

DEAD HORSES

Brit. /ded 'hɔrsɪz/

1. A soliloquy for mezzo-soprano.

- Lotte Betts-Dean performed *Dead Horses* last night.
- *Dead Horses* is my favourite solo voice piece.
- Isabella Gellis wrote *Dead Horses* last September.

ISABELLA GELLIS

DEAD HORSES

for unaccompanied voice

ONE OF THE 200 SOLO PIECES WRITTEN
TO COMMEMORATE THE BICENTENARY
OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

**PREMIERED BY LOTTE BETTS-DEAN IN THE
ANGELA BURGESS RECITAL HALL ON THE
8TH OF NOVEMBER 2021**

PROGRAMME NOTE:

The text for *Dead Horses* is taken from a poem I wrote at school, aged sixteen, after our class was encouraged to submit “something small, perhaps a cinquain” to be considered for the annual Poetry Evening. Instead, I chose to attempt a poem using every “word of the week” my school had ever had. It is important to note, when interpreting the tone of the text, that my doing so was not because I was a prolific poet, nor was I fishing for report card glory...rather as one of the world’s most productive procrastinators, who would have done almost anything to avoid maths homework; there were over one hundred words, and it was *very* time consuming. After achieving my technical goal, I felt able to slice a couple stanzas off, for quality’s sake. When writing this piece in 2021, no longer sixteen, I felt the need to again abridge the poem, also for quality’s sake.

The poem itself is about words, and how wonderful, and terrible, and loud, and dangerous, and powerful, and silly they are.

PERFORMANCE NOTE:

- Deliver as if in a theatre, quasi cabaret.
- Pitching is important within internal sections where sequences are involved, but as full priority should always be placed on the performance, I am happy for the general impression of intervallic relationships to be given if need be.
- Provide the glossary alongside the text for performances.
- It will probably always be *at least* eight minutes in length

DEAD HORSES

Ladies and Gentlemen; pay attention,
For I, a prestidigitator of
Words, shall in this encomium,
Siffilate dulcifluous sentences
Awakening you gongoozlers from
Your nightly lassitude,
Satiating not snurping your
Thirst for sesquipedalian sayings.

Xyresic as my wit may seem,
Volatile it can be.
Mercurial not immarcescible an
Abluvion gone in a saccade.
No need to fear, I shall
Anpeyn
Very hard to ensure that
This is not a
Fardel of flim-flam,
A yepsen of pretentious
Concatenations and elucubrations

Some orators like polysyndetons
They make me pandiculate,
Reiterate and pandiculate with boredom.
Spewing fustians, like stentorian drintlings
These panjandrum trammel the
Thoughts of thousands:
Your brain is a palimpsest, a
Filipendulous ventifact. Coruscations
Consumed by the ultracrepidarians,
Surrendered to cynosures
Incapable of impugning.

Quidnuncs prostitute words with the same
Assiduity, listen, the roucoulement
Of the mupmsimuses at
Quotidian nuncheons, bathed in a
Miasma of coffee and spite.
A funambulist in zugzwang
Balancing on blandishments
Baltering is banned, lest you
Fall to the kenspeckle, veprecose
Hadal of narcissistic shame.

I hope that I'm not being abstruse?
Let me elucidate –
Words leave a frittles on the soul
Only inflated by the inexorable
Arrival of more words, like
In torridity, the inchoate yet
Fervid psithurisms and psittacisms will
Only be hushed when
Mundified till impluvious.

Why aren't mortuusequusphobes
Afraid of dead horses?

Prestidigitator – Magician
Encomium – A speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly
Siffilate – To whisper or hiss softly
Dulcifluous – Flowing in a dulcet or gentle manner
Gongoozlers – An idle spectator, specifically a person who enjoys watching activity on the canals of the United Kingdom
Lassitude – A state of physical or mental weariness; lack of energy
Snurping – To contract into a shrivelled form
Sesquipedalian – Polysyllabic
Xyresic – Razor sharp
Immarcescible - Indestructible
Abluvion – That which is washed off [obsolete]
Saccade – A rapid movement of the eye between fixation points
Anpeyn – To try ones hardest [archaic]
Fardel – A bundle
Flim-flam – Nonsensical or insincere talk
Yepsen – Amount that can be held in two hands cupped together [obsolete]
Concatenations – A series of interconnected things
Elucubrations – To work out or express by studious effort
Polysyndetons – Repetition of conjunctions in close succession
Pandiculate – To stretch and stiffen as when fatigued and drowsy, or after waking from sleep
Fustians – Pompous or pretentious speech or writing
Stentorian – (of a person's voice) Loud and powerful
Drintling – The clucking sound that turkeys make
Panjandrum – A person who has or claims to have a great deal of authority or influence
Trammel – To deprive of freedom of action
Palimpsest – Something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form
Filipendulous – Suspended by or strung upon a thread
Ventifact – A stone shaped by the erosive action of wind-blown sand
Coruscation – A display of brilliance or wit
Ultracrepidarians – A person who offers opinions beyond their own knowledge
Cynosures – A person or thing that is the centre of attention or admiration
Impugning – To cause people to doubt someone's character, qualities, or reputation by criticizing them
Quidnuncs – An inquisitive and gossipy person
Assiduity – Constant or close attention to what one is doing
Roucoulement – A soft cooing or murmuring noise, specifically the sound made by a pigeon
Mumpsimus – A person who obstinately adheres to old customs or ideas in spite of evidence that they are wrong or unreasonable
Quotidian – Of or occurring every day; daily. Ordinary or everyday; mundane
Nuncheons – A light refreshment between meals; a snack [archaic]
Miasma – An oppressive or unpleasant atmosphere which surrounds or emanates from something. An unpleasant or unhealthy smell.
Funambulist – A tightrope walker
Zugzwang – A situation in which the obligation to make a move in one's turn is a serious, often decisive, disadvantage.
Blandishments – A flattering or pleasing statement or action used as a means of gently persuading someone to do something.
Baltering – To dance or tread clumsily [archaic]
Kenspeckle – Easily recognizable; conspicuous.
Veprecose – Full of prickly shrubs or bushes; full of brambles [obsolete]
Hadal – Relating to the zone of the sea greater than 6000 m in depth (chiefly oceanic trenches).
Abstruse – Difficult to understand; obscure.
Elucidate – Make (something) clear; explain
Frittles – A temporary mark on the skin caused by the impression of a textured surface [obsolete]
Inexorable – Impossible to stop or prevent.
Torrid – Very hot and dry. Full of difficulty.
Inchoate – Just begun and so not fully formed or developed
Psithurisms – The sound of rustling leaves [obsolete]
Psittacisms – Parrot-like repetition.
Mundified – Cleansed or purified
Impluvious – Wet with rain [obsolete]
Mortuusequusphobia – Fear of tomato ketchup. Coming from the rhyming slang of "dead horse" meaning "red sauce".

