

the Rhythms of the World

narrated by Langston Hughes...with documentary sounds

based on "The First Book of Rhythms" by Langston Hughes published by Franklin Watts, Inc.



Langston Hughes the Rhythms of the World

THE RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD
created and narrated by LANGSTON HUGHES
using documentary recordings.

SIDE 1:

INTRODUCTION: All sounds: Plant, animal,
fish, man made, music, dance, speech and
play and work songs are related: RHYTHMS.

Heart Beat, drumming, chanting, dancing,
clapping, jogging, games, tap dancing, jazz,
ocean waves, fish are related in SOUNDS.

SIDE 2:

Walking, marching, jump rope, waltz, work
songs have movement: RHYTHM.

From the purr of a kitten, a pump drill, jet
plane, a clock, radio short waves, lion roar to
Beethoven's "Fifth" there is a common theme:
RHYTHM.

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descriptive notes are inside pocket

THE RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD

narrated by
Langston Hughes-
with Documentary Sounds

COCK'S CROW (1)
BABY CHICKS (2)
WOOD THRUSH (3)
CORCHA (4)
BIRDS AT DAWN (5)

Sunrise!...Birds at dawn....The whole forest awakens....In the village the children play.

"BLUE BIRDS, BLUE BIRDS" (6)
Interrupted by:
THUNDER (7)

Thunder!....The game is over.

RAIN (8)

Rain!

INTRODUCTION OF SONG (9)

And a folk song from Kentucky:

"BOUGHT ME A CAT" (10)

That's a baby lamb calling for its mother....

BABY LAMB (11)

CRICKET (12)

The chirp of a cricket.

CHILD WALKING (13)

And you walking into a room are all related. You—and sunrise, and birds, and games and thunder, and songs, and crickets, and baby lambs are all related. Listen! Let me tell you how....Remember!

Hey, diddle, diddle!
The cat and the fiddle.
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such craft,
And the dish ran away with the spoon!

Well, that's Mother Goose rhyme which doesn't make very much sense, does it? But it's fun, anyhow—and a part of its fun lies in its rhythm.

Hey—diddle—diddle
The Cat—and the—fiddle...

Just speaking it. Then, if you sort of chant

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the words, as children do:

Hey—diddle—diddle
The Cat—and the—fiddle...

you add an additional element, chanting, to the rhythm which helps accentuate it. Then if words are sung, still an additional element—that of music—is added. Then the two expressions of rhythm strengthen each other, as in this singing game:

"MARY MACK" (14)

As you sing, your voice makes a rhythm. And as you clap your hands to it, or skip to it, or dance to it, your body makes a rhythm. So, you can make one rhythm, or two rhythms, or even several rhythms all at once sometimes. You can make rhythms that you hear, rhythms that you feel, or rhythms that you can see. There is no rhythm in the world without movement first.

HEART BEAT (15)

Your rhythms on this earth first began with the beat of your heart. The human heart beats in a regular rhythm, normally always the same like this:

HEART BEAT CONTINUED

That's your heart....The heart makes the blood flow. Feel your heart. Now, feel your wrist where your pulse is. That is where you can best feel the rhythm of the blood moving through your body from the heart. Your rhythm, your blood, your heart! The rhythm of the heart is the first and most important rhythm of human life.

Thousands of years ago men transferred the rhythm of the heartbeat:

HEART BEAT

into a drum beat, first perhaps on a hollow log:

BEATING ON A HOLLOW LOG (16)

And later a goatskin drum:

DRUM BEAT (17)

and with these beats probably the first rhythms of music began. Primitive men made a slow steady beat to walk or march to, and often a faster one to chant to or sing to:

HAITIAN CHANT (18)

YORUBA DANCING RHYTHMS (19)

They made a livelier beat to dance to as in these African drum rhythms of the Yoruba tribe.

TWO DRUMS (20)

But drums are not the only percussion instruments people use, however. This is a little song from Tahiti in the South Seas. Here coconut shells supply the rhythm:

COCONUT SHELLS (21)

And in Bali little bells, each with its own tone, create tuned percussion:

TUNED PERCUSSION (22)

But even without so many instruments, drums alone can make music. Here is an American drummer, Baby Dodds, playing on the tom toms:

TOM TOM WORKOUT (23)

There used to be a very popular dance that children and grown-ups and almost everybody did back in the 1920's. It was called the Charleston. It could be done just to hand-clapping—like this:

CLAP! CLAP!
CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!

Children clap their hands for games. People clap hands for square dancing.

