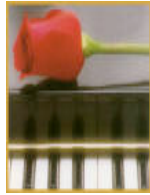


A Conductor's Insult



This story takes place in South America, where the hot-blooded-latin members of a Brazilian symphony orchestra were preparing a difficult new work for a concert that same night. At the end of the piece there was an extended flute solo, which, for one reason or another, had not been properly prepared by the principal flutist. He played some wrong accidentals, stumbled over some arpeggio passages, and fell apart.

The conductor was furious, and, in front of the entire orchestra, verbally ripped the flute player to shreds; he accused the flutist of laziness, incompetence, unprofessionalism, and finally stupidity like a pig. The flutist accepted this harsh criticism stoically, and said not a word in reply.

There had been no time at the end of the rehearsal to correct the problem, so, at the performance that night, everybody was breathless with anticipation to see what would happen with the flute solo.

When the moment arrived, the flutist stood up grandly, played the bravura arpeggio passage brilliantly, and sent the last haunting note off into the night with the most delicately faint sigh. A Mona Lisa smile played across his lips, as his eyes met the conductor's face, grinning with satisfaction. It was a perfectly transcendent musical moment.

Then the flutist turned to his gig bag sitting on the chair, pulled out a revolver, and shot the conductor in the heart.