

# Four Superstitions

Richard Causton

words by George Szirtes

These four songs were composed as part of the *200 Solo Pieces* project to celebrate the bicentenary of the Royal Academy of Music. The first performance was given by the baritone Sean Purcell.

The songs are setting of the first four poems from George Szirtes' collection *In the Land of the Giants*. They can be sung by any voice, at any pitch.

The *tempi*, dynamics etc can be modified to suit the performer, and the timing can be fairly fluid (*rubato*). The most important thing is to find and capture the character of the songs and to deliver the words clearly and with personality.

Duration: *c.* 6 minutes

## *Four Superstitions*

### I. *The Sneezing Week*

He who sneezes twice on Monday  
Finds a lost sock in his shoe.

Sneezing even once on Tuesday  
Both your ears fill up with glue.

Wednesday sneezing can be lucky  
Providing that it isn't flu.

Those who sneeze three times on Thursday  
See their fondest dreams come true.

Friday sneezing means a meeting:  
A sneezer geezer meeting you.

Saturday's not good for sneezing.

Sunday sneezing just won't do.

### II. *Bad Signs*

When the wind runs through the garden, when the ants drop down the street  
When the spider in the window has eight legs but just six feet  
When the sheep all start to bark and every dog begins to bleat  
Count your toes, open your eyes,  
Check your pulse, put out your spies,  
Watch where you're going.

When the chickens pack their jimjams, when the pig stands up to beg  
When the butcher sells you chocolate and the baker lays an egg  
When the table starts complaining and demands an extra leg  
Cross your fingers, mop the floor,  
Wash your hands and slam the door,  
Better get going.

When elephants throughout all China suddenly turn black and white  
When the car locked in the garage goes out by itself at night  
When the mouse on the savannah gives the lion a nasty bite  
Pack your bags, empty your pockets,  
Light the candle, set off the rockets,  
On your marks. Set. Get going.

III. *Watch Who You are Winking At*

Wink at a dog  
Fall in a bog.

Wink at a cat  
Lose your hat.

Wink at a slug  
Slip on the rug.

Wink at a fish  
Get your wisj

Wink at a rabbit  
Develop a habit.

IV. *Runs till it Drops*

It never rains but when it's *wet*.  
Slow drying glue is rarely *fast*.  
A flower is up when it's in *bed*.  
A gift's a present when it's *past*.

A beaten fish knows when it's *battered*.  
An ice cream knows when it is *licked*.  
A tired window can look *shattered*.  
A clock's in order when it's *ticked*.

The wrong road is the one you've *crossed*.  
A proper map is a *relief*.  
You rule the roost when you're *embossed*.  
Hankies obey their *handkerchief*.

Leopards may hide but will always be *spotted*.  
The tiger always earns its *stripes*.  
Meat on cue is often *potted*.  
Wind whistles but water *pipes*.

Dad's bald patch is top of the *pops*.  
A hairy lamb grows *muttonchops*.  
A wood's arrested by the *copse*.  
He stopper leaks until it *stops*.

*Your nose runs for you till it drops!!!*

George Szirtes

# Four Superstitions

GEORGE SZIRTES

RICHARD CAUSTON

## I. The Sneezing Week

Flexible & with character (♩ = 54c.)

VOICE

*f* (*mp dim.*) *ten.*

He who snee-zes twice on Mon-day Finds a lost sock in his shoe.

*f* (*mp dim.*) *ten.*

Snee-zing e - ven once on Tues-day Both your ears fill up with glue.

*f* *mp dim.* **poco rit.**

Wednes-day snee-zing can be lu - cky Pro - vi - ding that it is - n't flu.

**a tempo**

*mf*

Those who sneeze three times on Thurs-day See their fon - dest dreams come true.

**poco rit.**

*mp* *dim.* *ten.* ,

Fri - day snee-zing means a mee-ting: A snee-zer gee - zer mee-ting you.

**rit. becoming heavier & darker...**

**slow**

**a tempo**

*p* , *pp* \* ; ↗ , ↗

Sa - tur-day's not good for snee-zing. Sun-day snee-zing just won't do.

\*rapid intake of breath through nose

## II. Bad Signs

**Darkly, with foreboding** (♩ = 44c.)

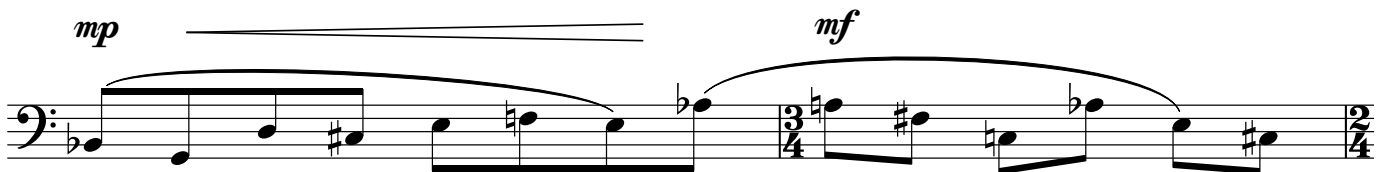
*p lugubre e misurato* *poco*



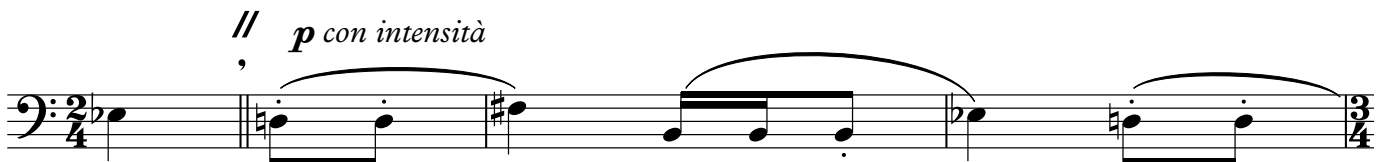
When the wind runs through the gar - den, when the ants troop down the street  
\*the phrasing given in this song is only a suggestion & other options are welcomed.



