

Carina

Opera in two acts

(Act 1: 1 hr; Act 2: 1 hr)

Music by Nicholas Ansdell-Evans

Libretto by the composer, based on a story created by Brigitta Schroter

Cast

Carina	soprano
Carina's mother	speaking role
Carina's father	bass-baritone
Șerban <i>Carina's brother</i>	tenor
Anton	lyric baritone
Elena <i>Anton's sister</i>	mezzo-soprano (doubling o/s voice)
Lucreția <i>Șerban's daughter, aged 12 or 13</i>	girl soprano
Lili <i>Anton's daughter, aged 11</i>	girl soprano
Tasma <i>Anton's daughter, aged 7</i>	girl soprano

Chamber orchestra:

ob [ca], cl, cl [bcl], fg, hn, tpt, (optional timp [perc]), harmonium/keyboard, hp,

4 vln, 2 vla, 2 vc, db.

Total 18 players (or 19 if using optional timp [perc])

After ten years in Austria, Carina returns to Romania in 1990 to seek out her daughter, Liza, who was taken away from her when she was a baby. She meets again Anton, the man by whom she had the child. She eventually finds that one of Anton's daughters is indeed Liza, whom Anton has rescued from an orphanage. Liza, believing that she is the daughter of Anton's deceased wife, is hostile to Carina, and Anton cannot speak of Liza's parentage, fearing it will destroy his own relationship with his daughter. He asks Carina to marry him, and she has to choose between living with this lie and losing her daughter again.

Act 1

Prologue

Rural Transylvania. CARINA enters with her suitcase. She sits down by the riverbank. She takes out a photograph and looks at it.

Off-stage voice
(mezzo-soprano) Mother, do not reproach me.
For I am going far away,
Where the sumac bushes bloom,
Where the incense cedar grows,
Nor return while the world lasts.

Mother, you can wait for me
With a hot meal on the table,
With cold water in the jug.
Food will grow cold on the table,
Water in the jug grow warm,
But I, mother, won't return.

Mother, take a hand of wheat;
Scatter it by the river
If the wheat grows thick and strong,
Mother, hope to see me back.
But if the wheat grows weak and thin,
Know that I am dead
In Transylvania.

Mother, do not reproach me.

Act 1 sc. 1 : the kitchen of Carina's parents' house. *A cottage, rustic and poor, but dignified, not desperate. All is spotlessly clean; someone takes pride in this home. Perhaps there is evidence of greater wealth in the past. CARINA, in her modern Austrian clothes, looks out of place.*

CARINA (*entering*) Mama! Papa! I'm home! (*She hears a pig scream*). Yes, of course. The farm.

MOTHER *enters*.

CARINA (*putting out her arms*) Mama!

MOTHER *doesn't seem to notice CARINA, or, if she does, it is as if acknowledging someone she last saw an hour ago, for whom she must serve some lunch, some soup. She is intent on the soup..*

C Mama? Mama? It's Carina. Your daughter.

C tries to embrace her. MOTHER shakes her off and bustles on with her work.

C Mama? Mama? Mama? *(She realises. She calls out of the back door.)*
Papa! *(He is not where she expects. She calls louder.)* Papa, I'm home!

Some moments later, her FATHER stands at the back door, wearing a cap and spattered in pig's blood. He looks older than his years. His open face beams a welcoming smile.

C Papa!

FATHER Carina! You're home!

C Dearest Papa!

F Let me wash first.

He washes from a bucket by the pump behind the house, while C still looks round at her old home. FATHER comes back in.

F My daughter. My love.

C What joy to see you again.

They embrace.

F My darling girl.

C My dear Papa.

F*(his eyes filling with tears)* Don't ever go away again.

C You know why. We couldn't pay the taxes.

F But now you're home, never leave us again.

(An embarrassing moment for C)

C Why didn't you tell me about Mama?

F What could I say? You weren't allowed to return, and Șerban is

here. He's coming to see you today. You know they have five children now (*He laughs a tired laugh. C smiles*)

C So you work on Puşco's farm now? Now that we've lost our own fields?

F Yes, but at least I have work. He will find work for you too.
(*Not a welcome thought for C.*)

ŞERBAN (*shouting, off*) Hello there! (*He enters*)

C Şerban!

S Carina!
They embrace; he lifts her off the floor and swings her from side to side as he did when she was a little girl.

S Let's see if my little sister has become a grown woman. (*He inspects her up & down.*) Very smart!

S's clean white collar sets off his rough, shaven face. C can't take her eyes off him. She notices the first strands of grey in his black hair, and his face lined by years of hard work.

S So you've come back. After ten years.

C Ten years!

S I'm glad that at last you are home.

S How are things in Austria?

C I'm working as a teacher now.

S (*admiringly*) You always were the clever one.

C Nonsense! How's the family?

S They're well. They're longing to see you.

C And Ana?

S She's wonderful. It's hard work for her with five children.