DEAD HORSES

MUSIC AND TEXT BY
Isabella Gellis

Freely

f *p* *ff* *f* *playful*

La - dies! La - dies! La - dies La - dies! and Gen - tle-men: Pay at - ten-tion! For I, a pres - ti - di - gi -

p *f* *pp sub.* *mf*

ta - tor (of words) shall in this en - co - mi - um (mi yum yum yum yum) shall sif-fi-late dul-ci - flu-ous sen - ten - ces a - wa - ke-ning you gon goo -

p *6* *6* (hair flip, smile!) (spoken) *senza vib. p breathy, drooping*

- - - - zlers from your night - ly las-si-tude las-si-tude sa - ti - a - ting not snur - - ping your thir -

f *p* *f suddenly brash*

slowing down, running out of energy sharp breath *suddenly cheery! faster* *f* *p breathy*

ir - ir - ir - ir - st for ses - qui - pe - da - li - an say - ings La - dies and Gen - tle - men pay at - ten-tion!

Con moto

(clear throat) finger snaps *cresc. + accel. poco a poco* approximate snapping rhythm from here, becoming frenzied straighten self out *dolce, grinning, vib. rubato, slow* *p*

a - hem Xy - re - sic as my wit may seem vo - la - tile it can be mer - cu - ri - al not im - mar - ces - sa - ble an a - blu vi - on gone in a sac - cade no need to fear..

ff (enjoy the microtones, pitch approx.) claps

I shall an - peyn - ve - ry hard - to en - sure that this is not a far - del of flim - flam a yep - sen of pre - ten - tious con - ca - te - na - tions

subito!

American accent RP English accent American accent RP English accent American accent RP English accent

p *f* *p* *sim.*

and e - lu - cu - bra - tions Some o - ra - tors like po - ly - syn - de - tons they make me pan - di - cu - late re - i - te - rate and pan - di - cu - late with

American accent RP English accent

pp *f* *p* *f*

bore - dom - mm Spew - ing - ng Fus - ti - ans like sten - to - ri - an sten - to - ri - an drint - lings

huge breath as if about to be loud

Ord. accent *p sub.*

start trill slow accel. rall.

these pan - jan - drums tram - mel the thoughts of thou - sands

senza vib. *p* breathy, drooping

your - brain - is - a - pal - imp - sest - a - fi - li - pen - du - lous - ven - ti - fact (mm) co - (co) (co) (co) (co) rus -

poco accel. ----- *subito meno mosso*

5 *gliss.* 6 *gliss.* 4 *gliss.*

- ca - (ca) (ca) (ca) (ca) tions con - (on) (on) (on) (on) (on) sumed by - (y) - (y) - (y) the ul - tra - cre - pi - da - ri - ans sur - ren - dered to

pp possibile *mf* *pp* relaxed, regular


cy - - no - sures in - cap - a ble of im - pu - ning (humming) Quid (mm - mm) nuncs m - m

Sweetly, slowly

la la Quid m - m nuncs m - m - m Quid - nuncs pros - ti - tute words m - m - m - m with the same a - (m - m - m - la) ssi (m - m -

fp pigeon noise, at mid pitch depending on voice

m) du - i - ty (m - m - m - la - la mm - la) Lis - ten mm the rou - cou - le - ment of the



low cooing *fp* *p* *f* *pp*

mum - mm psi - (i) mus - es at quo - ti - di - an nun - cheons bathed in a mi - as - ma of

p *ff* *pp sub.* *f* *p* *(few)* *(bew)*

cof - fee and spi - pi - pi - pi - pi - pi - pi - pi - spite! (mm) a (mm) fu - nam - bu - list la la

gliss. (eye) (y) (tuh)

poco sprechstimme **Thick German accent** Subito playful

ppp *ff* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p* *mf*

oh a fu - nam - bu - list in zug - zwang! zug - zwang! Ba - lan - cing on bland - - ish - ish - ish - ish - ments

manically look around low chest falsetto

