

GABRIELLE TOZER

'Bursting with creativity, fun and flair,
Melody Trumpet is a triumph!

Yvette Poshoglian, author of the bestselling **Ella and Olivia** series



She was never meant to be ordinary ...

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1.

The Trumpet heir is born

Melody Trumpet burst into the world with a screech that rattled the windowpanes of Trumpet Manor. It was a perfectly ordinary sound for a newborn baby startled by the cold air, yet the doctor and nurses gasped at the shrill wail. The world expected the daughter of opera superstar Viola Trumpet and renowned conductor Barry T Trumpet to have a voice so beautiful that even the hardest, coldest person would cry tears of joy at a single note.

Years of the Trumpets winning awards and touring the globe with orchestras, ballet companies and theatre troupes had set the stage for this moment. The long-awaited appearance of this cherub was supposed to be *extraordinary*. That was what everyone expected, from the doctors and nurses, to the international press waiting outside the manor for news of her arrival.

The expectation had been set thirty-nine years earlier, when baby Viola's first teary gurgles were so sweet and harmonious that the nurses had swaddled her in a soft woolly wrap and carried her from cot to cot to calm the other newborns with her song. And now Mrs Viola Trumpet was the face of opera around the world — an icon whose voice box was insured for millions of dollars. As far as the Trumpets were concerned, it was perfectly acceptable for ordinary babies to shriek out of key. But not a Trumpet. Especially not one deemed a medical marvel!

Mrs Trumpet had been told by doctors for years that she could never have a child. She'd almost given up hope until one day the impossible became possible and she was granted her wish.

A daughter.

An heir.

A gift from the musical gods.

Mr Trumpet had fallen to his knees and sobbed with happiness at news of the miracle, his moustache drooping low as it filled with fat tears. For nine months, he conducted the air around Mrs Trumpet's belly morning after morning, night after night. Music from his thirteen award-winning classical compositions soared around the nursery, bouncing off the lemon and peach walls that had been decorated with musical notes.

The Trumpets were considered music royalty across the globe. Year after year the duo received so many awards and honours that they needed to build a new wing in Trumpet Manor to house them. Mrs Trumpet had received more curtain calls than anyone in history, twelve distinguished authors had written books about her and Mr Trumpet's brilliant careers, and they had so much money they didn't know what to do with it all.

They were certain their wondrous miracle child would carry on the musical legacy of the Trumpet name. In preparation, they placed their unborn baby on the waiting list for the Battyville Elite School For Musically Gifted Children — the most prestigious and selective music school in the world. Mr and Mrs Trumpet had met there as children, and now giant oil paintings of them adorned the school's many hallways and staircases for the more *ordinary* students to admire and dream of maybe one day being half as talented. The Trumpets dreamed of the day their child would become the rising star of the school, then of Battyville, then the country, then the world — just as they had done.

But dreams don't always come true — as it was discovered when baby Melody squawked her first out-of-tune note and then wailed into the wee hours.

'Honey, what shall we do?' Mrs Trumpet asked her husband, rocking a red-cheeked Melody in the

pair's enormous four-poster bed. 'The beastly creature won't shut up.'

'My darling Viola, there must have been a mistake,' Mr Trumpet assured her. 'A Trumpet would never make such a terrible noise. That doctor owes us an explanation. Somehow they've misplaced our little angel.'

'Oh, that horrific bleating sound! We'll be a joke,' Mrs Trumpet hissed. 'Laughed out of the town! All our plans, our dreams ... and our reputations. Barry, our reputations!'

Mr Trumpet scooped the screaming baby into his sausage-like arms and stroked her mop of straight jet-black hair. 'We'll work it out. With a little guidance she'll find her way.'

Mrs Trumpet began to sob. 'She's no bigger than a watermelon but she sounds like a snoring rhinoceros! Or a freight train! Or a rhinoceros snoring on a freight train!'

Mr Trumpet stared down into Melody's big chocolate-brown eyes. They were the same colour as his own. 'We're Trumpets, Viola. We'll set things right — whatever it takes.'

She nodded. 'You need to fix this, Barry. No one else can ever find out that our baby is not at all extraordinary.'

'Yes, my darling.' Mr Trumpet squeezed her hand. 'Consider it done.'

But what could he do?

Despite growing public interest, the Trumpets hadn't yet dared to hold a press conference or send out a media release announcing Melody's arrival. Too much was at risk. Their entire musical legacy could be obliterated with just one of Melody's squeals.

Melody. Even her name, which meant 'a sequence of single notes that is musically satisfying', was now almost too painful to utter aloud. Melody hadn't been born with the voice of an angel like her mother. In fact, she seemed about as musical as a gumboot.

What would people say if they discovered the Trumpets' prodigy was just a crying, pooping baby like any other?

Mr Trumpet did the only thing he could think of in such dire circumstances: he and his wife starved the world of all information about their heir. Everyone assumed she was a child prodigy who remained in seclusion to focus on her training, and naturally the Trumpets didn't correct the assumption. In fact, they fuelled it by refusing to answer any questions at all about Melody. Any journalist who asked even a single question about her was banned from interviewing the Trumpets ever again.

To maintain the secret, Melody spent much of her childhood in her wing of Trumpet Manor. A high-

security fence ran all around the grounds so no one could spot her on the rare occasions when she was allowed outside. She was home-schooled by a private academic tutor, and friendships were banned the way other parents banned sweets. Forget about joining a dance class or sports team. Banned. Forget about using a mobile phone or spending an afternoon in the library or at the park. Absolutely, definitely BANNED.

Aside from the Trumpets' driver and bodyguard, Royce, and their housekeeper, Miss Sprinkles, the only other person privy to the family's secret was a man by the name of Mr Pizzicato. He was one of the greatest music teachers the world had ever known, and the Trumpets paid him an outrageous amount of money to become Melody's music tutor when she turned three. He was to give her private instrument and vocal lessons in a secret soundproofed room inside the Battyville Elite School For Musically Gifted Children.

Mr Pizzicato's greatest achievement to date was tutoring a chicken named Clive to become one of the most beautiful-sounding soprano opera singers to ever grace the stage.

'Mr Pizzicato will find Melody's talent and make her a true Trumpet,' Mr Trumpet declared as he and Mrs Trumpet waited for Mr Pizzicato to walk down the steps of the private jet they had sent for him.

‘Remember your performance with Clive in Venice, my darling?’

Mrs Trumpet nodded. ‘Oh yes. And Melody will be better than that feathery diva once Mr Pizzicato is done with her. She’ll be the best!’

And so Melody’s private music lessons began. No one, not even Principal Sharp, ever saw her enter or leave the school. Royce drove her in the family limousine to a secret entrance every morning at eight thirty on the dot, where Mr Pizzicato met her and ushered her through a twisting, turning secret corridor high above the classrooms to the private studio that had been built with money donated by Mr and Mrs Trumpet. The routine was performed in reverse at the end of each day when it was time for Melody to be escorted back to Trumpet Manor.

Over the years, Mr Pizzicato and Melody clocked up thousands of hours of lessons. Singing, musical scales, theory, improvisation, and every instrument you could think of. Thousands of hours — with no improvement. Not even a little.

And with every day that passed, with every dollar spent, Melody grew more and more aware that she was the thing her parents despised more than anything else. She was completely, utterly and painfully *ordinary*.