

# EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE

# SILENT LIGHT

BASED ON THE FILM *STELLET LIGHT*  
BY CARLOS REYGADAS

MUSIC BY **PAOLA PRESTINI**  
LIBRETTO BY **ROYCE VAVREK**

October 31, November 1-2, 2024 | 7:30 PM  
November 3, 2024 | 2:30 PM  
Kilbourn Hall



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## ARTISTIC TEAM

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### *Artistic/Music Director*

Timothy Long

### *Chorus Conductor*

Henry Griffin

### *Scenic/Lighting Designer*

Seth Reiser

### *Sound Designer*

Gregory Thompson

### *Assistant Conductors*

Henry Griffin

Immanuel Mykyta-Chomsky

### *Costume Designer*

Nicole LaClair

### *Props Designer*

Mary Reiser

### *Assistant Projections Designer*

Henry Rodriguez

### *Stage Director*

Pat Diamond

### *Intimacy Director*

Lindsay Warren Baker

### *Projections Designer*

John Horzen

### *Foley Designer*

Sxip Shirey

### *Assistant Director*

Joelle Lachance

## PRODUCTION STAFF

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### *Technical Director*

Mark Houser

### *Production Stage Manager*

Josh Lau

### *Scene Shop Crew*

José Maisonet

Robert DiCandia

Dylan Skwirba

Steve Woznick

### *Assistant Stage Managers*

Amy Pressman

Izabella Gozzo\*

Jessica Kodsi\*

Grace Lauther\*

### *Costume Shop Crew/Wardrobe*

Claudette Hercules

Shelbie Colombo

Leah Camilleri

Megan Lancy

Andrea McGaugh

Jessamyn Slon

Elizabeth Wager

Alanna Beilke\*

Hutton Stiller\*

### *Scenic Artists*

Shelbie Colombo

Katherine Duprey

\*denotes student production assistants

## GRADUATE OPERA ASSISTANTS/PIANISTS

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Cynthia Chun-Hsin Liu

Mizi Li

Guhan Peng

ZeLin Huang

Jeongmin Oak

## CAST

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**October 31, 7:30 PM**

**November 2, 7:30 PM**

**November 1, 7:30 PM**

**November 3, 2:30 PM**

Neylan Loffredo

**Esther**

Alanna Beilke

Jenna Justice

**Marianne**

Ally Arenson

Yiran Guan

**Esther's Mother/Ensemble**

Hutton Stiller

Jonathan Ellwanger

**Zacarias/Ensemble**

Evan McMahon

Finn Bucci

**Johan**

Ashton Rapp

S Joshua Sheppard

**Father/Ensemble**

Holden Turner

Julia Tooker

**Autghe/Ensemble**

Mackenzie Minguillo

Freddie Kartoz

**Mother/Ensemble**

Eleni Nicholas

Liam Blecha

**Cornelio/Ensemble**

Daniel Perez

Elijah Gebers

**Alfredo/Ensemble**

Elijah Gebers

## ENSEMBLE & COVERS

Sarah Schexnayder for **Esther**

Carolina Sullivan for **Marianne**

Savannah White Heximer for **Esther's Mother**

Minghang Wang for **Johan/Alfredo**

## ORCHESTRA

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Timothy Long, conductor

*Violin*

Zihua Ma

*Trumpet*

Jacob Hunkins

*Percussion*

Kai Gray

*Cello*

Kristi Roller

*Trombone*

Danny Bolaños

*Foley Artist*

Luke Honeck

## SETTING & SYNOPSIS

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### SETTING

A Mennonite Community in Chihuahua, Mexico, Present Day

**Please Note:** This opera contains a scene of simulated sexual intimacy between the characters of Johan and Marianne.

**Duration: 90'**

### SCENE ONE

Johan, a Mennonite man, sits at the breakfast table by himself as the audience enters, the sound of a clock's pendulum prominently moving back and forth. At the start of the show, his wife Esther enters with the children. They pray and then eat in silence before leaving the table and exiting the house. Johan gets up and stops the clock. He sits back down and breaks down in tears.

### SCENE TWO

Outside of a farm shed, Johan meets with his friend Zacarias. He confides in his friend that he is having an affair with another Mennonite woman, and also that his wife is aware of the extra-marital relationship.

### SCENE THREE

The scene then shifts as we see Marianne off in the distance in the middle of a field. Johan runs to her, and kisses her. They fall onto a swath of grain.

The children bathe in the river. Esther washes one of her girls' hair. Johan watches. Esther begins to cry.

