

Dear friends from CityProms,

Greetings from the city of Plovdiv in Bulgaria and the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

We are deeply honoured to have the pleasure of sharing with you our music and to be able to lead you through one of the most famous choir folklore songs in our country.

We were inspired by the topic of this year's festival – nature and animals are our ecosystem and they have been present in almost all representations of our folklore.

When we talk about stage animals – we usually relate it to a dragon-kind-of-creature, called 'zmey' – who would live close to a village, who is almighty and big and beautiful, so often, in our language, nowadays – when someone is presenting something on stage of highest quality we often call that performer - 'zmey' = being the power and energy holder of the performance.

Most often the zmey would be met in the fairytales rather than in the songs and for that reason we chose to suggest that you to learn together and practice a song not about a zmey but about a young horse owner and their beloved horse. The relationship between the owner and the animal, in our songs, is usually presented as very strong and this song is no exception.

The first official recording of the song, kept in the National Academy of Science is from 1958. The song originated long before that from the south-west part of Bulgaria, some 80 kilometres away from Plovdiv, in the mount range called The Rhodope mountains – often referred to as the birth mountain of Orpheus - the Thracian bard, legendary musician and prophet.

The song is sung by women, by men or mixed and is an example of two-voice and/or polyphonic singing. A very interesting musical form - with singing, stepping, chorus and chant. The Bulgarian language used in the song is in a local dialect which is no longer in use but still understood somewhat. It does not have an official title and is most often known by its first lines.

This introductory video aims to demonstrate to you the entire song (starts at minute 5:25 in the video) – as we would be aiming to make it sound towards the end of our meeting in June.

It also shows, in 3 separate video excerpts, the 3 vocal registers that exist in the song – sopranos (starts at minute (9:35 in the video), mezzo-sopranos (starts at minute (13:35 in the video), and Alts (starts at minute (17:15 in the video). Listen to each of them and try to allocate which of them is closest to your own voice. Then you can try to start learning gently and slowly the pronunciation of the words and we can then practice how to sing those words in the voice register you feel most comfortable with in the coming workshops.

We have prepared a simple translation of the text, for you to know what you would be singing about and a phonetic pronunciation of the words. In the text there is one word we have not translated – 'lele', it is a colloquial ending more melodic than meaningful, and was added after a sentence when you would have talked to someone.