The Killing Flower
(Luci Mie Traditrici)

An opera in two acts by Salvatore Sciarrino

Libretto by Salvatore Sciarrino

(after IL TRADIMENTO PER L’ONORE by Francesco Stromboli published as G.A. Cicognini, 1664 with an Elegy by Claude Le Jeune based on a text by G. Durand, 1608)

Libretto translated into English by Paola Loreto

Translation commissioned by Music Theatre Wales for the UK premiere tour in 2013

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Music Theatre Wales Tour Dates 2013

Tuesday 16th July  
Buxton Opera House (UK Premiere at the Buxton Festival)

Friday 18th October  
Wales Millennium Centre

Thursday 24th October  
Linbury Studio Theatre, Royal Opera House

Saturday 2nd November  
Venue Cymru, Llandudno

Tuesday 26th November  
Swansea Grand Theatre

Cast

Duchess  Amanda Forbes
Guest  William Towers
Servant  Michael Bennett
Duke  George Humphreys

Creative Team

Conductor  Michael Rafferty
Director  Michael McCarthy
Designer  Simon Banham
Lighting Designer  Ace McCarron

www.musictheatrewales.org.uk
THE KILLING FLOWER  
Salvatore Sciarrino

ACT I

Prologue

(A VOICE FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN)

What happened to the lovely eyes
Which lightened my soul with their rays,
Where Love found his darts, his flames, his traits?
What now of the mouth, of the pretty laugh, and talk
With which my mistress caught the wildest in love?

What came of the cheek, crimson with love and coyness,
On which Love laid thousands of roses and lilies?
What of the fine golden curls, once shining,
Of which thousand Cupids, thousand nets...

Scene I

(In the garden, morning)

IL MALASPINA
Come, my life, admire the one half concealed. I will pluck it.

LA MALASPINA
Let it be my own hand.

IL MALASPINA
Crimson and ivory will show together.

LA MALASPINA
A clumsy endeavour: a trench has formed.

IL MALASPINA
Watch the thorns.

LA MALASPINA
Oh, they have pricked me, and well.

IL MALASPINA
Cursed be that rose!

LA MALASPINA
Yet, especially dear to me...

IL MALASPINA
Too high a price is your blood.

LA MALASPINA
Not if from that blood the rose was born.
IL MALASPINA
Your hand is bleeding!
I feel faint…

LA MALASPINA
Such a weak heart is yours.
Come help! My spouse has passed out.

Darkness

Scene II
(In the garden, morning)

IL MALASPINA
My breath is now returning.

LA MALASPINA
A droplet of blood nearly took your soul away.

IL MALASPINA
My paradise, there’s a difference twixt Mars and Cupid.

LA MALASPINA
Those who love are daring.

IL MALASPINA
Those who love are fearful.

A SERVANT (unseen)
Ah, those who love torment themselves.

LA MALASPINA
I’m daring.

IL MALASPINA
I’m fearful.

SERVANT (unseen)
I’m desperate.

LA MALASPINA
I’m daring because I love you.

IL MALASPINA
I’m fearful because I adore you.

SERVANT (unseen)
I’m desperate because I don’t dare.

LA MALASPINA
I will love you forever.
IL MALASPINA
So will I forever.

SERVANT (unseen)
And so shall I, as long as I live.

LA MALASPINA
O, the happiness of love!

IL MALASPINA
O, the delights of love!

SERVANT (unseen)
O, the misery of a lover!

LA MALASPINA
You are mine.

IL MALASPINA
I am yours, indeed.

SERVANT (unseen)
Death owns me.

LA MALASPINA
Here is my right hand.

IL MALASPINA
I hold it and kiss it.

SERVANT (unseen)
I weep and sigh.

IL MALASPINA
Let’s go, my life.

LA MALASPINA
I’ll follow, my beloved.

SERVANT (unseen)
Go, my Duchess. My heart will follow you.

Intermezzo I

Scene III

(In the garden, noon)

THE GUEST
O God!

LA MALASPINA
Alas!
GUEST
What do I see?

LA MALASPINA
What am I feeling?

GUEST
Such a beauty…

LA MALASPINA
Such ardour…

GUEST
I am gazing into paradise.

LA MALASPINA
I’m feeling an inferno in my heart.

GUEST
Ah, I wish I were born without eyes…

LA MALASPINA
Ah, I wish I had died in my cradle…

GUEST
Ah, what force is doing me violence…

LA MALASPINA
Ah, what violence is forcing me…

GUEST
My heart is throbbing in my chest.