### SCENE FOUR

Johan goes to his parents' dairy farm early one morning to get his father's advice. He tells his father that he is in love with another woman. His father provides spiritual and practical advice. They step outside to further their confidential conversation and the entire farmstead has been overcome by the frost of winter.

## SETTING & SYNOPSIS

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### SCENE FIVE

Johan and Marianne meet in a hotel room in a nearby town. They make love. Marianne tells him that they can no longer continue this arrangement.

### SCENE SIX

Johan and Esther drive. She asks Johan about the state of his affair, knowing full well that he has continued to see the other woman. She becomes overwhelmed with sadness, and asks him to pull over the car. She gets out in the pouring rain, running towards a nearby tree. She drops the umbrella, become soaked through. When she doesn't return after some time has passed, Johan goes searching for her, finding her lifeless. He holds her as he grieves.

### SCENE SEVEN

At Esther's wake, a group of women prepare her body, as others sit outside the room singing hymns. When the body is washed and dressed, Johan enters the room and pays his last respects to his wife. When he is finished, he exits the house to be alone. Marianne arrives offering her condolences. She asks Johan if she might be able to see Esther's body.

### SCENE EIGHT

Marianne is alone with Esther. She touches her feet. She holds her hand. She kisses her lips and drops a tear on her face. Esther wakes up. Marianne exits quietly.

### EPILOGUE

As the sun sets, the sound of the light is not silent at all. The moon beam shines on the blade of grass awakening a dormant beetle who crawls out only at twilight and suddenly whirrs into a mating frenzy. The first ray of sunlight evaporates the overnight dewdrops on the soggy leaves which slowly creak towards the heavens seeking another day of life and transformation. Passions buried deep in anxious souls scream out suddenly as the light of truth pierces the veil of secrets so meticulously, so vainly, constructed.

— *Thaddens Strassberger*

*Silent Light was originally commissioned for the Banff Center for Arts and Creativity as part of the Opera in the 21st century program, and is presented by arrangement with publisher and copyright holder Paola Prestini publishing.*

## ARTISTS' NOTE

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We decided on *Silent Light* because of the vast emotional canvas the film's characters offer. There is no score, location sounds seem hard-edged, and when a hymn is sung, it is not a tune but a dirge. It was the perfect skeleton for an opera.

Set among the 100,000 or so Mennonites living in Mexico, the leads double as a Chorus and embody them- people who deeply hold their values and try to act upon them, and yet who do not seem to be zealots. They will be accompanied by orchestra and Foley Artist.

*Silent Light* has a beauty based on nature and the rhythms of the land. It opens with a sunrise and closes with a sunset, and is a solemn and profound film about a man transfixed by love, which causes him to betray his good and faithful wife. How he fell into this love, we do not know. Certainly, Johan isn't the kind of man to go straying. Nor is Marianne, the woman he loves, a husband stealer. That they are both good to the core is the source of their pain. Yes, Johan and Marianne have sex, but it is the strength of the film that not for a second do we believe they are motivated by sex — only by love.

Esther, Johan's wife, and the mother of their six children, knows Marianne and knows about the affair. Johan has told her. He is a religious man and has also confessed to his father and his best friend. There is the sense that he will never leave Esther and never stop loving Marianne. He and Esther say they love each other, and they mean it. You see how love brings its punishment.

At the end, ritual, every day life and finally, a moment of the surreal, tie the story together. This is a story of people trying to do their best.

— Paola Prestini

**The Voice, Opera, and Vocal Coaching Department at the Eastman School of Music expresses its sincere gratitude to the Friends of Eastman Opera for nearly 30 years of support and advocacy. It also thanks all donors who have made a gift in support of the Eastman Opera Theatre.**

## UPCOMING EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE EVENTS

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Tickets for all opera performances can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](http://EastmanTheatre.org)

**EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE**

### **Evidence of Things Not Seen**

Annex 804

January 23-26, 2025

Music by Ned Rorem

**EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE**

### **H & G: A Great and Terrible Story**

Annex 804

January 30-February 2, 2025

Music by Allen Shawn

Libretto by Anna Maria Hong and Jean Randich

### **Friends of Eastman Opera Vocal Competition**

Kilbourn Hall

Friday, February 21, 2025 at 7:30 PM

\*This event does not require tickets

**EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE**

### **Ainadamar**

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

April 3-6, 2025

Music by Osvaldo Golijov

Libretto by David Henry Hwang

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*



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