

Isolated in a pool of light, a human-scale articulated model of Melolontha melolontha, on his back. His legs kick and wriggle, moved by visible cords coming down from above him, as a marionette.

The ropes do not quite disappear into the darkness above, but meet a system of pulleys and connect at the other end to the singer, upstage and raised slightly, in his own pool of light.

The singer is similarly on his back, similarly helpless. With cords attached to all four limbs, he operates the puppet beetle with kicks and wriggles of his own.

From time to time, the beetle's elytra separate and his membranous forewings briefly emerge, ineffectually buzzing.

MELOLONTHA sings:

In the grub days
In the smooth cool
underground days

I, master-builder
I, burrow-master

Not a rootlet,
not a rhizome
escaped my devouring jaw

three times i rose and fell
the warm to pull me upwards
to a layer of plenty
among the reaching grasses
to feast and feast

many a curious thrushbill did i evade
there were none so fat and white as I

shaken by thundering mole far below
marauding badger above
earth-tearing fox paws
lay still and silent and survived

three times rose and fell
three times i rose and fell
each time fatter than the last

three times split through my tightening skin
released released
to feast and feast
until the chill came to drive me down again

three times
before the long deep
the great sleep

in the grub days
in the smooth cool
underground days

i didn't know then it was dark
i didn't know i was beneath
i didn't have these brittle legs
i didn't have these heavy wings

i feared no owl
i feared no bat

sheltered by earth
in the smooth cool underground days