LA MALASPINA
My soul is blazing in my guts.

GUEST
Love has stabbed me.

LA MALASPINA
Death, why don’t you end me?

GUEST
Miserable, what shall I do?

LA MALASPINA
Unhappy, what will you do?

GUEST
I shall suffer.

LA MALASPINA
I will keep silent.
GUEST
I shall be in pains.

LA MALASPINA
I shall die.

GUEST
O, but love…

LA MALASPINA
O, but honour…

GUEST
My eyes betrayers…

LA MALASPINA
My eyes betrayers…

GUEST
Turn away from that face.

LA MALASPINA
Do not meet that gaze.

GUEST
O yes, I'll take pity on you.

LA MALASPINA
Yes, o yes, I'll grant you mercy.

GUEST
Admire the loveliest thing in the world.

LA MALASPINA
Admire the finest fruit of nature.

GUEST
Speak, my eyes…

LA MALASPINA
My eyes, tell him…

GUEST
That I'm burning.

LA MALASPINA
That I adore…

GUEST
Be silent, my tongue.

LA MALASPINA
Close, my lips.
GUEST
Impudent tongue.

LA MALASPINA
Bold mouth.

GUEST
I will speak no more, my Lady.

LA MALASPINA
Into silence will I lapse.

GUEST
I must leave, Duchess.

LA MALASPINA
Farewell, my Lord.

GUEST
One word, though…

LA MALASPINA
But hark…

GUEST
What?

LA MALASPINA
Aye, Lord?

GUEST
Nothing.

LA MALASPINA
Nothing.

GUEST
Alas!

LA MALASPINA
O God!

GUEST
What confusion…

LA MALASPINA
What turmoil…

Scene IV

(In the garden, noon)

SERVANT (unseen)
I am stirred by jealousy.
GUEST
One word, my Lady.

LA MALASPINA
Speak.

GUEST
What will I tell you…

LA MALASPINA
That which I would tell you…

SERVANT (unseen)
I wish I had no ears…

GUEST
What then would you say?

LA MALASPINA
That I…

GUEST
Love you.

LA MALASPINA
So do I, yet…

GUEST
Ah, this “Yet” is death!

SERVANT (unseen)
Ach! You venomous snake!
You bite me too deep…

GUEST
Do you swear fidelity?

LA MALASPINA
I swear it!

GUEST
Only God will see us.

SERVANT (unseen)
Alas! I, poor wretch, see you too!

GUEST
I know I’m presuming too much.

LA MALASPINA
I know I’m going astray.

GUEST
Yet your beauty’s so compelling.
LA MALASPINA
Yet, my destiny is leading me.

GUEST
I am yours, my Lady.

LA MALASPINA
I am yours, my life.

SERVANT (unseen)
Anger and revenge possess me.

LA MALASPINA
Behind that jasmine stands a secret door.
Wait for me there: I'll open it for you.

GUEST
I'll go, my beauty. Come.

LA MALASPINA
I'll be waiting, my Light.

GUEST
Let Love help me!

LA MALASPINA
Let silence protect me!

GUEST
I'll go.

LA MALASPINA
I shall go, too, to wait for you.

GUEST
Ah, what rapture!

LA MALASPINA
Ah, what sweetness!

SERVANT (unseen)
Ah, what torment!

Darkness II

Scene V

(Inside, noon)

IL MALASPINA
And this is true?
SERVANT
I wish it were not.

IL MALASPINA
And you saw them?

SERVANT
With these very eyes.

IL MALASPINA
But is it true, indeed? The tale is past believing…

SERVANT
Yet, believe you must.

IL MALASPINA
Far better you had stabbed my heart.

SERVANT
Zeal prompted me to talk.

IL MALASPINA
I was not dishonoured till you spoke.

SERVANT
Had I kept silent, I would have betrayed you.

IL MALASPINA
You are forcing me to kill them.

SERVANT
That way you will amend your honour.

IL MALASPINA
And I shall lose her, who is my life.

SERVANT
I deemed it right to do so.

IL MALASPINA
Great evil will come of this.
Go to the jasmine door, and watch.

SERVANT
As you will. (Goes out)

IL MALASPINA (To himself)
Your turn will be first.

(After a while, the Servant returns)

IL MALASPINA
Have you seen the Duchess?
SERVANT
No, my Lord.

