

Georg Friedrich Händel

ATHALIA

(1733)



Oratorio

Livret de Samuel Humphreys

PERSONNAGES

Athalia, Reine de Judée, adepte du culte de Baal, fille de Jezebel (soprano)

Josabeth, Femme de Joad (soprano)

Joas, Roi de Judée (soprano garçon)

Joad, Grand Prêtre (alto)

Mathan, Prêtre de Baal, ancien prêtre juif (ténor)

Abner, Capitaine des forces armées juives (basse)

Chœur des jeunes vierges
Chœur des Israélites
Chœur des prêtres et des Lévites
Chœur de la suite
Chœur des prêtres sidoniens

ACTE I

1. Ouverture

Scène 1

Josabeth, Priests and Chorus of Young Virgins and Israelites.

2. Air

Josabeth
Blooming virgins, spotless train,
Tune to transport all your lays!
Hail Jehovah's wond'rous reign,
Wake the dayspring with his praise!
Blooming virgins. . . *da capo*

3. Chorus

Young Virgins
The rising world Jehovah crown'd
With bright magnificence around!
He hung the radiant orbs on high,
And pour'd the sunbeams through the sky;
He lent the flow'rs their lovely glow,
And breath'd the fragrance they bestow;
The plains with verdant charms array'd,
And beautify'd with green the glade.

Israelites
O mortals, if around us here
So wond'rous all his works appear,
Ah think with awe, ye sons of men,
How wond'rous is their author then!

4. Solo and Chorus

Josabeth
Tyrants would in impious throngs
Silence His adorers' songs;
But shall Salem's lyre and lute
At their proud command be mute?

Israelites
Tyrants, ye in vain conspire!
Wake the lute and strike the lyre!

Josabeth
Why should Salem's lyre and lute
At their proud command be mute?

Israelites
Wake the lute and strike the lyre!

5. Recitative

Abner
When he is in his wrath reveal'd,
Where will the haughty lie conceal'd?

6. Air & Chorus

Abner
When storms the proud to terrors doom,
He forms the dark majestic scene,
He rolls the thunder through the gloom,
And on the whirlwind rides serene.

Israelites
O Judah, boast his matchless law,
Pronounc'd with such tremendous awe!
When tempests his approach proclaim'd,
And Sinah's trembling mountain flam'd,
All Judah then his terrors saw.

Scène 2

Enter Joad.

7. Recitative

Joad
Your sacred songs awhile forbear,
Our festival demands your care;
And now no longer let your stay
The due solemnities delay.

8. Accompagnato

Joad
O Judah, Judah, chosen seed,
To what distress art thou decreed!
How are thy sacred feasts profan'd,
Thy rites with vile pollution strain'd!
Proud Athalia's impious hand
Sheds desolation through the land,
Bids strange, unhallow'd altars flame,
And proudly braves Jehovah's name.

9. Solo and Chorus

Joad

O Lord, whom we adore,
Shall Judah rise no more?
Can this be thy decree.
Hear from thy mercy seat
The groans thy tribes repeat,
The sighs they breathe to thee.

Israelites

Hear from thy mercy seat,
The groans thy tribes repeat,
The sighs they breathe to thee.

Scène 3

Athalia and Chorus of Attendants.

10. Accompagnato

Athalia (starting out of a slumber)

What scenes of horror round me rise!
I shake, I faint, with dire surprise!
Is sleep, that frees the wretch from woe,
To majesty alone a foe?

Enter Abner and Mathan.

11. Recitative

Athalia

O Mathan, aid me to control
The wild confusion of my soul!

Mathan

Why shrinks that mighty soul with fear?
What cares, what danger can be near?

Athalia

E'en now, as I was sunk in deep repose,
My mother's awful form before me rose;
But ah! she chill'd my soul with fear,
For thus she thunder'd in my ear:

12. Accompagnato

Athalia

«O Athalia, tremble at thy fate!
For Judah's God pursues thee with His hate,
And will with unrelenting wrath this day
Set all His terrors round thee in array.»

13. Chorus of Attendants and Sidonian Priests

The gods, who chosen blessings shed
On majesty's anointed head,
For thee their care will still employ,
And brighten all thy fears to joy.

14. Recitative

Athalia

Her form at this began to fade,
And seem'd dissolving into shade.
In waking starts I vainly press'd
To clasp her to my panting breast:
She, pale, from my embrace withdrew,
And bleeding limbs lay mangled in my
view;
The horrid carnage dogs contending tore,
And drank with dreadful thirst the floating
gore.

15. Chorus of Attendants and Sidonian Priests

Cheer her, O Baal, with a soft serene,
And in thy votary protect the queen!

16. Recitative

Athalia

Amidst these horrors that my soul
dismay'd,
A youth I saw in shining robes array'd,
Such as the priests of Judah wear,
When they for solemn pomp prepare.
His lovely form and winning smile
Suspended all my fears awhile.
But as the young barbarian I caress'd,
He plung'd a dagger deep within my breast.
No efforts could the blow repel,
I shriek'd, I fainted, and I fell.

Mathan

Great queen, be calm! These fears I deem
The birth of a delusive dream.
Let harmony breathe soft around,
For sadness ceases at the sound.