F (*to MOTHER*) Come on, dearest. I must work. We'll leave the young people to talk.

FATHER *and* MOTHER *leave.*

C (*indicating MOTHER as she leaves*) I had no idea.

S It came on very slowly. Papa didn't know what was happening.

C Papa looks old.

S Life has been hard while you've been away. We're much in debt. We have to pay Puşco back all the money he lent us.

C I missed you, Şerban.

S You shouldn't have gone away.

C I had to. What could we do? We couldn't pay the taxes. We couldn't bribe them. How can they tax one for having a child?

S You should have married Anton.

C No, no. I'll never forget his mother's face. Her eyes were burning with contempt. We were too low for her. She despised us. Is he married?

S I know he is married, for his daughter is at school with our Lucreţia. Lucreţia's eleven now. But Anton I haven't seen since you left.

C I knew that Anton would be married. No, I have come to find Liza.

S (*surprised*) To find Liza?

C Yes. I haven't told Papa, but I will be returning to Austria.

S (*shocked and disappointed*) Oh Carina!

C I have come to find Liza, and take her back with me.

S Oh, this will be hard for Papa.

C Yes, but I've only come to find Liza.

S How will you find her?

C I don't know. Please will you help me?

S How? She was one year old when they took her away.

C I must see her. Surely we would know each other.

S Many babies died.

C There are orphanages.

S The older children are working, if they have survived.

C Ten years I've waited. Every day I think of her. Every night I dream of her, of the day when I will see my daughter. In my sleep she is with me, and I look into her eyes, and see her bright smile, and she smiles back at me, and I know we will be re-united. (*She finds the photograph and shows it to S.*) Look. There she is, Şerban, one year old, wearing a hat with a pompom on it, slipped one side, my daughter... to

S Oh Carina. I will help you.

C And all because we were too poor to bribe them. They said I was an unsuitable mother...

S But now no more crying. At home they all want to see you. Tomorrow there's a dance in our village. Wouldn't you like to come to a dance? I'll come to fetch you.

Act 1 sc. 2: outdoors, in or near Şerban's village. *The following day. A dance (a 'hora') is being played and danced just off-stage; sounds of talking and dancing - in Romania they shout during the dances. As the dance finishes, CARINA and ŞERBAN enter, breathless and laughing.*

S How well you remember the steps!

C It's as if I never went away.

S Now you are truly home.

Another dance starts.

S Will you join me for this dance?

C (*before they have a chance to join the dance*) Oh! It's him! It's him!

S Who?

C Anton!

S Anton?

C What is he doing here?

S *(to himself)* He's never come here before.

C He mustn't see me. I suppose his wife is here too. But they don't live here. I must go. There's his sister! His sister! I'll go. No, this is stupid. I'm behaving like a silly child. Ten years have passed. He is married. He has a family. It's all over. All over and done with. Ah, he's seen me.

The music stops and the dance ends. ANTON enters. ȘERBAN slips away.

ANTON Carina! You're home! When did you get back?
Oh, this is wonderful. I can't believe it. Look, I must see you.

C No.

A Yes, I must.

C No, Anton, please.

A It is very important.

C I can't.

A Let me call Elena. You'd like to see my sister again, wouldn't you? *(He signals to ELENA)*

ELENA *(entering)* Carina! You're back! What a glorious surprise. Why didn't you tell me? So you're home after all this time?

C I'm here for the Summer.

E Oh... You know, I never heard from you.

C I did write, but you didn't reply.

E I never got your letter. They used to take them.

C How is it you're here? Don't you and Sorin still live in Brașov?

E Yes. And we've two boys now. We've been staying with Anton to help on the farm. We're going home tomorrow. (*Another hora starts.*)
It's the couple dance.

A Carina, will you dance this next dance with me?

C Anton, I can't.

A Why not?

C Surely... Shouldn't you...

A Come on. You used to love dancing.

C Yes...

A Then dance with me again.

They dance. His hand around her waist is tight, and his fingers press on her shoulder...

C Ah! I must be dreaming! Anton!

Act 1 sc. 3: the kitchen of Carina's parents' house *A few days later.*

C (*daydreaming*) And ten years have not changed the sound of his voice, nor the thrill of his touch, and his eyes are still as blue as the day I lay drunk with love in his arms...Stop it! He's married! It's all in the past. Now, where's the address of the orphanage?

MOTHER *enters, starts bustling in kitchen. Something falls.*

C I wish I could talk to you, Mama, as mother and daughter together. Then I could tell you about Puşco, and how he leers at me, and how he touched me. But you don't understand a word I'm saying.

M (*spoken*) When we had the baby in the house, I never worked with a knife in the kitchen when she was with me, in case I dropped it.