"CLAP YOUR HANDS" (24)

Rhythm may be made with just hands, with music and hands and feet, or just feet—like a tap dancer:

TAP DANCING FEET (25)

You can make rhythms with just sticks and a box:

DRUMMING ON BOX (26)

Or tin cans:

DRUMMING ON TIN CAN (27)

Here are some New York City teenagers drumming

on benches and chairs, an empty soda bottle, and a bongo:

TEEN-AGERS DRUMMING (28)

Now, listen to the washboard in this jug band. This is Sonny Terry playing a harmonica and Oh Red with cymbals on his fingers strumming on a washboard:

WASHBOARD BAND (29)

Rhythm seems to come just naturally to most people. To Americans it comes very naturally, for we have made jazz music. From the African drums of long ago New Orleans, to trumpets and saxophones and pianos and guitars, our dancing rhythms spread. They became jazz. Listen to Bunk Johnson swinging out:

AMERICAN JAZZ (30)

But music is only one form of rhythm. From the rhythms of nature—the petals of a flower, the shape of an acorn, the tips of wheat stems—may come the designs on a man's tie, the patterns on living room drapes, the wallpaper border around your bedroom. Look at them and see what they are. Styles of decoration and fashions in clothes are everywhere influenced by ideas from other people and other countries around the world. That design on your father's tie may be from Persia. Your uncle's jacket is a Scottish plaid. The lines of your mother's dress are French. Her shawl is Spanish. The music on your radio now may be a tango from South America.

TANGO (31)

But its beat is taken from the drums of Africa, and the orchestra playing it is American. Rhythms go around the world, adopted and molded by other countries, mixing with other rhythms, and creating new rhythms as they travel—everything man makes or nature creates, has rhythm—from the dome shaped ice huts of the Eskimos to the skyscraper rectangles of New York, from Niagara Falls to the Grand Canyon of Arizona there is rhythm.

The United States Navy has recorded the rhythms of the waters of the ocean and of the fish that live in the ocean. This is the sound of the Pacific off the California coast:

PACIFIC OCEAN (32)

And here are the noises that some fish make below the surface of the sea. This is a toadfish:

TOAD FISH (33)

Here are croakers:

CROAKERS (34)

And these are spot fish in a tank:

SPOT FISH (35)

And these are the unknown sounds one hears 200 miles out in the Pacific and 2,000 fathoms down in the depths of the sea:

OCEAN DEPTHS (36)

But it is only with the aid of special sound-recording instruments that we can hear the sounds from the depths of the sea. But all of us who live near the sea can listen to the majestic roar of the waves on its surface:

OCEAN WAVES (37)

And we can think how each grain of sand on the beach, and the rhythms of each shell in the sea, are molded and shaped by the waves and the tides. An American poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, once wrote a famous poem about "The Chambered Nautilus" that lives in the warm Pacific in a spiral shell with a succession of chambers, always building new spirals for itself with new rooms, until:

Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn

it is washed up on the beach. Then, at the end of his poem, capturing something of the roaring rhythms of the sea in his words, the poet speaks to himself:

Build thee more stately mansions,

O my soul,

As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler

than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with
a dome more vast

Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by
life's unresting sea!

END OF SIDE I

SIDE II

CHILD WALKING (38)

Here you come walking down the street! The rhythm of your walk is like no one else's walk. Some people walk with long easy steps. Some trip along. Some shuffle. This is the sound of my walk:

NARRATOR WALKING (39)

But a girl I know walks this way:

GIRL WALKING (40)

And a company of soldiers marching sounds like this:

SOLDIERS MARCHING (41)

Soldiers must learn to march in step together, with their walking-rhythms in the same tempo, so that they all cover the same amount of ground in the same time at the same speed. If one man gets out of step, he makes the whole company look bad. That is why all must follow the same rhythm marching together. Forward, march!

MARCHING MEN (42)

At the Radio City Music Hall in New York there is a famous chorus of girl dancers called the Rockettes. Each girl's foot strikes the stage at the same time in rhythm when they are dancing. When two people are dancing together, the nearer their rhythms correspond, the better they look.

WALTZ (43)

Music sets the rhythm for dancing, and the body follows the beat of the music. Listen to this cowboy waltz:

WALTZ

The rhythms of music, or the rhythms of words, cause people to want to move, or be moved, in time to them. Babies like to bounce to:

Bye, Baby Bunting,
Papa's gone a-hunting
To get a little rabbit skin
To wrap the Baby Bunting in.

And children jump rope to:

"ON THE MOUNTAIN" (44)

Sailors on old sailing clippers sang sea
chantays as they hauled in the sails or
lifted the anchor:

SEA CHANTEY (45)

Men plowing or saving or moving the fields
with a scythe or breaking rock with a ham-
mer like to work to music, with the rhythm
of the song matching the rhythm of the
bodies as they work. Usually the men sing
together. But here is one man, Leadbelly,
singing a work song of the American South:

"JULIAN JOHNSON" (46)

Even without music, there is rhythm in
words put together in a rhythmical pattern
like:

Sing a song of sixpence,
Pocket full of rye.
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened
The birds began to sing.
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king?