IL MALASPINA
I believe she’s in her room.
Take this key, and open the door quietly.

ACT II

Scene VI

(Inside, dusk)

IL MALASPINA
So, my Lady Duchess, what are you doing?

LA MALASPINA
Nothing, and much.

IL MALASPINA
How so, nothing and much?

LA MALASPINA
Living for nothing, yet worn by my guilt.

IL MALASPINA
Say no more of this.

LA MALASPINA
Yet, this will always haunt us.
I’m forgiven, then… but how?
Ah, I am torn between two dreams!
Do not wonder that I call myself both alive and dead.

IL MALASPINA
Let us change the subject, my Lady Duchess.

LA MALASPINA
And talk of what, then?

IL MALASPINA
Tell me of the love that you feel for me.

LA MALASPINA
I should talk about the infinite.

IL MALASPINA
Yet your love was interrupted,
therefore it is less than perfect.

LA MALASPINA
I am speaking of the love that I feel now,
which is boundless.
IL MALASPINA
How much do you love me?

LA MALASPINA
As much as your Grace loves his own soul.

IL MALASPINA
Do you love me as you love yourself?

LA MALASPINA
No, my Lord, for I would hate you.

IL MALASPINA
Do you hate yourself?

LA MALASPINA
I do hate myself.

IL MALASPINA
Why?

LA MALASPINA
You know why.

IL MALASPINA
Will you sin again?

LA MALASPINA
I would rather die first.

IL MALASPINA
Regenerated phoenix!

LA MALASPINA
Absolute culprit.

IL MALASPINA
I love you, Duchess, believe me.

LA MALASPINA
It helps me to believe it.

IL MALASPINA
Do you swear fidelity?

LA MALASPINA
Eternal.

IL MALASPINA
And I swear to you eternal love.

LA MALASPINA
What is the pledge?
Il Malaspina
Take my right hand.

La Malaspina
O sweetest bond!

Il Malaspina
Beauty is a fine sorceress.

La Malaspina
Love is a finer sorcerer.

Il Malaspina
You believe it?

La Malaspina
I believe it.

Il Malaspina
So be it, then.

La Malaspina
Be what?

Il Malaspina
What behoves me.

La Malaspina
Aye me!

Il Malaspina
You’re sighing?

La Malaspina
I’m sighing.

Il Malaspina
For what?

La Malaspina
For death.

Il Malaspina
Talk of living, my Lady!

La Malaspina
Living?

Il Malaspina
Yes, living.

La Malaspina
Noble soul!
IL MALASPINA
Love beyond saying.

LA MALASPINA
What is your pawn?

IL MALASPINA
Myself.

LA MALASPINA
When, then?

IL MALASPINA
This evening?

LA MALASPINA
May I believe it?

IL MALASPINA
You may.

IL MALASPINA
Sun, move faster in your course!

IL MALASPINA
Hasten, darkness…

LA MALASPINA
Gods, I render thanks.

IL MALASPINA
I must leave now, Duchess.

LA MALASPINA
Whither?

IL MALASPINA
To Pietramala.

LA MALASPINA
And return?

IL MALASPINA
Sometime after supper.

LA MALASPINA
I will not retire.

IL MALASPINA
No, my Lady.

LA MALASPINA
I shall be waiting for you.
IL MALASPINA
I’ll find you.

LA MALASPINA
Farewell, my paradise.

IL MALASPINA
Farewell, my amorous inferno.

Scene VII

(Inside, evening)

IL MALASPINA
This night I will detain you, but never again.

LA MALASPINA
Don’t say so. You have shown me nothing but grace.

IL MALASPINA
What keeps you busy, my Lady?

LA MALASPINA
This embroidery.

IL MALASPINA
What are you making?

LA MALASPINA
A pillowcase for you.

IL MALASPINA
What is this greenery?

LA MALASPINA
It’s a branch of myrtle.

IL MALASPINA
Would you please add a cypress?

LA MALASPINA
Why a cypress?

IL MALASPINA
Cypresses and myrtles go well together.

LA MALASPINA
I will do so.

IL MALASPINA
You won’t have enough time.

LA MALASPINA
I need little.
IL MALASPINA
If you require little, you will have it.

LA MALASPINA
I will make the impossible, possible.

IL MALASPINA
And I the possible, impossible.

LA MALASPINA
Let us go to bed.

