

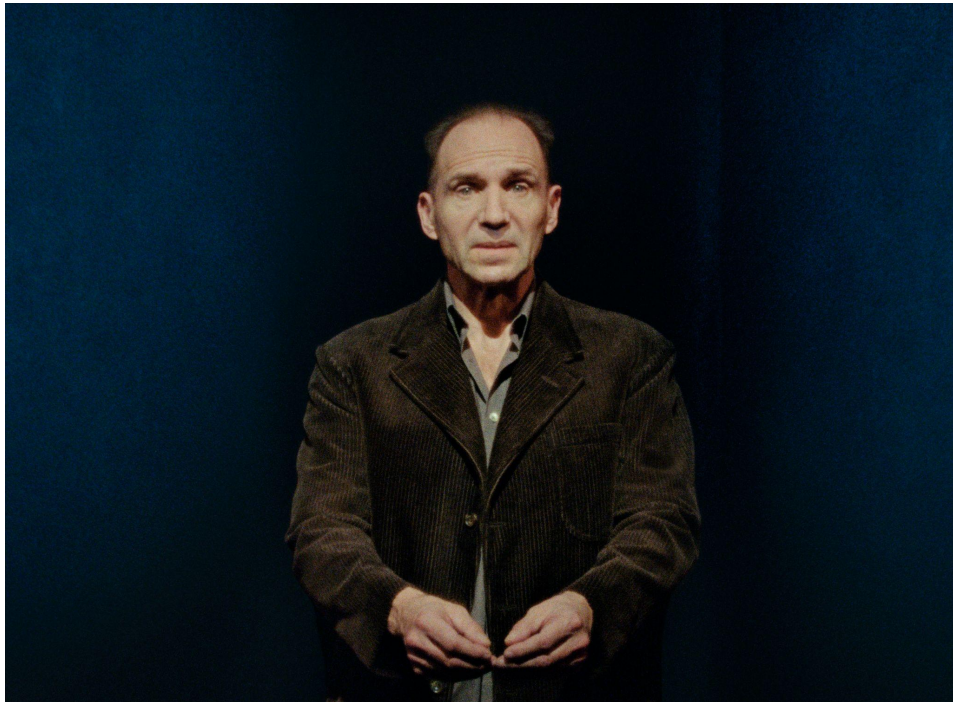
KINO LORBER

Presents

T.S.ELIOT'S

FOUR QUARTETS

**A FILM BY SOPHIE FIENNES OF THE ACCLAIMED STAGE PRODUCTION
PERFORMED BY RALPH FIENNES**



UK | 2022 | 84 min | Color | In English

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SYNOPSIS

Ralph Fiennes's exquisite performance of T. S. Eliot's poetic masterpiece is dynamically translated from stage to screen by director Sophie Fiennes (*Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami*, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*). During the early days of COVID, the Oscar® nominee set himself the challenge of committing *Four Quartets* to memory, and in 2021 he brought it to the London stage, followed by a tour of theaters across the UK. Written by Nobel Prize winner Eliot in the shadow of the Second World War, the poem is a searching examination of who – and what – we are. This celebrated meditation on human experience, time, and the divine offers up questions, imagery, and emotions that bear a powerful relevance to our present day.



PRODUCTION NOTES

“*Four Quartets* is something that’s been floating in and out of my awareness over the years,” says Ralph Fiennes. “I’ve known it since I was quite young as we had the T.S. Eliot vinyl recording. In the first lockdown I gave myself little things to engage my mind and memory, and I thought I’d learn *Four Quartets*. And then various things I thought I’d do in the early part of that year went away – films and so on – and this sort of transitioned. Could *Four Quartets* be put in a context where it was not just recited, but given an appropriately judged theatrical context? ”

Theatre producers James Dacre of Royal & Derngate Theatres, and Danny Moar of The Theatre Royal Bath got behind Fiennes’ idea to create a theatrical production of *Four Quartets*. They attached Hildegard Bechtler, Chris Shutt, and Tim Lutkin to create the set and costume design, sound, and stage lighting, with Fiennes directing the production. This toured UK regional theatres and ran at The Pinter Theatre, London in December 2021.