Rhythm is very much a part of poetry. Maybe
that is because the first poems were songs.
In ancient Greece poets made up words and
tunes at the same time. In the Middle Ages
bards and troubadours sang their poems.
Nowadays poets usually make up only words.
But behind the words of good poems, there
is always rhythm, like Blake's:

Tiger! Tiger! Burning bright
In the forest of the night!

Or as in the beautiful poetry of the Bible:

Whither thou goest, I will go,
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge.
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God.

Stories and sermons and speeches and prayers
have their rhythms, too. How wonderful is
the flow of Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address":

Fourscore and seven years ago
our forefathers brought forth
on this continent a new nation,
conceived in liberty, and
dedicated to the proposition
that all men are created equal.

Just as the feet of soldiers marching in rhythm
carry men forward, so the rhythms of sermons or
speeches or poems carry words marching into your
mind in a way that helps you to remember them.

Most of the rhythms men put into music and
poetry may be found in nature — from the
drumming of the rain:

RAIN

The rap-rap-rapping of a woodpecker on a tree:

WOODPECKER (47)

The steady beat of the waves on the beach:

OCEAN WAVES

The repeated hoot of the owl:

OWL (48)

The call of the whippoorwill:

WHIPPOORWILL (49)

All these rhythms helped men to form their own
rhythms and make their first music.

Men and women create rhythms that make things
easier to do, too. In fact, some things could
not get done at all without rhythm. If you
live in the country, watch a farmer or his wife
churning butter. Even sweeping a rug or raking
a lawn is done better if the broom or rake is
handled with a steady rhythmical motion. Broken
rhythms can be unproductive, unpleasant, startling
or even harmful.

When it is peaceful in the chicken yard, hen
clucks like this:

HAPPY HEN (50)

But when there is excitement or danger, a
frightened hen sounds like this:

FRIGHTENED HEN (51)

A contented kitten purrs rhythmically and steadily like this:

KITTEN'S PURR (52)

But if a kitten's day dreams are interrupted by a sudden noise, or a dog, she meows:

FRIGHTENED MEOW (53)

It is the same with men and women, and races and nations. When the rhythms of happy harmonious living are broken by quarrels or fights, wars or riots or disasters, people's hearts do not beat right, and their minds are worried, and their songs are troubled, and sometimes they cry.

The word "Harmonious"—harmonious—is a part of the definition of rhythm in most dictionaries. Rhythm is "an harmonious flow" says one. Another dictionary says that rhythm is "the measure of time or movement by regular beats coming over and over again in harmonious relationship." A good athlete must have that harmony of movement or rhythm, which is called "form." Notice the form of a championship baseball player. Pitchers wind up for the pitch and let go with a rhythm that begins in the very tips of their toes and ends at the tips of their fingers. From pitch, to swing, to bat, to ball, a whole series of rhythms are set off, one rhythm, or one motion, starting another. So it is in life. All the rhythms of life in some way are related. You, your baseball, and the universe are brothers through rhythms.

Machines move in rhythm. You can hear the rhythm of a pump drill drilling a well:

PUMP DRILL (54)

You can see the rhythms of a ramrod, a piston, a shuttle, a washing machine, an egg beater, or an airplane propeller. And a jet plane—listen:

JET PLANE (55)

A railroad engine turns its rhythms into power that carries a train rocking across the rails from city to distant city:

TRAIN (56)

The rhythm of a clock's balance wheel can be heard in its steady tick-tock:

CLOCK (57)

And this is the rhythm of a pendulum:

PENDULUM (58)

Certain sounds can be both felt and heard. An explosion at a distance can knock you down:

EXPLOSION (59)

Certain tones on the piano or violin hurt a dog's ears and will set a dog to howling. Some electronic vibrations, like these from a short wave radio set, men can hear:

SHORT WAVES (60)

But other electronic sounds are much too delicate for our ears. Sometimes a dog can hear them, though, or a dog can feel them in his ears. They hurt his eardrums. You and I cannot see or hear electricity, but we can feel it, and a shock of electricity may floor you. The unseen rhythms of electronics may take on the force of a moving body. Perhaps tomorrow men may learn how to use such rhythms to shoot space ships from the earth to the moon.

This earth, which is our home, moves in its own rhythms around the sun, as do all the planets. The moon moves around the earth as well as around the sun. The rhythms of the sun and moon influence the sea, the seasons, and us—for plants live by the sun, and animals, and boys and girls, and men and women, get up in the morning by the sun.

COCK'S CROW
BABY CHICKS
WOOD THRUSH
CORCHA

How wonderful are the rhythms of the world!