When the spi - der in the win - dow has eight legs but just six feet



When the sheep all start to bark and ev - ery dog be - gins to



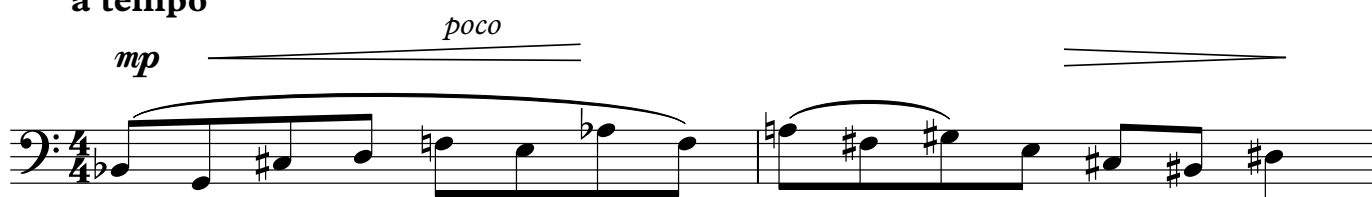
bleat Count your toes, o - pen your eyes, Check your

**Grave**

*pp*



pulse, put out your spies, Watch where you're go - ing.

**a tempo**

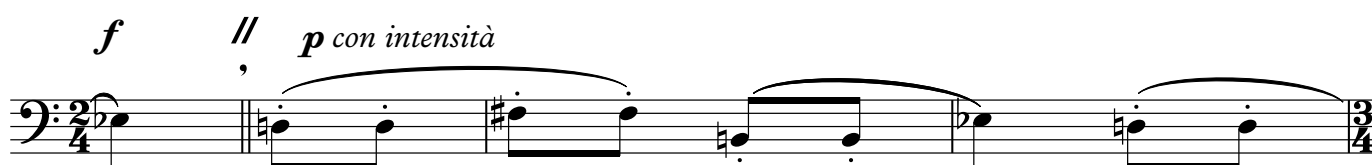
When the chick - ens pack their jim - jams, when the pig stands up to beg



When the but - cher sells you cho - colate and the ba - ker lays an egg



When the ta - ble starts com - plai - ning and de - mands an ex - tra



leg Cross your fin - gers, mop the floor, Wash your

**Grave****a tempo**

hands and slam the door, Bet - ter get go - ing. When



e - le - phants through - out all Chi - na sud - den - ly turn black and white



*poco*

When the car locked in the ga - rage goes out by it - self at night

*p*

When the mouse on the sa - van - nah gives the lion a nas - ty

*// pp con intensità*

bite Pack your bags, emp - ty your poc - kets, Light the

**Grave** *ppp*

can - dle, set off the roc - kets, On your

marks. Set. Get go - ing.

### III. Watch Who You are Winking At

**Leggiero** ( $\text{♩} = 120c.$ )

*f* *p*

Wink at a dog      Fall in a bog.

*f* *p*

Wink at a cat      Lose\_ your hat.

*f* *p*

Wink at a slug      Slip on a rug.

*f* *p*

Wink at a fish      Get\_ your wish

*f* *p*

Wink at a rab-bit      De-ve-lop a ha-bit.

### IV. Runs Till it Drops

**Smooth and calm** (♩ = 60c.)

*mf* *ten.* (,) *sim.*

It ne - ver rains but when it's wet. Slow dry - ing glue is rare - ly fast. A

**più veloce**  
(♩ = 96c.)

*p* *leggiere*

flo - wer's up when it's in bed. A gift's a pre - sent though it's past. A

**accel.** . . . . . (♩ = 108c.) **accel.** . . . . .

*mp* \* *p* *mf* *mp*

bea-ten fish knows when it's bat-tered. An ice cream knows when it is licked. A

\* the next two commas in this section progressively shorter.

**accel.** . . . . . (♩ = 120c.) **rit.** . . . . . // **Tempo I**

*mf* , *mp* , *f* , *p*

tired\_ win-dow can look shat-tered A clock's in or - der when it's ticked. The

wrong\_ road's the one you've crossed. A pro - per map is a re - lief. You

**più veloce**  
(♩ = 96c.)

rule the roost when you're em-bossed. Han - kies o - bey their hand-ker-chief. Leo -

**accel.** . . . . . (♩ = 108c.) **accel.** . . . . .

pards may hide but will be spot-ted. The ti - ger al-ways earns its stripes.

**accel.** . . . . . (♩ = 120c.) **rit.** . . . . . //

Meat on cue is al-ways pot-ted. Wind whis - tles but wa - ter pipes.

**Tempo I**

Dad's bald patch is top of the pops. A hai - ry lamb grows mut - ton-chops. A

**più veloce**  
(♩ = 96c.)

wood's ar - res - ted by the copse. The stop - per leaks un - til it stops. Your

**molto rit.** . . . . . , ,

nose runs for you till it drops!!!