C (*astonished*) What did you say, Mama? You remember Liza? Mama, answer me please. Please, Mama, please. You remember my little girl, don't you? Answer me, please. Answer me!
 You nursed her. She sat on your lap, didn't she? (*She fetches the photograph.*) Here, look, Mama. She had big brown eyes. Do you remember? (*growing angry*) You were here when they took her. Where did they take her? Where? You gave her to them. Did you

give them her clothes? Wrap her in a shawl? Did you? It was winter. Winter, remember? Was she warm when you handed her over? Was she warm? Was she warm? Was she warm?...

Oh, this brutal country and this miserable life, that I should have screamed at my own mother.

ȘERBAN, FATHER *and* LUCREȚIA *enter*.

S (*entering, cheerfully*) Look, here we are! Lucreția's longing to talk to you. (*He stops short, seeing C crying.*)

F What's this? Crying, my love? Well, I've some good news for you. I've found you some work. With Mr. Pușco. What do you say to that?

C ...I'll think about it.

F Why are you so stubborn? You have to do some work.

C I'm going to teach.

F Pah! Șerban, tell Carina she must take some work.

C I'm sorry, but I can't work for Pușco. He's disgusting.

F She's on about this teaching business.

C Pușco touched me.

S What?

C He came in while Papa was out and touched me.

F You imagine it.

S Look, Papa. It's not worth Carina's taking this work. She won't be here for long.

F What do you mean, 'Won't be here for long'?

S (*to C*) Haven't you told him?

F Carina? What do you mean, 'Won't be here for long?' I'm waiting for your answer.

C I'm here for the summer.

F And then? Where will you go?

C I have come back to look for Liza.

F (*His eyes fill with tears*) Ten years! Ten years! I thought she was back here, back with us again.

C (*She puts her hand on his arm.*) Papa, please.

F (*He flicks her off like an insect.*) No, don't touch me. I understand it all. Abroad it is better. There you have money, luxury, all that you want, while here we have nothing!

S Papa, don't be harsh with her.

F Are you on her side? Look at your mother! See how Carina abandons her. But she doesn't care. She wants to teach. Teach! (*to C*) Go then. Go. We'll probably never see you again.

He makes to go. C tries to stop him.

F No!

He pushes ȘERBAN roughly out of the way. LUCREȚIA steps aside as he treads heavily out of the kitchen. A pause.

LUC Why is Grandpa so cross? Who's Liza? (*She wants to comfort C.*)

S Leave us a moment, Lucreția. (*LUCREȚIA reluctantly goes out.*) Carina, how could you? You know he's not well. How could you be so inconsiderate?

C I love him. But he doesn't understand.

S You have forgotten. Things are still difficult here. Papa has suffered. You must remember that.

C Yes, Șerban. (*A pause.*)

S Now, I must tell you. I had a visit from Anton, the first in twelve years. He wants you to help him with the children during the fruit harvest.

C I can't. I can't.

S I think you should go. Go and see him. (*C doesn't reply.*) Carina, he's the father of your child.

LUC (*putting her head round the door*) Is everything all right? May I come in?
(*She comes back in.*) Carina, you danced so beautifully at the dance. I wish I could dance like you. (*LUC dances.*)

S Lucreția has become friends with Anton's daughter.

LUC Yes, Lili is my new best friend. She lives in a big old house on a farm. I'm going to see her this afternoon.

S (*to LUC, putting his arm on her shoulder*) Come. Your mother's waiting for us.
(*He and LUC are about to leave. He turns once more to C.*) Well, Carina?

C (*pleading*) Șerban, you know I can't.

S and LUC leave. C takes out a piece of paper with an address on it.

C Here's the orphanage. Now I will find my daughter.

Act 1 sc. 4: Elena's apartment in Brașov. *Later the same day. A city apartment in a concrete block, cramped, as is usual. Elena's husband is at work, and her children, aged between eight and ten, are at school, but we see a few toys lying around, perhaps a child's picture on the wall. Elena is sewing, mending one of their clothes. She hums as she sews. There is a tentative knocking at the door.*

E Who is it?

C (*outside*) Carina.

E (*opening the door, joyful*) Carina! Come in! (*She sees C's face.*) Oh my God, you're ill.

C No.

E It's your parents...

C No.

E Your mother...

C No. But I need to talk to you.

E Of course.

C But I'm disturbing you. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come.

E No, please, it's fine. Sorin's at work. The boys are with friends.
Sit down.

E waits for C to start, but C doesn't, so E, making conversation, points to a photograph.

E Look, there are my boys.

C No. There's something I must tell you.

E Go on

C I came back to find Liza.

E Liza?

C Yes. That was my only purpose. I know, I should have told you. I thought I could manage on my own. I've been to the Town Hall. To the priest. He sent me to a convent. Nothing. But they told me of an orphanage. I went there, and... and... Elena, it's terrible!

E Tell me.

