUR BERGH

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THE CONGO
A STUDY OF THE NEGRO RACE

I

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able, Boom, Boom, Boom!
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
Boomlay, Boomlay, Boomlay, Boom!
Then I had religion, then I had a vision,
I could not turn from their revels in derision.
Then I saw the Congo creeping through the Black,
Cutting through the jungle with a golden track.
Then along that river bank a thousand miles,
Tattooed cannibals danced in files,
Then I heard the boom of the blood lust song,
And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong.
And Blood! screamed the whistles and the fifes of the warriors,
Blood! screamed the skull-faced lean witch doctors,
Whirl ye the deadly voodoo rattle,
Harry the uplands, steal all the cattle,
Rattle, rattle, rattle, rattle, Bing!
Boomlay, Boomlay, Boomlay, Boom!
A roaring epic ragtime tune,
From the mouth of the Congo to the mountains of the moon.
Death is an elephant, torch-eyed and horrible,
Foam-flanked and terrible, Boom, steal the pygmies,
Boom, kill the Arabs, Boom, kill the white men,
Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!
Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost,
Burning in hell for his hand-maimed host,
Hear how the demons chuckle and yell,
Cutting his hands off down in hell.
Listen to the sleepy proclamation,
Blown through the lairs of the forest nation,
Blown past the white ants' hill of clay,
Blown past the marsh where the butterflies play.
Be careful what you do or Mumbo Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all of the other Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo Jumbo will hoodoo you.
II

Wild crap shooters with a whoop and a call
Danced the juba in their gambling hall,
And laughed fit to kill and shook the town,
And gory the policemen, and laughed them down,
With a Boonlay, Boonlay, Boonlay, Boom!
Then I saw the Congo creeping through the Black,
Cutting through the jungle with a golden track,
A negro fairy-land swung into view,
A minstrel river where dreams come true,
The ebony palace soared on high,
Through the blossoming trees to the evening sky,
The inlaid porches and casements shone
With gold and ivory and elephant bone,
And the black crowd laughed till their sides were sore
At the baboon bullet in the gate door,
And the well-known tunes of the parrot band
That thrilled on the bushes of that magic land.
A troupe of skull-faced witch men came
Through the gate doorway in suits of flame,
Yea, longtailed coats with a gold-leaf crust
And hats that were covered with diamond dust,
And the crowd in the court gave a whoop and a call,
And danced the juba from wall to wall,
But the witch men suddenly stilled the throng
With a stern cold glare, and a stern old song,
Mumbo Jumbo will hoodoo you.
Just then from the doorway, as fat as shutes,
Came the cake-walk princes in their long red coats.
Came with a brilliant lacquer shine,
And tall silk hats that were red as wine.
And they pranced with their butterfly partners there,
Coal-black maidens with pears in their hair.
Knee skirts trimmed with the jassamine sweet,
And belts on their ankles and little black feet,
And the couples tailed at the chant and the frown
Of the witch men lean, and laughed them down.
Oh, rare was the revel and well worth while,
That made those glowing witch men smile.
The cake-walk royalty then began
To walk for a cake that was big as a man
To the tune of Boonlay, Boonlay, Boom!
While the witch men laughed with a sinister air,
And sang with the scarabays prancing there,
Walk with care, walk with care,
Or Mumbo Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all of the other Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo Jumbo will hoodoo you,
Beware, beware, walk with care,
Boonlay, Boonlay, Boonlay, Boom!
Oh, rare was the revel and well worth while,
That made those glowing witch men smile.
III

A good old negro in the slums of the town
Preached at a sister for her velvet gown,
Howled at a brother for his low-down ways,
His prowling, guzzling sneak-thief days,
Beat on the Bible till he wore it out,
Starting the jubilee revival shout,
And some had visions, as they stood on chairs,
And sang of Jacob and the golden stairs.
And they all repented a thousand strong,
From their stupor and savagery and sin and wrong,
And slammed with their hymn books till they shook
the room.

