

Bastien and Bastienne

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART



The Story of the Opera

Bastienne (soprano) has gone out to the meadow to watch over her flock of sheep. She waits for her boyfriend Bastien (tenor) and when she realizes that he has skipped their regular Saturday afternoon appointment, she is forced to admit that the rumors are true - Bastien has found another girlfriend! As she sits alone, feeling sad and mad, she hears music that announces the arrival of the great magician, Colas (bass). He has understood her predicament and offers his help.

Bastienne explains to Colas that people are talking about a new girl who has just arrived in the nearby city. The girl is rich and she fears Bastien has been lured away by her beauty, her fancy jewelry, her gigantic house, and above all, her ability to make a delicious chocolate cake! All Bastienne has to offer him is the charm of the meadows and the companionship of her sheep. Colas begs her not to waste energy being upset. He sends Bastienne away and he promises to use his magic powers to teach Bastien a lesson.

Bastien appears, but he is not happy. He has eaten so much that his stomach hurts! He has realized on his own that the city girl is not good for him and that Bastienne is his true love. Colas, determined to make sure that Bastien will never make this mistake again, tells him that it is too late; Bastienne has found another boyfriend and is no longer available. He makes Bastien swear to always be faithful, and then he recites a complicated “magic spell” ensuring that Bastien will win her back.

Bastienne appears and follows Colas’ instructions to pretend to reject Bastien. At the depth of despair, he threatens to run away and “jump into a lake.” Bastienne pretends not to care, but as she sees how truly sorry he is, she relents and forgives him. They realize that the true magic is found in the “words that heal our hearts and help us to forgive.” Colas joins them in a final song as they celebrate their understanding of the real magic, the magic of true love!

Translation and adaptation by Mary Dibbern

The Characters

Bastienne: (soprano) A young shepherdess; she loves Bastien but is worried he loves another. She turns to Colas for help to win Bastien back.

Bastien: (tenor) Bastienne’s lover; he is distracted by another lady in town but he really loves Bastienne.

Colas: (bass) The village wise man and magician; he helps Bastienne and Bastien get back together.