

**At a Glance – *Silent Night*
by Kevin Puts (1972)**



OPERA BACKGROUND

- *Silent Night*, an opera in two acts by composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark Campbell, was commissioned and premiered by Minnesota Opera in 2011.
- The opera is based on the 2005 French film, *Joyeux Noel*, which recounts the true story of a spontaneous ceasefire (known as the 1914 Christmas Truce) among Scottish, French and German soldiers during World War I.
- Kevin Puts won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2012 for *Silent Night* - his first opera.

MAIN CHARACTERS

THE GERMANS

Nikolaus Sprink, tenor – a German opera singer

Anna Sørensen, soprano – a German opera singer and Sprink’s girlfriend

Lieutenant Horstmayer, baritone

The Scottish

Lieutenant Gordon, baritone

Father Palmer, baritone

Jonathan Dale, tenor – young Scottish soldier

The French

Lieutenant Audebert, baritone

Ponchel, baritone – Audebert’s aide-de-camp (personal assistant)

Madeleine, soprano – Audebert’s wife

WHAT HAPPENS?

- A horrific battle is fought. Nikolaus violently stabs a man to death. Jonathan is forced to leave his brother, who has been shot, on the battlefield. Casualties on all sides are assessed and lamented.
- Gifts arrive on Christmas Eve for the troops, followed by sentimental singing by the soldiers on all sides. The three lieutenants agree to a cease-fire. The soldiers bravely enter no-man’s land, greet one another and share their gifts.
- Father Palmer sets up a makeshift church and leads a mass. Anna appears and sings for the troops.
- The truce is extended so the dead can be buried.
- Word of the truce reaches headquarters. Troops on all sides get reprimanded.

YOU’LL WANT TO SEE THIS SHOW IF...

- You are a history buff and want to see a live reenactment of a historic event during WWI.
- You long for and believe in the ideals of world peace.
- You want to hear one of the most highly acclaimed modern operas of the 21st Century.