

The Tiger and the Little Bear
A Fantasy Cantata
For Chamber Orchestra, Two Sopranos, and Tenor

Music and Libretto by
Bryce Weber

Composer's Notes

The Tiger and the Little Bear is fantastical story based on the style of the Grimm fairy tales. Many modern tellings of these stories are quite tame in comparison to the nonchalant gruesomeness that is common in the originals. This cantata tells a story in this manner with the odd mix of light-hearted fantasy and dark consequentialism.

The cantata is a genre that originated in Italy during the Baroque period. Many aspects of this work are specifically modeled after the Italian solo chamber cantata which was traditionally performed unstaged in intellectual clubs known as academies. In comparison to opera, which was also developing at this time, cantatas tended to be more experimental, particularly in the recitative. In addition, while the main purpose of opera was to entertain, cantatas were intended to stimulate thought. In emulation of this, the libretto's main theme is symbolized with, "A bright blue sky; a crimson creek." The main character, the tiger, must make some difficult decisions on how to protect her domain from the ever-encroaching presence of humans.

Libretto

I. Ballad: An Axe and a Gun

A tiger knew days of terror;
Scares of guns an' axes on her pelt.
In her keep was a little bear.
Hardship the bear had never felt

The wood was safe but darkened by
The tiger's fierce subjection.
She often sang a lullaby
Of the price of their protection.

Sleep, sleep ever deep; a bright blue sky, a crimson creek

A young man came one afternoon,
A letter in his hand.
He whistled such a lovely tune;
It brightened up the land.

The tiger readied then to pounce
But much to her surprise,
Vivaciously the bear pronounced,
"Let live, let goodness thrive."

Not without some hesitation
Was the man allowed to stay.
Only one, just one provision,
The bear should keep away.

But the letter brought unhappy news.
How quickly hearts can fill with pain.
To save the man from solitude
The bear came forth and sang.

Sleep, sleep ever deep; a bright blue sky, a crimson creek

The tiger watches from a tree.
Sunlight departs and darkness brings,
What only feline eyes can see; what only my eyes can see.
An axe and a gun among the young man's things.

II. Duet: Second Place Again

Young Man

Do believe me when I say I'm sorry I must write today
To tell you my heart's gone astray. I truly hope you'll be okay.

This she writes so easily, so thoughtlessly contrived to be a severance of her ties to me. I spiral now quite endlessly.

I do believe I'm gonna be in second place again.
First place is the luxury of highly gifted men.

I do believe I'm gonna be in second place again,
But second place in love is not a spot you wanna win.

Honesty, integrity don't matter in the end.
She prefers proximity over the virtues within

Much to my chagrin, much to my distress, she's left me for another man whom she considers best.

Little Bear

I do believe this truth we share, life's ironically unfair. The brightest sky, the freshest air has become a darkened lair.

Much have I yet to learn, to be as strong and brave as her, but ambitions take a turn, second place to her concerns.

I do believe I'm gonna be in second place again.
First place is the luxury of creatures on the wind

I do believe I'm gonna be in second place again.
A safe and cozy life for me is this here wood but I'm not free.

Gallantry, bravery don't matter in the end.
All noble propensities shine forth only in sin.

I do believe I'm gonna be in second place again.

III. Recitative: Thus said the Tiger

Thus said the tiger to the little bear; “you must go home without a care.
I’ll stay and comfort the boy with the broken heart.”

Thus said the tiger to the little bear; “you must go comb your unkempt hair.
Rest your tired eyes with a full night’s sleep.”

Thus said the tiger to the little bear; “you must not go so unprepared.
I’ll sing you music so sweet, sleep, sleep ever deep.”

Thus went the bear when she awoke to visit him whose heart was broke.
All to be found were bones. She chewed the marrow and went home.

IV. Aria: Sleep, Sleep Ever Deep

Sleep, sleep ever deep; a bright blue sky, a crimson creek.
Sleep, sleep ever deep. No need to know the deeds I’ve done.
To keep you safe I’ve slain the weak. Sleep, sleep ever deep.

Lovely forest, lovely trees forgive me for the things you’ve seen.
Remember guns that bit your bark and axes brought you to your knees.
Lovely forest, lovely trees forgive, forgive me, the things I’ve done, the things I’ve seen.

Sleep, sleep ever deep; a bright blue sky, a crimson creek.
Sleep, sleep ever deep. No need to know the deeds I’ve done.
To keep you safe I’ve slain the weak. Sleep, sleep ever deep.