

Story for performance #121
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Source: John F. Burns, 'On eve of Saddam's trial, questions', *New York Times* in *International Herald online*, 19/10/05.

Tags: [film](#), [intimacy](#), [nostalgia](#)

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In my inbox this morning this from my sister: 'Thanks for that, girl, wish we were still both there. But I chuckled that all in. Now I'm in Texas. I recorded my first mockingbird this evening and was thrilled despite making every mistake possible. Love, Holly'

Holly. I was last with her backstage at Lincoln Hall. I didn't hang around after the recital. At that time she was perfecting her use of Chopin's technique. She was there preparing herself, pacing nervously wearing a cravat, dinner suit, and boxing gloves. An aura of farce you might say, except that for me, Holly doesn't have an aura.

'Don't go there' I tell myself. 'There's no "there" there'. But my mind casts back.

We're late.

Now that we're in junior high and our mother is working, we can cut class and take the bus, the bus which winds through letterbox landscapes into town, this little southern town which must be, like all the others we've moved to, of no earthly use because in the sidewalk there are lots of cracks to step over and puffballs emerge from the earth below.

A woman walks by, straightened hair, the top teased to add height, the ends flipped. Holly too wears a flip. (After the shower run 'dippity doo' through, make a pony tale on top of your head, divide that into three parts and roll each up on big rollers. Sleep on it.)

We cross over to the other side of the street in front of Walgreen's Cafeteria where mother takes us on weekends for fried chicken, mashed potatoes and spinach. Mother wears a sort of a flip, but doesn't know we're here on a school day, crossing the street, over to the Paramount, opening the door to the ruined picture palace smell, buying our tickets at the candy stand and walking straight into the theatre.

Bless the Beasts and the Children is in its third week and by now Holly has memorized so many of the lines. She is

the sound of noise which lives. Right now Wheaties is screaming at the boys that they're like buffalo -they need to be shot.

From Halliwell's 10th edition: 1971, 'A group of misfit teenagers at a ranch resort rebel against their counselors to save a herd of buffalo earmarked for destruction. Rather obviously pointed melodrama, well enough done but not very interesting.'

I admit this. But my own review would, naturally enough, be fonder. We lived the dream out loud—the childrens' version of the sixties baptized in Nixonian soft-rock, already begun. The Carpenters, Holly was the loud speaker. I was the sound of the needle in the groove mourning. The buffalo, that other American project, cast long shadows. Unventilated creatures barely worth powder and shot.

These days if I want to see a movie I'll read the script. The film is the damaged version. But then Holly and I were mesmerized in the optical sound—by meat, by womanish boys, by first business. My review would linger over Billy Mumy's swallow beauty. And the transitions—the 'mosaic flip', the 'clock wipe', the 'iris'. And my favourite, used over and over in this film, the 'push-slide dissolve'. From screen left slides a scene remembered, and simply pushes the present out of frame.

Holly takes a seat. I walk all the way down the aisle feeling gravity and the downward slope of things, and then climb the steps up to the proscenium. With a look back over my shoulder as I mount the steps—there's no one to notice, only Holly mouthing dialogue to the empty seats—I duck behind the projection screen.

And there, in the space between the screen and the mouldering velvet curtain, cast in the radiance and the shadows of wounded boys and unventilated beasts, I kneel.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sherre DeLys.