Ralph Fiennes’ sibling, the filmmaker Sophie Fiennes, is director of the film of *Four Quartets*. Sophie Fiennes often incorporates performance in her work, notably in her films with Michael Clark, Grace Jones, Les Ballets C de la B, and the award-winning film of Stopgap’s *Artificial Things*.

“I have seen all of Ralph’s stage performances, but *Four Quartets* felt essential to document,” says Sophie Fiennes. “Seeing it on stage left me with the sensation of having travelled far in space and time and experienced a huge world. As I left the theatre I looked back at the relatively small space where it had all happened, it seemed miraculous, impossible. In translating *Four Quartets* to the screen, a central aim was to retain the spatial re-inventions Ralph conjures through the poem’s own structural, tonal and narrative shifts.”

“Running the performance for colleagues and friends in rehearsal, one of the key and most common responses was, ‘My God, it’s so modern ! It’s all about now !’ ” says Ralph Fiennes. Written by Eliot in the shadow of the Second World War, the poem is a searching examination of who we are, offering four interwoven meditations. “I think it deals with endless and essential questions on the nature of time, the journey of the soul in life. It’s endlessly mysterious, but there are also ways of speaking it that are conversational and accessible.”

The intimacy of the performance was important for Ralph Fiennes: “What I love about theatre is the very simple thing that you walk on to a space, and you start something,

you create something immediately. Even as I get older, the simple essential magic or possibility of that is endlessly fascinating – so simple and so profound at the same time.”

The film was shot hot on the heels of the live performances, while the material was still actively in Ralph’s body. The set and lighting were transported overnight from the West End and re-rigged in English National Ballet’s production studio. The film was shot on 16mm in three days using one camera, with Director of Photography Mike Eley. The color and atmosphere in Tim Lutkin’s lighting are fully preserved; light transitions indicate emotional and narrative shifts, allowing the poem’s detail and meaning to gather through fluid unbroken takes.

“Why, for all of us, out of all that we have heard, seen, felt, in a lifetime, do certain images recur, charged with emotion, rather than others?” Eliot asks in his essay *The Use of Poetry*. In *Four Quartets* Eliot mines his own life experience. Each quartet is named after locations that hold personal significance for him; Burnt Norton, East Coker, The Dry Salvages and Little Gidding.

“There are vivid descriptions of these places, sometimes real and sometimes fantastical, but what is extraordinary is that what he describes is still there, down to a patch of bramble!” says Sophie Fiennes. “The passage of the sun, which he also refers to, has clearly not altered. So we carried out some forensic poetry and created landscape sequences as a form of visual exposition, breaking momentarily from the hermetic, abstract world of the stage, and into the material world to build a separate layer of time and place within the film.”

The poem contrasts rural with urban, (being on the underground train in London when the train stops between stations). It even references “this twittering world”. Metaphysical passages give way to simple, urgent imperatives: “Quick now, here, now, always -

Eliot had said his ambition was to write a poem that might produce the effect of music on the senses, (hence the title). However, with the material of poetry being language itself, the “wrestle with words and meanings,” sound recording, design and mix, were crucial to maintaining the subtly and vocal range in Ralph Fiennes’ delivery to bring to life what Eliot called the auditory imagination; “the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word.”

ABOUT SOPHIE FIENNES

Sophie Fiennes was born on February 12, 1967 and raised in England and Ireland, the fourth child of photographer Mark Fiennes and writer and painter Jini Fiennes (Jennifer Lash).

As a director and editor, Fiennes' approach often reflects a preoccupation with present-tense documentation of cultural and aesthetic worlds, and the invention of a film form specifically devised to communicate these worlds. Fiennes' first film, *Lars From 1-10*, in which Lars von Trier explains the origin of 'Dogme 95', premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 1998. Her first theatrical documentary, *Hoover Street Revival* (2003), used the sermons of Pentecostal pastor Noel Jones as a form of narration for the life of the local Compton community in Los Angeles, using these to echo the Christian narrative. It was in response to this film that Grace Jones invited Fiennes to document her life and world in *Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami* (2017), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and was distributed by Kino Lorber. Fiennes is also known for her collaborations with the philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006) and *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2013), with their final film, *The Pervert's Guide to Utopias* now in development. Fiennes' recent performance films, *Artificial Things* (2018) and *Four Quartets* (2022), explore the possibilities for the cinematic rendering of stage works.

