

Mama and Daddy Standin' By

Paul Swenson

Best thing that ever happened
In church was when Martha
Got Nancy to sing "Summertime"
On Mother's Day—
Not once
But twice.
First, in Relief Society
For all those cream-colored
Sisters, Martha at the
Piano, Kayjean arriving
Just in time to
Unzip her cello while
Martha made introductions

Said her own personal
Mother's Day version of that
Famous line in *Gone With the Wind* was:
"Frankly, my dear, I'd rather be an aunt"
But since she couldn't set that to music
Started thinking about her childhood in Florida
Hot, humid nights; no screens on the open windows
Whipporwills singing her to sleep; waking up to
Songbirds in the trees outside her bedroom
That's why George Gershwin's lullaby
Still sings to her inner child
And how Gershwin came to church on Mother's Day
With Martha, Nancy, and Kayjean

Summertime
And the livin' is easy
Nancy's voice is
Torching the words
Her dark hair cascading
Like a southern night
Catfish jumpin'
And the cotton is high
Across the aisle
A black child is crooning
To himself on his mother's lap—
The only dark faces
In a sea of beige.
Your daddy's rich
And your mama's good lookin'
Hush little baby
Don't you cry
I'm the only adult
Male in the room
And when the song is over
I'm the lone groupie to join
the entourage. Like a roadshow
But without the scenery,
We're moving from the Relief
Society to the Elders' Quorum
A small, dark room full of suits

When the song starts, the light
Comes on in the room
It seems to be coming from Nancy's face
One of these mornings
You're goin' to rise up singin'
You're goin' to spread your wings
And you're goin' to fly
The Elders sit impassively
Until that day
You hush up your cryin'
Mama and daddy standin' by
Best damn thing
Ever happened in church