Of "Glory, Glory, Glory" and "Boom, Boom, Boom!"
Then I saw the Congo creeping through the Black,
Cutting through the jungle with a golden track.
And the gray sky opened like a new-rent veil
And showed the apostles with their coats of mail.
In bright white steel they were seated round,
And their fire eyes watched where the Congo wound.
And the twelve apostles from their thrones on high
Thrilled all the forest with their heavenly cry,
"Mumbo Jumbo will die in the jungle,
Never again will he hoodoo you."

Then along that river a thousand miles
The vine-snarled trees fell down in files,
Pioneers angels cleared the way
For a Congo Paradise for bales at play,
For sacred capitals, temples clean.

Gone were the skull-faced witch men lean,
There where the wild ghost gods had waited,
A million boats of the angels sailed,
With oars of silver and prows of blue,
And silken pennants the sun shone through.
'Twas a land transfigured, 'twas a new creation,
Oh, a singing wind swept the negro nation,
And on through the backwoods clearing flew,
"Mumbo Jumbo will die in the jungle,
Never again will he hoodoo you."

Redeemed were the forests, the beasts and the men,
And only the vulture dared again,
By the far lone mountains of the moon,
To cry in silence, the Congo tune,
"Mumbo Jumbo will hoodoo you."

VACHEL LINDSAY.
THE CONGO
A STUDY OF THE NEGRO RACE

VACHEL LINDSAY

I
(THEIR BASIC SAVAGERY)

ARTHUR BERGH, Op. 25

Allegro moderato

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,

Barrel-house kings with feet unstable, Sagg'd and reel'd and

pounded on the table, pounded on the table,

Beat an
empty barrel with the handle of a broom,

Hard as they were able, Boom, Boom, Boom!

With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom!
Andante con espressione

Then I had religion, then I had a vision,

I could not turn from their revels in derision.

Maestoso (Spoken, very deliberate)

Then I saw the Congo creeping thro' the Black,

Cutting thro' the jungle with a golden track.

* South East African melody "Thata Nabandii"
Allegro

Then along that river bank a thousand miles, tattooed cannibals danced in files, then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song, and a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pen gong. And blood! scream'd the whistles and the fifes of the warriors, blood! scream'd the skull-faced lean witch doctors,
Whirl ye the deadly voodoo rattle, Harry the uplands,

steal all the cattle, Rat-tie, rat-tie, rat-tie, rat-tie, Bing!

Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom! A rearing epic

rag-time tune, From the mouth of the Congo to the mountains of the moon.
Allegro

Death is an elephant, torch-eyed and horrible, Foam-flank'd and
cresc. molto

terrible,
Boom, steal the pygmies, Boom, kill the Arabs,
dim.

Boom, kill the white men, Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!

Listen to the yell of Leo-pold's ghost, Burning in hell for his
hand-maim'd host,  
Hear how the de-mons chuck-le and yell,

Cutting his hands off down in hell,

Andante sostenuto

Listen to the sleep-y pro-cla ma-tion,  Blown thro' the lars of the

dolce cantabile

for est na tion,  Blown past the white ants' hill of clay,
Blown past the marsh where the butter-flies play.

Be care-ful what you do, or

Tempo I

Mum-bo Jum-bo, God of the Con-go, And all of the oth-er Gods of the Con-go,

n/f a rigore di tempo

Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you, Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you,

Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you.
II

(THEIR IRREPRESSIBLE HIGH SPIRITS)

Allegro moderato  (In the manner of an American coon song)

ARTHUR BERCH

Wild crap

shoot-ers with a whoop and a call  Danced the ju-ba in their gam-bling
hall, And laugh'd fit to kill and shook the town, And guy'd the po-
lice-men and laugh'd them down. With a Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom!

Maestoso

(spoken)

Then I saw the Congo
creeping thro' the black,

Cutting through the jungle
with a golden track,

Andante espressivo

A ne-gro fai-ry-land swung in-to view,

A
minstrel river where dreams come true, The ebony palace soared on high,

Through the blossoming trees to the evening sky,

The inlaid porches and casements shone With gold and ivory and elephant bone.

