

The Intelligence Park – Synopsis

ACT ONE

A boy's voice sings a chorale on fatherhood.

SCENE I. The composer Paradies is struggling to write an opera with the aid of a toy theatre on the amorous entanglements of Wattle, a warrior, and Daub, an enchantress, but his imagination has dried up. His companion D'Esperaudieu enters and there follows a discussion about Paradies's obligation to marry Jerusha Cramer if he is to inherit his father's estate.

SCENE II. The two attend a party at the magistrate Sir Joshua Cramer's house, where the guests appear as costumed Dummies. His daughter Jerusha sings, only to be silenced by the arrival of her singing teacher, the castrato Serafino and his companion Faranesi. Faranesi tells the story of Serafino's castration. Paradies, dispirited, resolves to abandon marriage and his inheritance but when Serafino sings he is transfixed and fails to speak out.

INTERLUDE: Cramer's banquet. His guests place their orders.

SCENE III. D'Esperaudieu mocks Paradies for his obsession with Serafino and speaks of the advantages of marriage – a large estate and all that comes with it. They quarrel.

SCENE IV. Paradies conjures up Wattle and Daub, the fantasy characters in his new opera. They struggle through a love scene dominated by images of guilt, betrayal and imprisonment. Paradies is possessed by thoughts of Serafino as his power to write begins to return.

ACT TWO

SCENE I. Faranesi plays blind man's buff with Serafino and Jerusha, who obviously share a secret intimacy. Cramer enters, and the three hastily contrive a singing lesson on the song Serafino sang in Act I. As her father anticipates the union of the houses of Cramer and Paradies, Jerusha sings of dawn and colour.

SCENE II. Paradies summons his operatic characters, Wattle and Daub. In the role of Wattle's stern adviser he impatiently encourages Wattle to abandon Daub and is angry when Wattle hesitates.

SCENE III. D'Esperaudieu watches Paradies as he stands in the snow outside Serafino's house. They both hide as Faranesi appears and enters the house. Mysterious cries come from within. Serafino appears on the balcony.

INTERVAL

SCENE IV. D'Esperaudieu walks in a Dublin street and encounters Faranesi who appears strangely agitated.

SCENE V. Paradies, trying to compose, fantasises about a meeting with Serafino. Suddenly Daub appears unbidden and Paradies struggles with her. D'Esperaudieu enters and provokes

Paradies to an angry outburst. Cramer enters, unintelligible with rage, followed by Faranesi. Serafino and Jerusha have eloped. Paradies tries to speak out but is silenced by the sound of midnight bells, conjuring up a feverish operatic vision. Daub now has the upper hand, Wattle is her prisoner and Paradies has lost control. Cramer vows that Serafino will be caught. Paradies breaks down.

ACT III

PRELUDE. The globe in Paradies' study spins as time passes, coming to rest in a series of stations.

STATION ONE. D'Esperaudieu sings of the mechanical workings of nature and of Paradies's racing debts.

STATION TWO. Serafino as performer begins the aria of the imprisoned lion.

STATION THREE. Cramer in a coffin is mocked by the people of Dublin: 'The chicken steals the vixen...' He has devised a plan to capture his erring daughter and son-in-law.

STATION FOUR. Serafino's da capo is interrupted when he is arrested.

SCENE I. A grief-stricken Jerusha writes a letter from which we hear fragments describing her father's plot. He had written a letter pretending to forgive them, then had them seized and suffer 'a variety of wretchedness'. Serafino can be heard singing a masochistic love song.

SCENE II. D'Esperaudieu recounts Cramer's plot and the fate of the eloped couple to Paradies. Paradies determines to plead with Cramer that he needs Serafino for his opera.

SCENE III. The Dummies play a game of ombre and weave in and out of the conversation in Cramer's drawing room. Paradies attempts to speak to Cramer, whose listlessness alternates with wild animation as they enter upon a grotesque banquet. The light fades as the sun goes into eclipse. All respond with images of terror and darkness. Cramer collapses and dies of an apoplectic fit, having already bequeathed all his possessions to Paradies, who refuses them.

SCENE IV. Serafino and Jerusha perform the closing scenes of Paradies's opera.

SCENE V. As Paradies prepares to leave Dublin the chorus sings of the bitterness of parting and of love frustrated.