Since 2006 Fiennes has edited her films, sometimes under the pseudonym Ethel Shepherd. Perceiving film editing as a form of writing, Fiennes' films are shaped from her directly observed film material, as opposed to voice-over. Her film, *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010, is visually driven, bearing witness to German artist Anselm Kiefer's alchemical creative processes and renders as a film journey the personal universe he built at his hill studio estate in the South of France.

Fiennes' work has been released in cinemas, festivals, on television, and shown in art gallery and museum contexts including MoMA in New York, Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Japan, and Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. Her current projects include her third collaboration with Slavoj Žižek and *Acting*, an observational examination of the directing methodology of theatre director Declan Donnellan and art director Nick Ormerod, of celebrated UK theatre company, Cheek By Jowl.

ABOUT RALPH FIENNES

Ralph Fiennes made his feature film debut as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* in 1992. His film credits include *Schindler's List*, *The English Patient*, *The Constant Gardener*, *The End of the Affair*, *The Reader*, *Quiz Show*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Onegin*, *Spider*, *Sunshine*, *Strange Days* and *The Hurt Locker*. He played Lord Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* series and the role of 'M' in *Skyfall*, *Spectre* and *No Time To Die*.

Fiennes most recent film credits include, *The Forgiven*, *The Menu*, *The King's Man*, *The Dig*, *Official Secrets*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *A Bigger Splash*, *Kubo and the Two Strings*, *Hail Caesar!* and *The Lego Batman Movie*. Forthcoming films include: *The Four Quartets*, *Wes Anderson's Wonderful World of Henry Sugar* and *Conclave* directed by Edward Berger.

Fiennes made his feature film directorial debut in 2011 with *Coriolanus* in which he also starred in the title role. In 2013 he directed and starred in *The Invisible Woman*. And his film *The White Crow* about Rudolf Nureyev was released in 2019.

His television work includes David Hare's trilogy *Page Eight*, *Turks and Caicos* and *Salting The Battlefield*. He played T.E Lawrence in *A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia* and also appeared in *Prime Suspect* and *Rev*.

Fiennes' work at the National Theatre includes *Antony And Cleopatra* opposite Sophie Okonedo for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award, *Man & Superman*, *Oedipus*, *The Talking Cure*, *Six Characters In Search Of An Author*, *Fathers And Sons* and *Ting Tang Mine*.

His extensive work at the Royal Shakespeare Company includes *Troilus & Cressida*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labour Lost*, Henry VI in *The Plantagenets*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King John*, *The Man Who Came To Dinner* and Ibsen's *Brand* which later transferred to the Haymarket Theatre.

For the Almeida he has appeared as *Richard III* for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award, *Richard II*, *Coriolanus*, *Ivanov*, and *Hamlet* all directed by Jonathan Kent. *Hamlet* was presented at The Hackney Empire and then The Belasco Theater on Broadway where Fiennes received the Tony Award for Best Actor.

Fiennes returned to Broadway in 2006 and received a Tony Nomination for his role in Brian Friel's *The Faith Healer* following a run at The Gate Theatre Dublin. In 2016

Fiennes played Solness in *The Master Builder* directed by Matthew Warchus at the Old Vic theatre for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award.

In 2020 Fiennes appeared at The Bridge Theatre in David Hare's *Beat The Devil* and toured the country in 2021 in his production of *The Four Quartets* before a season at The Pinter Theatre in London. Both productions were performed under social distancing regulations. In 2022 he played Robert Moses in David Hare's new play *Straight Line Crazy* directed by Nicholas Hytner which opened at The Shed in New York in October 2022.

