

Il flauto dolce

We'd like to tell you a story. It's a story that has been told many times before, but as you know, the beauty of a story is always in the telling. It's the colours in the storyteller's voice, the way the words are coupled together, the little quirks of inflection and the momentary silences that make it memorable.

Vivaldi wrote the words of our story. We unfastened them from their original settings and bound them together again in a new form – a *pasticcio*. The tale that results is ours, but could just as well have been one of his. It's fanciful, colourful, passionate – the stuff of opera.

Words derive meaning from their context. The same words, even whole sentences, can mean such different things in different circumstances. If you know fragments of our narrative in other guises, as parts of different scenarios, you may wonder at their delivery here. Everything in this version has been designed to intensify the experience of our own fabricated story.

We begin by presenting the orchestra. There is a grand sweep of sound, a fierce power in this collective beast, the excitement of the pluck and the strum, the intensity of hairs meeting gut.

The heroine responds in kind, intoxicated by this music, breaking in over the final chord with youthful impatience. Hers is an unbridled joy.

A chilling response follows: the rich voice of the violin in its lowest register disapproves. The orchestra join with considered sentences of rejection.

Filigree hard and theorbo weave around the plea that ensues. Heavy with dread, the hard pedal slows almost to a halt and our heroine runs out of words.

A raging storm pelts down contempt and then ... silence.

A bass line emerges from a woolly organ pipe. Twisted, chromatic anguish is reinforced by harp, theorbo, guitar, harpsichord and harp again. A little recorder floats above, but there is no body left in this voice, little strength, and few ornaments. Who has the energy to be eloquent in grief?

The chorus returns with a gently weeping melody – haunted sentences where the sound is blurred by tears.

We are submerged in melancholy, in brooding hopelessness where phrases go in circles, passagework leads nowhere and is followed by violent chords of complete desolation.

The angel voices of harp and theorbo return to signal a moment of epiphany for the violin. Her inspired thought animates others, the possibility of dialogue opens out and gradually all the players are led to a place of pastoral repose.

Folly, festivities and finally an exultant summary of all that has been: the full gamut of human experience told in a concerto.

Our story told in music, Vivaldi's music.