

# I Heard a Fly Buzz

Emily Dickinson

man Shahi

With Reverence ♩=48

A

S. I heard a Fly died. The

A. Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ when I died.

T. Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ when I died.

B. Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Buzz\_ when I died.

Pno.

I heard a Fly buzz  
 The Stillness in  
 Was like the Silence in the Air -  
 Between the Window and the Form -

The Eye had wrung them dry -  
 And Breath had gathered firm  
 For the Infirmary - when the King  
 Beheaded the Room -

The Keepsakes - Signed away  
 With the Vision of me be  
 Assured - and then it was  
 There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -  
 Between the light - and me -  
 And then the Windows failed - and then  
 I could not see to see -

Emily Dickinson 1830-1886

8

S. *pp* Still-ness in the Room was like the Still-ness in the Air. **B** *p* Hmm

A. Room Still-ness in the Air. Buzz. *pp* *p* Hmm

T. Room Still-ness in the Air. *pp* *p* Hmm

B. Room Still-ness in the Buzz. *mp* 3 Be-tween the Heaves of

Pno.

13

S. *mf* es of Storm. *mp* And

A. Heaves of Storm. *mf* *pp* *mp* Hmm And

T. Heaves of Storm. *mf* *mp* The Eyes a - round had wrung them dry.

B. Storm. *mf* *mp* 3 Be-tween the Heaves of Storm. The Eyes a - round had wrung them dry.

Pno.

18

S. Breaths were ga-the-ring firm\_ Be wit-nessed Room\_ *mp* *mf*

A. Breaths were ga-the-ring firm\_ Hmm\_ B in\_ the Room\_ *pp* *mp* *mf*

T. Hmm\_ For that Last\_ On-set when thr wit-nessed in\_ the Room\_ *pp* *mp* *mf*

B. Hmm\_ For that Last\_ O' King Be wit-nessed in\_ the Room\_ *pp* *mp* *mf*

Pno.

23

S. Buzz\_ Buzz\_ Hmm\_ Hmm\_ Keep *p* *pp*

A. Buzz\_ Hmm\_ Hmm\_ Hmm\_ Keep *p* *pp*

T. What por-tion of me be A-sign-a - ble\_ Keep *pp*

B. I\_ willed my Keep-sakes, Signed a -way What por-tion of me be A-sign-a - ble\_ Keep *mp* *pp*

Pno.

**D** Gradually Back to A tempo

29 *rit.*

S. - sakes, A-ssign-a-ble, Signed a - way, Signed a-way

A. - sakes, A-ssign-a-ble, Signed a - way, Signed a-way And then it was

T. - sakes, A-ssign-a-ble, Signed a - way, Signed a-way

B. - sakes, A-ssign-a-ble, Signed a - way, Signed and then it was, And then it was

Pno. *rit.* Gradually Back to A tempo



**A tempo**

**molto accel.**

33 *mf* *f*

S. And then it was was And then it was And then it was And then it was

A. *mf* *f* And then And then it was And then it was And then it was And then it was

T. *mf* *f* was And then it was And then it was And then it was And then it was

B. *f* And then it was And then it was And then it was And then it was And then it was

Pno. **A tempo** **molto accel.**

**A tempo**

35 *ff* **E**

S. There in - ter-posed a Fly, a Fly

A. There in - ter-posed a Fly, a Fly

T. There in - ter-posed a Fly, a Fly

B. There in - ter-posed a Fly,

Pno.



38 *p*

S. With un - cer-tain stum - bling Buzz Stum-bling Buzz

A. Buzz Hmm Buzz Buzz

T. Hmm Buzz Buzz

B. *p* *sotto voce* Be-tween the

Pno.

42 **F** *soffo voce*

S. *p* light and me\_ light and *mp*

A. *p* *soffo voce* light and me\_ light me\_

T. *p* *soffo voce* light and me\_ i\_ d me\_ *mp*

B. light and me\_ Be-tv and me\_ *mp*

Pno. *p* *soffo voce*

S. *p* *pp* light and me\_ an' Win-dows failed,\_ and then I could not see to see. I

A. *p* *pp* light an' en the Win-dows failed,\_ and then I could not see to see. I

T. *p* e\_ and then the Win-dows failed,\_ and then I could not see to see. I

B. *p* *pp* light and me\_ and then the Win-dows failed,\_ and then I could not see to see. I

Pno.

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY - PLEASE DO NOT COPY



50

*mp* *pp* *rall.* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

S. could not see to see Buzz Buzz

A. could not see to see Buzz Bu Hmm

T. could not see to see Buzz Hmm

B. could not see to see Buzz Hmm

Pno.

**PERUSAL SCORE ONLY - PLEASE DO NOT COPY**



Saman Shahi is JUNO-nominated composer, pianist, conductor and educator based in Toronto. His compositions have been performed, and broadcast around the world and include symphonic, orchestral works, operas, ballets, and many works for choral, vocal and chamber ensembles. Saman holds a master's degree in composition from the University of Toronto, is an affiliate Member of the Canadian League of Composers, Associate Composer at the Canadian Music Centre as well as a SOCAN member. He is a Co-Founder and the Executive Director at ICOT, Music Director at the Peterborough Concert band, and a composer and teaching artist with the Canadian Opera Company.

In 2020 Saman's debut composition album "Breathing in the Shadows" was recorded and released by Leaf Music. All song cycles in this album have won awards both in Canada and the United States including a 2022 JUNO Awards nomination. His second album, "Microlocking" was released by People Places Records in 2021

The poem depicts with the moment of death. Instead of portraying with the usual brush hyper-Romanticism and spirituality, it emphasizes the mundane such as a fly buzzing around or describing signing their livelihood away in their Will. In the final stanza, the buzz of the fly comes back, as a reminder that the moment of departure is near, "and then the windows failed – and then I could not see to see". The speaker succumbs to death in the end, without any grandiose pageantry.

I use the "buzz" motif throughout the piece to various effects; Sometimes to set an ambivalent mood, sometimes wistful and sometimes redemptive. The piece also uses silence as a dramatic mechanism to portray the intensity of the "Stillness in the Room". While composing it, this short choral piece felt like a long phrase from the beginning to end, rendering a solemn moment stretched in time. SS