IL MALASPINA
As your Grace commands.

LA MALASPINA
I shall disrobe.

IL MALASPINA
Go ahead, my Lady.
I’ll be waiting for you.

Intermezzo III

Scene VIII

(Chamber, night)

LA MALASPINA
My Lord Duke.

IL MALASPINA
My Lady Duchess.

LA MALASPINA
My beloved consort.

IL MALASPINA
My dearest spouse.

LA MALASPINA
Here I am.

IL MALASPINA
I was waiting for you.

LA MALASPINA
You seem troubled.

IL MALASPINA
My heart is in flames.
LA MALASPINA
What torments you?

IL MALASPINA
An honourable passion.

LA MALASPINA
Can I ease the pain?

IL MALASPINA
You and you alone can heal it.

LA MALASPINA
Here is my life, Sir.

IL MALASPINA
Very generous.

LA MALASPINA
I would fain yield it for you.

IL MALASPINA
Is your talk sincere?

LA MALASPINA
I speak from the heart.

IL MALASPINA
You would die then, for me?

LA MALASPINA
Surely.

IL MALASPINA
I remind you that dying is gruesome.

LA MALASPINA
I would find it so gentle.

IL MALASPINA
Truly, life is death, and death, life.

LA MALASPINA
How so, Sir?

IL MALASPINA
Enough, let us talk of living.

LA MALASPINA
Before my life, I cannot speak of dying.

IL MALASPINA
Before my death…
LA MALASPINA
Would I be your death, then?

IL MALASPINA
An amorous death….

LA MALASPINA
You’re joking, Duke…

IL MALASPINA
I have never been more serious.

LA MALASPINA
You love me that much?

IL MALASPINA
More than you think.

LA MALASPINA
And where shall I find proof of such a great love, Sir?

IL MALASPINA
In bed.

LA MALASPINA
That would be the cradle of my pleasure.

IL MALASPINA
Well put, my Lady.

LA MALASPINA
What are we waiting for?

IL MALASPINA
For you to lie down.

LA MALASPINA
I shall go to the bed, then, Sir.

IL MALASPINA
Wait…

LA MALASPINA
Here I am, still.

IL MALASPINA
Let me light up a torch…

LA MALASPINA
Why?

IL MALASPINA
As a confirmation of faith.
LA MALASPINA
As before a corpse?

IL MALASPINA
Precisely: you take the torch.

LA MALASPINA
Your face has changed, Sir.
Love should not turn into a funeral.

IL MALASPINA
Let the torch declare it.

LA MALASPINA
In what way?

IL MALASPINA
By drawing back the bed curtains.

LA MALASPINA
My pulse is racing…

IL MALASPINA
So little daring, now?

LA MALASPINA
My blood is freezing…

IL MALASPINA
There were days you would rush to this bed in eager joy.

LA MALASPINA
Oh doleful memories…

IL MALASPINA
Truthful tales…

LA MALASPINA
So will this be the time for penance?

IL MALASPINA
Ask the man who lies within…

LA MALASPINA
Who is in there?

IL MALASPINA
He, whom you loved too much.

LA MALASPINA
Between me and this bed stands death.

IL MALASPINA
Courage, now: open!
LA MALASPINA
You have never forgiven me?

IL MALASPINA
Aye, for then.

LA MALASPINA
You want me to die?

IL MALASPINA
Look at yourself reflected in this bed.

LA MALASPINA
Is there a mirror?

IL MALASPINA
More truthful than any glass.

LA MALASPINA
I would like to see, but I dare not.

IL MALASPINA
There were days you would dare.

LA MALASPINA
Dreadful memories…

IL MALASPINA
Very lively memories.

LA MALASPINA
Alas! Alive, only to bring others death.

IL MALASPINA
Courage, my Duchess.

LA MALASPINA
I have none left: it all perished in my breast.

IL MALASPINA
Let me assist you.
Is that not a ravishing sight?

LA MALASPINA
The words are freezing on my very lips.

IL MALASPINA
Have you no words, then, for our guest?

LA MALASPINA
The sentence curdles.

IL MALASPINA
Yours is the thorn, with which I will now stab you.
LA MALASPINA
Rip, then, the other image.

IL MALASPINA
Come over, chalices!

LA MALASPINA
Ah, I’m torn between two dreams…!

IL MALASPINA
Wash me now in blood.
Farewell! Farewell!
I shall live in perpetual agony.