And the
Allegretto moderato

black crowd laugh'd till their sides were sore At the

ba-boon but-ler in the agate door. And the

well-known tunes of the parrot band That

poco rit.

trill'd on the bushes of that magic land.
Allegro non troppo

troupe of skull-faced witch men came Thro' the agate doorway in

suits of flame, Yea, long-tail'd coats with a gold-leaf crust And

hats that were cover'd with diamond dust, And the crowd in the court gave a

West Indian Negro Dance "Bamboula!"
whoop and a call, And danced the ju-ba from wall to wall.

(boisterously)

But the

Largamente

witch men sud-den-ly still'd the throng With a stern cold glare and a
s tern old song, Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you.

Allegro

then from the door-way, as fat as shotes, Came the cake walk princes in their

long red coats, Came with a brilliant lacquer shine, And

tall silk hats that were red as wine.
And they pranced with their butterfly partners there,

Coal-black maidens with pearls in their hair, Knee skirts trimmed with the jasmine sweet, And bells on their ankles and little black feet, And the couples railed at the chant and the frown, Of the witch men lean, and
laugh'd them down.

Oh,

Largamente

rare was the revel and well worth while, that made those glowing witchmen smile!

Tempo I

The cake walk

royalty then began to walk for a cake that was
(spoken)
big as a man To the tune of Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom! While the

witch men laughed with a sinister air, And sang with the scalawags prancing there,

(rythma indicated)
Walk with care, walk with care, Or Mumbo Jumbo,

God of the Congo, And all of the other Gods of the Congo,
(In strict rhythm)

Mambo Jumbo will hoodoo you, Beware, beware, walk with care,

Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom, Boom-lay, Boom-lay,

accol.

Boom-lay, Boom, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom-lay, Boom! Oh, rare was the revel and

accel.

well worth while, That madethose glower-ing witchmen smile.
Allegro

Voice:

(Spoken)

A good old negro in the slums of the town Preached at a sister for her velvet gown, Howled at a brother for his lowdown ways, His prowling, guzzling sneak thief days, Beat on the Bible till he wore it out, Starting the jubilee revival shout, And some had visions, as

*American Negro melody "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel."
Moderato

they stood on chairs, And sang of Jacob, and the golden stairs. And they all repented a

thou-sand strong, From their stupor and sav-a-ger-y and sin and wrong.

Allegro

And slammed with their hymn books till they shook the room.

Moderato e marcato

And

Allegro

Of "Glo- ry, Glo- ry, Glo- ry" and
"Boom, Boom, Boom!"

Andantino

(Spoken)

Then I saw the Congo creeping through the black,

Allegro moderato

Quasi recitativo

Cutting through the jungle with a golden track.

And the gray sky o-pen'd like a new rent

veil,

And show'd the a-pos-tles with their coats of
mail.

In bright white steel they were seated round,

And their fire eyes watch'd where the Congo wound.

And the twelve apostles from their thrones on high Thrill'd

* Andante con moto

all the forest with their heavenly cry. "Mumbo Jumbo will

* "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices"
die in the jungle, Never again will he hoo-doo you.

Never again will he hoo-doo you.

Andante espressivo

Then along that river, a

thousand miles, The vine snared trees fell down in files,
Pi-o-neer an-gels clear'd the way
For a Con-go Pa-ra-dise for

babes at play,
a Pa-ra-dise for babes at play,
For

sa-cred cap-i-tals, tem-ples clean.

recitative

Gone were the skull-faced witch-men lean.
Moderato assai

There where the wild ghost gods had wall'd

Million boats of the angels sail'd,

With oars of silver and

Prows of blue, and silk-en pennants the sun shone throu'.

'Twas a land trans-figured,

A tempo
'twas a new creation, Oh, a singing wind swept the

negro nation. And on thro' the back woods clearing flew,

"Mumbo Jumbo will die in the jungle, Never again will he hoo-doo you,

Never again will he hoo-doo you."
Moderato maestoso

decim'd were the forests, the beasts and the men, And only the vulture
dared again, By the far lone mountains of the moon, To cry in the silence, the

 rit. molto  p a tempo

Congo tune, "Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you, Mum-bo Jum-bo will

 hoo-doo you, Mum-bo Jum-bo will hoo-doo you."
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