
Tatiana Smirnova
Melody
in

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Melody in a Parallel World

«Автор»
2026

Smirnova T.

Melody in a Parallel World / T. Smirnova — «Автор», 2026

Between the world of ideas and the world of matter, melodies live in the thin layer of the noosphere, binding the higher and the lower into the harmony of the universe. There a small melody named Mila is born — quiet and tender as birdsong and a murmuring brook. Her path leads from the shelter of Prelude and Fugue through dizzying fame in the musical world to a small house at the edge of the noosphere, where she discovers that the calling of music is not in ovations but in its unobtrusive appeal to the innermost notes of the soul. A kind, wise, and quietly sad parable about harmony, the search for oneself, and the cherished melody that every person carries within.

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Introduction

There is a noosphere that surrounds us and the entire universe like a vast cotton-wool cap of ideas, illusions, and undertakings. How did it go? The One emanates into the Mind, the world of ideas, and the world soul. The lowest link in this emanation is matter. So taught the Neoplatonists. And we now walk upon the earth and content ourselves with material goods, conducting conversations only about money and wars. We stand at the lowest link in the chain of the universe. Higher up, in the upper layers of the noosphere, there are ideas, the creative origins of all things. And between them and us, in a thin intervening layer, there is the world of melodies. They live there, connecting the upper and the lower, and forming the harmony of the universe. In this world, parallel to our own, there appeared a small melody—quiet and tender as the chirping of birds, the rustle of leaves, and the murmuring of a brook. It came into being almost unnoticed by those around it, sounding gently and softly. But a child's ear caught the tune and set simple quatrains to it, singing a funny, lively little song. From that time began the count of the history of our melody, to the telling of which we have now come.

Chapter One. First Steps in the World of Music

The melody named Mila raced about the noosphere, humming to herself. Along her way she encountered other melodies, older and more finely dressed. There were serious motifs in neckties and jackets, and there were coquettish operettas and ever-gloomy requiems. On the whole, the world of music seemed to her very motley, like a crossroads in a big city during the evening hours of invited dinners, friendly gatherings, and mind-boggling concerts. In the bustle of sounds she nearly forgot herself, but catching herself in time, she sketched a line of notes in pencil: "My name is Mila, and I love a field of daisies." She carefully folded the scrap of music paper and walked on, when a grown-up, serious voice called out to her.

"Mila dear, why are you wandering about here so forlorn? Come here, we shall adopt you!" It was the Countess Prelude speaking on behalf of herself and her sister Fugue, who had just rushed past.

"You want to adopt me?" Mila blurted out, and blushed. The Countess let her joke pass by unheeded and led her along. In her spacious house there was a room for just such wanderers as Mila. In this room, by the fireplace, other melodies were warming themselves, along with a couple of little motifs. Countess Fugue ran into the room and handed Mila bed linen, a grey floor-length dress, and white ribbons. Thus began Mila's life in the shelter of Prelude and Fugue. Every morning the children were woken at exactly seven by the loud ringing of a bell. They put on grey dresses and little black suits, the girls' hair was braided into tight plaits with ribbons bigger than their faces, and they were led off to music lessons. They breathed in and out to the beat of the metronome, sang scales, triads, and arpeggios. Mila's head began to spin from the strenuous inhaling, but she, like the other melodies, went on standing and singing: "singing till you drop," she thought to herself. After a meager lunch came the lesson in playing an instrument—the same scales and arpeggios, but now with the fingers: "back straight, elbows higher," Prelude ran among them with her instructions. Toward evening they were permitted to be as they liked. But they no longer liked anything, and, exhausted, they sat on their little beds and gazed at the fireplace.

Once a month influential persons in expensive suits came; they looked at the progress of the young wards and considered how they might be put to use. Some melodies were taken into wealthy homes as servants: they stood at the entrance, called people to dinner, sang lullabies, and performed other small household tasks. Some were luckier: they might be invited to work at composing new music, and then in time they themselves turned into prim and haughty rich folk with a retinue of servants.

Mila did everything diligently, but without enthusiasm. After several weeks of training, she decided that she did not like singing and would not play. She thought that she loved silence, and in her free time she would go wandering along the pond.

One day at sunset she was admiring the first flowers that had appeared in a patch of thawed ground, lit by the russet light of the setting sun, and with delight her soul was filled and began to sing. She sang her native melody at the top of her voice and merged with it as one in a creative impulse. This spontaneous performance of hers was heard by a Concerto in a frock coat and hat who happened to be passing by. He stopped, he admired the sunset, and then invited her to his home. The Concerto had no children of his own, and he lived entirely alone—decrepit and bored. He decided to take the Melody into his house and make her the heiress of his fortune, once lavish but now mostly dusty.

"I shall be able to bring her out into society," he convinced Prelude and Fugue, and they, further motivated by a large donation to the shelter, agreed. And so the Melody moved into the Concerto's estate.

Chapter Two. The History of Music

The Concerto was thoroughly versed in music, and every day, strolling through the park, he shared his knowledge with the Melody.

"In the beginning there were sounds. All things made them: the animals, the waters, the winds, the fire, the stone. All the elements filled the world with sounds. But when man appeared, he was able to repeat the melodies of nature and to order them. He heard the music of the stars, he learned of inspiration, and he was able to catch the music of the noosphere. And then he invented musical instruments and the theory of music."

"But why were we stuffed with nothing but theory, without being told of inspiration and the music of the celestial spheres?" Mila asked, distressed.

"Alas, in time the melodies themselves forgot their origin, the music of nature and the elements. And so they created a strict classification by genres, styles, instruments, and similar nonsense. Now there are so many classifications that they drive music into strict frameworks and shackle it like fetters. Take your first bar: one, two, three, four, MI, re, do, re, mi, FA, mi, re. The ancient Greeks could have performed that sequence in different modes."

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