Fiennes has been the recipient of many significant awards and nominations for his work on film and in the theatre. He was nominated for Academy Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs for his roles in both *The English Patient* and *Schindler's List*, winning the BAFTA for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for the latter. He was also nominated for BAFTAs for *The End of an Affair* and *The Constant Gardener*. He was nominated for the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer for *Coriolanus*. Most recently he was nominated for a Golden Globe and a BAFTA for his leading role in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Fiennes has also been honoured with the Variety Award for Film Achievement, The Richard Harris Award by the British Independent Film Awards and The Empire Film Legend Award.

ABOUT HILDEGARD BECHTLER | Production Designer

Hildegard Bechtler is an award-winning designer based in London and working internationally. She trained at Camberwell School of Art and Central St. Martin's.

Her designs for theatre, ballet and opera have appeared on the stages of the Royal National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Court Theatre, the Old Vic, the Donmar Warehouse, extensively in the West End, on Broadway, Tokyo Theatre Orb, Staatstheater Stuttgart, the Royal Ballet, Opera North, Glyndebourne Festival, Scottish Opera, Edinburgh International Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Sydney Opera House, Munich Staatsoper, Amsterdam Muziektheater, Opera National de Paris, La Scala Milan and Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Her many credits at the National Theatre include *Primo*, *Waste*, *Richard II*, *A Taste Of Honey*; *Hansard*; *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Consent* (also West End). Credits at the Royal Court Theatre, London include *Krapp's Last Tape* with Harold Pinter, *Blasted* by Sarah Kane and *My Name Is Rachel Corrie* directed by Alan Rickman which transferred to the West End.

Select West End credits include: *Top Hat*, *Old Times*, *Arcadia* (also Broadway), *Hedda Gabler*, *The Crucible*, *The Master Builder*, *The Sunshine Boys* and *The Misanthrope*. Other recent work in theatre includes: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* directed by Ralph Fiennes, *The Three Sisters* at the Almeida Theatre; and *Private Lives* at the Donmar Warehouse.

With writer/director Robert Icke, she designed the acclaimed Almeida Theatre productions of *Hamlet*, *The Doctor*, *Mary Stuart* and *Oresteia* (all of which transferred to London's West End) and *Uncle Vanya*. Their international work includes: *Oedipus*, *Kinderen van Nora* and *Judas* for the Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, *Oresteia* and *Iwanow* at the Staatstheater Stuttgart and *Enemy of the People* and the *Hamlet/Oresteia* double bill at the Park Avenue Armory, New York.

Recent work in opera and ballet includes: the world premieres of *The Cellist* for the Royal Ballet (choreographer: Cathy Marston) and Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel* which was performed at the Salzburger Festspiele, the Metropolitan Opera and the Royal Opera House; and *La damnation de Faust* at the Schiller Theatre Berlin which was a revival of the ENO's award-winning production.

Many of the productions she has designed have been filmed for cinema and television including: *Four Quartets* with Ralph Fiennes; *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Hansard*; *Hamlet*;

The Exterminating Angel; Primo with Anthony Sher; Krapp's Last Tape with Harold Pinter; Richard II; and Hedda Gabler.

Hildegard received an Olivier Award for her design of After the Dance at the National Theatre and received nominations for Top Hat and Oresteia. She was nominated for the Evening Standard Best Designer Award for Iphigenia at Aulis, also at the National Theatre, and won the Australian Green Room Award for Best Opera Design for Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk.

CREDITS

DIRECTED AND EDITED BY **SOPHIE FIENNES**

PRODUCED BY **SOPHIE FIENNES, RALPH FIENNES, MARTIN ROSENBAUM
& SHANI HINTON**

BY PERMISSION OF THE **T.S.ELIOT ESTATE AND FABER & FABER**

ORIGINAL STAGE PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY **RALPH FIENNES**

ORIGINAL STAGE PRODUCTION CREATIVE PRODUCER **JAMES DACRE**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **MIKE ELEY**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **JAMES DACRE, DANNY MOAR**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR THE BBC **MARK BELL**

PRODUCTION DESIGN **HILDEGARD BECHTLER**

LIGHTING DESIGN **TIM LUTKIN**

SOUND DESIGN **CHRISTOPHER SHUTT**

HAIR AND MAKEUP **LISA MUSTAFA**

LINE PRODUCER **PK FELLOWES**

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