C It's hard to find the orphanage. I walk through scalding fields of wheat that stretch white under the burning sun. There is no breeze, only heat. I can hear the strange noise of the chopping of wood, and the voices of children playing. Then I see the children. They are not playing. They are working. Little, tiny girls are bending over a metal bath, beating clothes on it with a wooden bat. Their thin arms beat and scrub. Their faces are thin, and their skin is stretched taut over the bones in their arms. The house stinks of urine; the windows have no glass. The superintendant sends for older girls. I search their thin faces for the features I know so well... of the

E Carina, don't. Don't!

C Are you mine? Are you mine? Are you mine?...
I walk back through the scalding field of wheat, and the banging noise follows me. I hear a woman's voice yelling, a child screaming, a wailing... then silence. Oh Elena, help me.

E Listen, Carina. We'll search and search until we find her. Together we'll find another orphanage, and I'll come with you. I'll talk to Anton.

C No, no. Not Anton. Please, Elena. Anton must not hear about this. Will you promise? Will you promise? Will you promise?

E You seem frightened of Anton. Are you?

C No, of course not. But I don't want to talk to him. Promise. Promise you won't tell him.

E Why? You were once very close, remember?

C That was over ten years ago.

E I don't understand you. Carina. Anton's very fond of you. He wants you to help him in the house during the fruit harvest.

C No, no. I can't.

E Why not? Are you married. Or do you have a boyfriend in Austria?

C (*shouting*) No! I'm not married and I don't have a boyfriend!... Can't you see? Anton is married.

E No, he's not. His wife died.

C Died?

E Yes, didn't you know? Mariana died. (*C is silent.*) All right, Carina. I promise not to tell Anton that you're looking for Liza. All right?

C Thank you. It's time for me to go.

E Why not stay the night?

C Another time, Elena. I'll be all right. (*She gets up to leave.*)

E We will find Liza. I know we will. I'm sure we'll find her. Trust me.

C leaves. E remains thoughtful.

Act 1 sc. 5: The kitchen of Anton's house *A few days later. An old, large, aristocratic farmhouse, now rather shabby, fallen on hard times.*

Two children enter. The eldest, LILI, is eleven and in some ways quite grown up. The younger, TASMA, is about eight. They are singing and playing a dancing game.

LILI & TASMA See the cherries ripening.

Many cherries on the tree,
Many are the girls I see.
This one is mine,
She's the one who pleases me,
And it's mine she'll always be.
Tralala, ai lai tralala.

T Lili, why won't you dance with me?

L Not now, Tasma. I'm preparing the tray for Grandma. Papa will be back soon from the orchard.

ANTON *enters*.

A Hello girls! Time for lunch. Lili, darling, will you prepare Grandma's tray?

L I'm just doing it, Papa.

T Can I help pick the plums after lunch?

A Yes, but don't eat too many. Not like last year.

L I didn't have a funny tummy.

A No, but you had a fair amount too. Ready!

The children sit at the table. ANTON serves them. They eat while he prepares his mother's food and tray.

A *(to himself)* And will Carina come? The harvest is nearly over. Will she return to Austria without a word for me? Will she come? Or has she no word for me?

L *(gets up and stands by her father.)* Papa, shall I take it up now?

C stands in the door. L, who is facing the door, sees her, but A doesn't, being turned away from the door.

A What is it, darling? What is it? *(Then he realises, but doesn't turn.)*
Ah! At last. She has come.

He turns. His and C's eyes meet. C enters the kitchen.

[A *(aside)* As in my dreams, she steps towards me. Her radiance fills the room.

[L (*aside*) Who is this woman? What does she want? Does Papa know her?
[
[C (*aside*) Once more I see the man I loved in this old familiar room.
[
[L (*aside*) Who is she? Why is she here?
[
[A (*aside*) I feel my soul revive at the sight of the woman I loved.
[
[C (*aside*) I feel my soul revive at the sight of the man I loved.
[
L (*aside*) Does Papa know her? Who is she? Why is she here? I don't want
[her here.

C (*now at A's shoulder*) Shall I take that up to your mother?

L (*interposing herself.*) No. I always take Grandma's tray.

A, *however, gives the tray to C.*

A (*calmly to L, but still looking at C*) Open the door.

C *leaves with the tray.*

L (*sharply*) Who's that?

T How does she know where Grandma's room is?

A That's Carina.

T But how does she know where Grandma's room is?

A She came here once before. A long time ago. Before you were born. And now she has come to help us.

L Papa?

A Yes, darling?

L Does she have to come, Papa? I can help you before I go back to school. Let me help you.

A You're so good to me. (*He embraces L lovingly; she returns his love.*) Listen, children. How about a picnic?

T A picnic!

A One day, when the harvest is over?

T Oh yes please!

L Where will we go?

A That's a secret. But it's a very special place.

L Can Lucreția come too?

A Yes, of course Lucreția can come.

T A picnic, a picnic!

L & T (*dancing around*) To a very special place! A picnic, a picnic!

L Thank you, Papa.

T Thank you.

L & T Thank you.

They stop suddenly as L sees C at the door. C enters.

A Did my mother behave herself?

C She was charming. She thinks I'm the new maid.

