*A Horse’s End –* a hybrid dance suite/concerto/music theatre piece

*A Horse’s End* is a music theatre piece commissioned by United Instruments of Lucilin, with euphonium soloist Philippe Schwartz, and featuring physical theatre/dance performer Irene Fas Fita, under the direction of Lionel Ménard.

The piece is a concerto for euphonium and ensemble; it’s also a piece of political theatre, with the character of the Horse being used to represent the disruptive and sometimes subversive causes of Brexit. The dual theatrical traditions of pantomime in UK and Ireland, and the Welsh Mari Lwyd tradition represent the subversive, and fundamentally unserious aspect of the Brexit campaign. It is also a dance suite, with the multiple European origins of the Baroque model (Allemand, stile francese) brought up to date by the inclusion of later dances – waltz, EDM, and Hora ţigănească. This last dance style was chosen as a subversion of the shouted Brexit slogans: since the Brexit campaign included xenophobic statements, these are shouted as Romanian *strigaturi* – the dance words mentioned by Bartók in Rumanian Folk Music (1967) –over a hora ţigănească, a Roma gypsy style hora.

Musically, the solo writing for the euphonium is virtuosic and develops extended techniques on the euphonium in order to represent the voice of the horse. The soloist, Philippe Schwartz suggested many extended techniques, and some, such as the “wobble bass” effect in “Eine Kleine Nacht(klub)musik” were developed in collaboration.

Collaboration was also important in developing the piece’s theatrical aspect – Lionel Ménard developed the idea of the horse and the horse’s performer being in dialogue with themselves. This, as realised beautifully by mime artist and dancer Irene Fas Fita, allowed for an element of internal struggle to be shown onstage.

The premiere performance was given by United Instruments of Lucilin on June 10th 2022 as part of their ‘Lucilin au Carré’ series, Luxembourg. The conductor was Pit Brosius.