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Letter, 1976 July 19, from Anton Coppola to Eva Jessye

Anton Coppola

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July, 1976

My dear and wonderful friend,

Many thanks for the Xeroxed copies of the Baton Rouge performance, but many more thanks for the beautiful Thomas Blake poem which I shall keep in my Porgy and Bess score as a reminder of you. You are a truly unique and marvelous human being and I consider myself fortunate to be included among your friends and associates.

I thought the entire Porgy company in Baton Rouge was an admirable group and I was overwhelmed by their warm hospitality. Frances Marsh seemed very interested when I mentioned "Street Scene" to her. It is, first of all, a powerful and moving stage work... starkly realistic. We mounted a highly successful production at the Manhattan School of Music last winter to enthusiastic critical acclaim.

The score is rich and poignant and full of interesting individual characterizations with much ensemble work... in other words, plenty for everybody. It all takes place in the unified time element of one day on a hot teeming street of any big city and would be a perfect Black vehicle. Certain "ethnic" personalities, such as the exuberant Italian musician, the socio-conscious Russian-Jewish communist who rants against the "Privileged Capitalist" and the placid Swedish buliding-janitor could all find their counterparts within the black community's experience with a little succinct word and expression-editing. In any case, it's a truly effective musical work and I know it would consume your interest once you got to know it. A black "Street Scene" would be a "first" anywhere and I repeat, naturally adaptable to the black theatre. The score is available on purchase from Chappell's in N.Y.C.

If possible, I will try to get a ~~fax~~ Cassette recording of one of our performances to you so that you can more easily get acquainted with it. The only available recording is an incomplete, badly done cast album dating from 1946 when it was first produced.

Once again, it was a personal satisfaction to be associated with you and hope for more of the same in the future.

Your friend,

Anton Coppola