T Are you a maid?

A Yes, she's a beautiful maid...

T Sit next to me. Let's play 'farm'.

C What's your name?

T Tasma.

A And this is Lili.

C Hello, Lili (*L refuses to reply.*)

T We're going on a picnic. Are you coming with us?

C I don't know.

T Please! Please!

C Maybe. (*L leaves the room.*)

T This is where my animals sleep? (*C kneels down to look.*) They have lovely soft straw.

C That's good.

T Are you going to stay with us?

C I don't know yet.

T Please, please, stay with us.

A (*watching C & T playing*) Do you remember the river?

C We walked by the shore...

A Where the sand was golden...

C And the water was blue...

A Now we walk there once more...

C We walk there once more...

A & C Once more we walk the golden sand, to the song of the water, and feel new joy, now our hearts are together.

They break off in surprise. ȘERBAN enters briskly, a somewhat formal manner overlying his embarrassment: he hasn't been in this house for over ten years.

S I'm sorry. Excuse me, Anton. Carina, you must come at once. Our father has collapsed.

C Oh my father! My father!

As C leaves with S, she exchanges a look with A.

INTERVAL

Act 2 sc. 1: the picnic *Three weeks later. ANTON, CARINA, LILI, TASMA and LUCREȚIA are in a horse-drawn cart, journeying through the mountains. Anton drives, and*

cannot easily hear what the others are saying in the cart behind him. LILI ('L') spends most of the time talking to LUCREȚIA ('LUC').

T Are we nearly there?

L You ask that every five minutes.

T This wind is so cold.

C *(to herself)* So here I am, going on a family picnic. This doesn't feel right. It's too soon after Papa's funeral. I should have stayed with Ana and my mother.

A *(turning round)* Let's see who'll be the first to see Lake Victra.

T,L, LUC *(all hearing for the first time where they are going)* Lake Victra!

C *(to herself)* Yet truly it surprises me how much I like being with the children and Anton. Even Anton's mother has been kind.

LUC I can see Lake Victra! I can see the Lake!

C *(to herself)* Tasma is the most affectionate. Many times I imagine she is Liza. But Lili is different, difficult ... Can it be ...? But no.

L Papa!

A Yes, Lili.

L For my birthday, can we have another outing like this?

A I think not, my darling. By your birthday it will be far too cold.

C *(trying to sound unconcerned)* When is your birthday, Lili? *(No response.)* Lili?

L The twenty-ninth of November. *(L resumes her talk with LUC)*

C *(to herself)* The twenty-ninth! The twenty-ninth of November! Impossible. It can't be her. It can't be.

T *(seeing C shaking)* Are you all right? Are you cold? Come under my blanket.

C *(to herself)* Thousands of girls, thousands share the same birthday. No. She is not my daughter.

A Look, children. Here's the lake, shining in the sun. We've

arrived! (*They stop.*) Careful as you get down.

They get down. A is busy with the horse and the picnic and doesn't yet notice C's unease.

T Can we play first? And collect pine cones?

A Of course. (*He takes three baskets out of the cart.*) Why don't you fill these baskets with pine cones? Then we'll have lunch. Off you go! (*The children run off. He sees C's face.*) Dear girl, what's the matter?

C Nothing. I was cold. I'm fine now.

A Is it too soon after the funeral?

C No, it's fine.

A Is the work in the house too much?

C Oh no, I'm perfectly all right.

A You rest. I'll fetch water for the horse.

C (*to herself*) If it's Liza, why doesn't he tell me? No, no. This cannot be Liza. She's unfriendly, obstinate, hostile. She can't be my child. When I meet Liza, we will look in each others' eyes, and at once we will know that we are mother and daughter. I must ask. I have to know. how? And whom? Surely Anton will tell me. I trust him. But

The shouts of the children playing are heard. ANTON returns.

A Feeling better?

C Yes. It's beautiful here.

A Don't you love the scent of pine needles?

C It reminds me of my childhood.

A (*gently*) Yes... It's a scent that comes from long ago. How good to rediscover it...

C Oh Anton...

They are about the kiss, when TASMA runs on, her half-full basket in one hand and a pine cone in the other..

T Papa! Papa! Have you ever seen such a big cone? Look! (*She runs towards them.*) Ah- (*She trips. The cones scatter all over the ground. She collects herself, and spots the big cone.*) Here it is! (*She picks it up.*) Oh. It's broken.

C Never mind. If you leave it by the fireplace it will open up.

T Really?

Meanwhile L and LUC have arrived.

C Lili, let me see what you've found. (*L won't. A note of desperation enters C's voice.*) Please!

L No. I don't want you to see it.

C Oh. Why not?

L Please leave me alone. (*L turns away*)

C, distressed, turns to LUC, to ask her what she has found.

C Lucreția?

LUC snatches away her basket and goes over to L, where they busy themselves with the pine cones. C is surprised and hurt.

A Time for our picnic!