BIRDS AT DAWN

The birds....

RUNNING BROOK (61)

The rippling brook.....

CRICKETS

The chirp of a cricket.....the rear
of a lion.....

LION'S ROAR (62)
into
HEART BEAT

The beating of your own heart.....
There is rhythm!

BEETHOVEN'S "FIFTH" (63)

Rhythm—something we share in common,
you and I, with all the plants and animals
and people in the world, and with the stars
and moon and sun, and with all the whole
vast wonderful universe beyond this wonderful
earth which is our home.

CREDITS

1. COCK'S CROW, Sounds of Animals,
Side 2, Band 1, PFX 124
2. BABY CHICKS, Sounds of Animals,
Side 2, Band 1, PFX 124
3. WOOD THRUSH, Sound Patterns,
Side 1, Band 1, PFX 130
4. CROCHIA, Sound Patterns, Side 2,
Band 1, PFX 130
5. BIRDS AT DAWN, Sound Patterns,
Side 2, Band 9, PFX 130
6. "BLUE BIRDS", BLUE BIRDS*, Ring
Games from Alabama, Side 2, Band
3, PP 704
7. THUNDER
8. RAIN
9. INTRODUCTION OF SONG
10. "BOUGHT ME A CAT", American Folk
Songs, Seeger, Side 1, Band 1, PP 701
11. BABY LAMB, Sounds of Animals, Side
2, Band 2, PFX 124
12. CRICKET
13. CHILD WALKING
14. "MARY MACK", Ring Games from Alabama,
Side 1, Band 1, PP 704
15. HEART BEAT, Sound Patterns, Side 1,
Band 16, PFX 130
16. BEATING ON A HOLLON LOG
17. DRUM: BEAT
18. HAITIAN CHANT, Drums of Haiti, Ganhos,
Side 2, Band 5, P 403
19. YORUBA DANCING RHYTHMS, Drums of the
Yoruba, Side 2, Band 5, P 441
20. TWO DRUMS, Footnotes to Jazz, "Maryland"
Dodge, Vol. 1, PP 30

21. COCONUT SHELLS, Music of World's
Peoples, Side 3, Band 12, P 504
22. TUNED PERCUSSION, Music of World's
Peoples, Side 3, Band 10, P 504
23. TOM TOM WORKOUT, Footnotes to Jazz,
Vol. 1, Side 2, Band 2, PP 30
24. "CLAP YOUR HANDS", American Folk
Songs, Seeger, Side 1, Band 3, PP 701
25. TAP DANCING FEET
26. DRUMMING ON BOX
27. DRUMMING ON TIN CAN
28. TESH-AGERS DRUMMING
29. WASHBOARD BAND, Jazz, South, Vol. 1,
Side 1, Band 3, PP 53
30. AMERICAN JAZZ, Jazz, New Orleans, Vol.
3, Side 1, Band 6, PP 57, Bunk Johnson's
Band
31. TANGO
32. PACIFIC OCEAN, Sounds of the Sea, Side 1,
Band 1, PFX 121
33. TOAD FISH, Sounds of the Sea, Side 1,
Band 4, PFX 121
34. CROAKERS, Sounds of the Sea, Side 1,
Band 14, PFX 121
35. SPOT FISH, Sounds of the Sea, Side 2,
Band 1, PFX 121
36. OCEAN DARTERS, Sounds of the Sea, Side 1,
Band 16, PFX 121
37. OCEAN WAVES
38. CHILD WALKING, especially recorded
39. NARRATOR WALKING, especially recorded
40. GIRL WALKING, especially recorded
41. SOLDIERS MARCHING
42. MARCHING MEN
43. "ALITZ

44. "ON THE MOUNTAIN", 1, 2, 3, and a
Zing, Zing, Zing, Side 1, Band 1, PP 703
45. SEA CHANTEY
46. "JULIANA JOHNSON", Jazz, South, Vol. 1,
Side 1, Band 2, PP 53
47. WOODPECKER
48. ONL
49. WHIPPOORVILL
50. HAPPY HEN, Sounds of Animals, PFX 124
51. FRIGHTENED HEN, Sounds of Animals, PFX 124
52. KITTEN'S PURR
53. FRIGHTENED MOW
54. PUMP DRILL, Sound Patterns, Side KK, Band
13, PFX 130
55. JET PLANE, Sound Patterns, Side KK, Band
12, PFX 130
56. TRAIN, Sound Patterns, Side 2, Band 11,
PFX 130
57. CLOCK
58. PENDULUM
59. EXPLOSION
60. SHORT WAVES
61. RUNNING BROOK
62. LION'S ROAR
63. BEETHOVEN'S "FIFTH", Otto Klempler conducting