Girls 'hurrah' etc. Alone amidst the others' enthusiasm, C picks up the broken cone and views it wistfully.

Act 2 sc. 2: Șerban's garden *The following day.*

MOTHER enters. She holds a piece of clothing which her husband was wearing in Act I. She mourns with it. Then she takes out a kitchen or gardening knife, and cuts it to shreds. SERBAN enters.

S What are you doing, Mama?

He tries to stop her. She attacks him. But she is a frail old woman and he easily overpowers her and takes the knife.

S I thought you were happy with us here, Mama.

CARINA *enters, tired.*

C What's going on?

S Mama has been cutting up Papa's clothes.

They sit MOTHER down and settle her. She remains onstage throughout this scene.

S (to C) How was your day at Anton's house?

C All right.

S Is Lucreția on her way home?

C She was still there when I left.

S You've been going there for three weeks. How do you like it?

C Well, his mother hasn't been unpleasant. She's a cripple, rather pathetic.

S And the children?

C I like them.

S Carina, how are you getting on with Anton?

C Why do you ask?

S Well... Anton was here today.

C Today? Why?

S He still loves you. He wants to marry you.

C Is that what he came to tell you? You want to know if I'll accept him? Do I want to turn the clock back? Perhaps at the moment the answer is no.

S I see.

C Do you? There hasn't been that kind of talk.

S So you're going back to Austria?

C You sound like Papa.

S Someone must talk to you.

C Yes, but not now. (*She rises angrily and walks apart.*)
... I'm sorry.

S No matter.

C You see... I think Lili may be my daughter. And yet I can't
believe it. We don't get on.

S Why don't you ask Anton?

C I can't. Don't you see why? (*S doesn't.*) Anton loves her. She
loves him. It has to come from Anton, don't you see? He's the
one who must tell me. But can he tell her?

S I don't understand you, Carina. Why can't you ask him? When
Anton speaks to you, ask him then.

C (*to herself*) "When Anton speaks to me..." Yes... When will that be?

Act 2 sc. 3: the kitchen of Anton's house *The following day.*

A sunny summer morning. LILI is reading a book. ANTON is looking at her thoughtfully.

A What are you reading, Lili?

L *looks up at him.*

L You look sad today, Papa. What's the matter?

A It's nothing, darling. (*She continues to look at him.*) I shall miss
you when you go back to school.

TASMA (*entering excitedly*) Carina is here and Lucreția! They're coming up the lane
together!

L Can Lucreția and I go up to see Grandma? (*A is lost in thought.*)
Papa?

A Yes of course, darling.

As L turns to go, C enters. They look at each other, then without a word L goes out with LUC, who has remained in the door. C and A are about to embrace when T claims C's attention.

T I'm going to school next week.

C Will you like that?

T Yes. Can I show you my new satchel?

A Tasma, why don't you join Lili and Lucreția? They're going up to see Grandma. (T *hesitates*.) You can show your new satchel to Carina at lunchtime. (T, *reassured by this, runs out*.)

A I think we should talk.

C If we must.

He finds it hard to begin. He closes the door, fiddles with the dishcloth, tidies the table...

A There's so much to say, I... How shall I begin? Perhaps I... I...

C Anton...? What... did you want to say?

A I want to tell you that I love you and that I want to marry you. Of course, things are very different now from twelve years ago. I know we have changed. There are the children... But... do you... feel... you might... be able...

C Anton, Anton. There's something you have to tell me. There's something you have to explain.

A What? What?

C Tell me about... Liza!

As she speaks the last word, the door flings open and T runs in, very agitated.

T Carina! Carina!

L and LUC are visible just outside the door, listening.

A Not now, Tasma. Go away.

T I want Carina, not you. Carina, are you Lucreția's aunt? (C *doesn't reply*.) Are you? Are you Lucreția's aunt? Are you? Are you

Lucreția's aunt? (*Finally, C nods.*) She is crying, Papa. Why is she crying? Why?

A Tasma, get out. Girls, take Tasma with you.

As he pushes T out, she shouts to L., and also to herself.

T Yes, she is Lucreția's aunt!

C (*overcome*) Ah! Ah! What have I done? I shouldn't be here.

C and A look at each other in silence.

A Carina?

C Give me a little time, please. I need to think about it.

A Of course. (*He kisses C lightly on the head and leaves.*)

C (*to herself, after A has gone*) Yes, Anton, I love you. If only you would tell me ...

She hears an argument off-stage. It grows louder until the following words are clearly audible just outside the door.

A Lili, you're a good girl, and you've shouldered a lot, but some things you don't understand.

L (*shouting*) And she tells me what to do. I know what to do!

A That's enough.

T I like Carina. (*sobbing*) I want her to stay.

The argument continues. C decides to leave. She snatches her coat and goes to the door.

C I'm going home.

A (*entering*) I'll take you back.

C No, I'll walk.

T runs in, in desperation. Sobbing wildly, she pulls at C's skirt.

T Please, you must stay here. Stay! Stay! Please!

A Will we see you tomorrow?

C starts to leave.

LUC and L enter.

LUC (shouting at C) Why are you here? Why did you have to come between us? Lili hates you and I hate you.

L (shouting at C) You've spoilt everything! You've spoilt everything! Everything!

Act 2 sc. 4: Elena's apartment *The same day.*

ELENA is sitting quietly, preparing food, when there is a wild knock on the door.

E Who is it?

C Carina.

E What, Carina! Come in.

E unlocks the door. C stands there dishevelled and breathless.

E Carina, what's happened? Why are you crying?

C I'm not crying.

E Oh? Come and sit down.

C walks in. She is exhausted.

E (*spoken*) How is everything at Anton's house?

C “ Fine.

E “ You don't sound very certain.

C “ No. Everything's fine.

E “ You must have something to eat. Have some bread and jam. This jam comes from Anton's plums. Sorin loves plum jam. It's funny because he doesn't have much time for the country. But I still hope to win him round...

C (*sung*) Elena. I've come to ask you. About Lili.

E Ah. I'll tell you all you want to know.

C Is she Mariana's child?

E No.

C So, whose child is she? You said you'd tell me all I want to know. So, whose child is she?

E Well. I gave Anton my word not to tell you. He said he would talk to you. So I couldn't say anything. Carina, Anton wants to marry you.

C Yes. He asked me.

E So will you marry him?

C Elena, I must know about Lili.

E Well. After you had gone to Austria, Anton went to your parents. Your father and Anton searched the orphanages. They went as far as Braşov. In those days they still registered the children. And your father said he recognised her. So Anton took her out.

C My father? My father knew about this?

E Yes. He knew. Anton had to bribe them, and pay the back taxes. It cost him a lot of money, and my mother was furious. But he got his daughter. He worked hard to keep her, Carina.

C (*flatly, distracted*) Yes, he has worked hard. So... Lili is my daughter?

E Yes.

C And my father helped to find her?

E Yes.

C Why did he never tell me? Why? I don't want to believe this. My father, my sweet gentle father – he knew all along. And yet he never told me. He knew. They both knew. (*turning on ELENA*) And you knew.

E Yes, but I gave Anton my word.

C You let me down. You, my friend. How could you do this to me?

E Carina, come, sit down. Surely this is the start of your new life. You'll live with Anton and Lili, and be a mother to Tasma. What could be more perfect?

C No. Lili and I don't get on.

E You will.

C We won't. Never. Lili hates me.

E How can you say that?

C Yes, she does.

E Never. Lili's a good girl. She's very affectionate. She will love you.

C No! Can't you see? Anton can never tell Lili that I am her mother.

E Why not?

C Lili believes that Mariana was her mother. If Anton tells her the truth, all her trust, all her love for him will be destroyed.

E Then don't tell her now. Leave it until she is older.

C And what about me? It can't work like that. And you didn't help by keeping it from me.

E Listen. The girl will adjust. Explain it to her.

C And poison her life? Never! Never! You talk nonsense.

C starts to leave.

E I'll come with you.

C No! *(She leaves.)*

Act 2 sc. 5: The kitchen of Carina's parents' house. *The following morning. C is asleep. She is dreaming. The different characters appear to her in her dream.*

MOTHER When we had the baby in the house, I never worked with a knife in the kitchen, in case I dropped it.

FATHER Don't ever go away again.

ANTON I want to tell you that I love you, and that I want to marry you.

ELENA We will find Liza. Trust me.

TASMA Please, please, stay with us.

LUC Why are you here?

LILI You've spoilt everything. Everything. Everything.

All the voices are heard together as C's dream turns to a nightmare. There is a banging noise in her nightmare like the banging she heard at the orphanage. It grows louder. She wakes with a scream.

C Puşco! *The banging is, in fact, a loud knocking on the door. It's Puşco prowling around outside. He's done this before. How dare he? This is not his house. (She shouts.)* Mr Puşco, go away!

ŞERBAN *enters.*

C Şerban!

S Carina! What's going on? Why aren't you at Anton's?

C Şerban, why did you lie to me?

S What? What are you saying?

C Yes, you lied. You knew where Liza was.

S No, Carina.

C Father knew. You knew. Everyone knew. Except me.

S Please listen.

C I trusted you, you of all people -

S Carina -

C My brother. My own brother. You betrayed me. I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.

S Dearest sister. Listen. You must believe me. I never knew where

Liza was, nor did I know that Father knew. When the police took Liza away, I never heard of her again – until Anton came to see me and told me. That was why I told you to ask him about Liza. Do you believe me? (C *nods.*) Did Anton tell you? (C *shakes her head.*) Who told you?

C Elena. You should have told me once you knew.

S Anton said he wanted to tell you.

C I don't understand... Why did Father not tell me?

Pause.

(So: when A came to see S the first time, he must have told S that LILI was Liza, and also that his wife had died. But A must also have asked S to keep this from C, so that he, A, could explain to C his whole story. . That's why S was insistent to C that she should go to A, and why S wasn't able to tell her either of these things himself. As it worked out, C heard from ELENA about Mariana's death, and A couldn't bring himself to tell C about LILI.)

S Let's go home.

C No. I'll stay here.

S Alone? Why?

C I belong here. Please bring Mother home.

S Mother? She seems happy with us.

C This is her home. I will look after her.

S She feels at home with us. She has Ana and the girls.

C So you won't bring her back?

S Why don't you come back with me?

C I want to look after her.

S Carina. Anton is waiting for your answer. He wants you with him. He came to see me last night. You loved him, didn't you? So why all this drama? Why can't you marry him?

C Is that why you won't bring Mother? You think I should marry Anton?

S Yes. You should marry Anton. There were tears in his eyes as he spoke of you. He always loved you. And you'll have the girls. You'll have the family you wanted. Think of Tasma. She can't stop crying. You can have Tasma, you'll have Anton, and you'll have Liza.

C No, no, no. Never.

S Why not?

C I shall never have Liza, or Lili as they call her. Didn't Anton tell you, how she shouted at me? Yes, Liza hates me.

S That's nonsense. Lili doesn't hate you.

C Yes she does.

S So what will you do?

C I don't know yet.

S Anton will come and see me. Do you have an answer for him?

C No.

S What do you want me to tell Anton?

C There is nothing to tell him.

S You won't go back to him. Shall I tell him that?

C You tell him whatever you like.

S Carina, please. (*She makes no reply.*) I'll go to him and put him out of his misery. (*He leaves.*)

C I should never have come. I should have stayed in Austria. But Şerban is right. Oh Anton, I want your love. I long for it, I yearn for it. Take me, hold me and comfort me... But Lili will not let me love you. She will love you like a mistress. She'll never share that love with another woman, least of all me. (*C takes Liza's photograph.*) Oh Liza. One year old, happy, smiling. Oh to banish the years, the ten years we've been apart, and to hold you in my arms... But you are not one year old. Now you despise me. (*She hauls out her suitcase and begins to pack wildly, throwing her clothes and other things into the case.*) You're not the

same girl that I held. Now you scorn my love. You despise me.
Why, Liza, why? (*She stands on the threshold, about to leave with
her case.*) Farewell to my dreams. Home and family, farewell. For
ever, farewell.

*As she is about to walk through the door, she sees Liza's photograph, which she has missed in
her frantic packing. She takes it and tears it into tiny pieces which fall like confetti. She walks
out and slams the door.*

Epilogue

*Once out of the village, the barren fields stretch away to right and left. She changes
her case from one hand to the other, tries hard to keep her mind on the road and not let
Șerban's voice remind her of her stubbornness. But she must have one last look at the river.
She scrambles down the embankment and sits. There is the river, green and dark. It is so wide
she can hardly make out the other side. This is where she and Anton found their love. They
walked all the way from the church along the river up to here, where the sand was golden and
the water blue. She sings. It is a Transylvanian folksong.*

Mother, do not reproach me.
For I am going far away,
Where the sumac bushes bloom,
Where the incense cedar grows,
Nor return while the world lasts.

Mother, do not reproach me.

Mother, you can wait for me
With a hot meal on the table,
With cold water in the jug.
Food will grow cold on the table,
Water in the jug grow warm,
But I, mother, won't return.

Mother, do not reproach me.

Mother, take a hand of wheat;
Scatter it by the river
If the wheat grows thick and strong,
Mother, hope to see me back.
But if the wheat grows weak and thin,
Know that I am dead
In Transylvania.

Mother, do not reproach me.

She takes off her shoes and walks down to the river. This is the place where she and Anton used to meet. Here she heard her heart throb; here they shared their young love and the first kiss he laid on her lips. The wind moans and mocks her, gently and patiently telling her she has been a fool.

The wind gives her a nasty tug, pushing and pulling at her as if playing catch-me-if-you-can. She has walked right to the edge of the water. The wet sand squeezes between her stockinged toes; some of it remains inside the mesh. The icy water washes around her ankles. She hitches up her coat and watches as her feet make deep imprints in the wet sand, which the next wave washes back into the water. Deeper and deeper sink her footprints, and her coat is heavy with the water around her legs which sucks at her slowly. She struggles. She cannot see; her eyes are blurred from the spray of water. She wipes them. Like windows they clear. She turns and sees Anton standing on the dunes, waving his arms, calling her.

This is the picture we see as the lights fade, and the same song is heard in the distance, off-stage, but not in English...

<u>Off-stage voice</u> (mezzo-soprano)	Maică, nu mă blăstăma. Că tare m-oi depărta, Unde înfloare scumpina, Și răsare tămâia, Nu mai vin până-i lumea. Maica, nu mă blăstăma...
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