17. Air

Mathan

Gentle airs, melodious strains!
Call for raptures out of woe,
Lull the regal mourners' pains,

Sweetly soothe her as you flow.
Gentle airs. . . *da capo*

18. Air

Athalia

Softest sounds no more can ease me,
Heav'n a weight of woe decrees me,
Horrors all my hopes destroy.
Whilst such rising torments grieve me,
Tuneful strains can ne'er relieve me,
Vain is the voice of joy.

19. Recitative

Mathan

Swift to the temple let us fly, to know
What mansion hides this youthful foe.

Abner

I'll haste the pontiff to prepare
For this black storm of wild despair.

20. Chorus of Attendants

The traitor, if you there descry,
Oh, let him by the altar die.

Scène 4

*Joad, Josabeth, Chorus, and to them
Abner.*

21. Recitative

Joad

My Josabeth, the grateful time appears
To bid dejected Judah end her fears.

Josabeth

O tell the people, as I oft have craved,
How I from death the royal infant sav'd.

Enter Abner.

Abner

Priest of the living God, with anxious heart
Proud Athalia's purpose I impart.
With vengeful haste she marches here,
To brave the God whom we revere.
She says this pile conceals a youthful foe,
Whose fall, she means, shall end her
jealous woe.

Josabeth

Oh, killing shock of unexpected pain!
Oh, innocence, my tender care in vain!
Must I at last my cherish'd joys forgo,
And drink, alas, this bitter cup of woe!

22. Air

Josabeth

Faithful cares in vain extended,
Lovely hopes for ever ended,
Beamy dawn of joy, farewell!
Gentle death, at last reveal me,
For the cruel woes that grieve me,
Thou alone canst now repel!
Faithful cares. . . *da capo*

23. Recitative

Abner

Oh cease, fair princess, to indulge your
woe;
No mortal to your son can prove a foe.

Joad

This grief, O Josabeth, degrades your soul;
Can God no longer Judah's foe control?
I trust he will his gracious care employ,
To make us close this festival with joy.

24. Air & Chorus

Joad

Gloomy tyrants, we disdain
All the terrors you intend.
All your fury will be vain,
And in low confusion end!

Israelites

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

ACTE II

Scène 1

The Temple. Joas, Joad, Josabeth, Abner, Priests and Levites.

25. Solo and Chorus

Priests, Levites and Israelites
The mighty pow'r in whom we trust,
Is ever to his promise just;
He makes this sacred day appear
The pledge of a propitious year.

Joad
He bids the circling season shine,
Recalls the olive and the wine,
With blooming plenty loads the plain,
And crowns the fields with golden grain.

Priests, Levites and Israelites
Give glory to His awful name,
Let ev'ry voice His praise proclaim!

26. Air

Josabeth
Through the land so lovely blooming,
Nature all her charms assuming,
Wakes the soul to cheerful praise.
Verdant scenes around us rising,
Each delighted sense surprising,
Softly crown the circling days.
Through the land. . . *da capo*



27. Recitative

Abner
Ah, were this land from proud oppression
freed,
Judea would be bless'd indeed!

Joad
O Abner, wert thou certain that the sword
Had not destroy'd the race by thee deplor'd,
Did one dear branch of that great stem
remain:
Wouldst thou, O Abner, then his cause
maintain?

28. Air

Abner
Ah, canst thou but prove me!
To vengeance I spring,
No terrors shall move me,
I'll fall for my king.
But whilst you relieve me
Awhile from my pain,
I fear you deceive me
With joys that are vain.
Ah, canst thou. . . *da capo*

29. Recitative

Joad
Thou dost the ardour that I wish display;
Revisit me before the close of day.
See, see, the proud imperious queen
Approaches with a glaring mien!

Scène 2

Enter Athalia.

Athalia
Confusion to my thoughts, my eyes have
view'd
My dreadful vision in this place renew'd!
Through all my veins the chilling horrors
run.
Say, Josabeth, is this fair youth thy son?

Josabeth
Though much he merits my fond love, yet
he
Is not indebted for his birth to me.

Athalia

Who is thy father? Let his name be known!

Athalia

Why so officious does thy zeal appear?
I mean the answer from his lips to hear.
How art thou call'd?

Joas

Eliakim.

Athalia

Unfold
Thy father's name!

Joas

In me, alas, behold
An orphan, cast by providence, and ne'er
As yet acquainted who his parents were.

Athalia

Give me to understand whose tender cares
Sustain'd and rear'd thee in thy infant
years?

30. Air

Joas

Will God, whose mercies ever flow,
Expose his children's youth to woe?
The little birds his bounty taste,
All nature with his gifts are grac'd.
Each day his care I implore,
He feeds me from his altar's store.

31. Recitative

Athalia

'Tis my intention, lovely youth, that you
A scene more suited to your worth shall
view;
You to the palace shall this day repair,
And live consigned to Athalia's care.

Joas

Shall I behold the God by whom I'm
bless'd
Profan'd by you with rites that I detest?

Athalia

Princess, in discipline you much excel;

Josabeth

He has no father but kind Heav'n alone.

Whate'er you dictate he remembers well.
But be assured that one revolving hour
Shall snatch your learned pupil from your
pow'r.

32. Air

Athalia

My vengeance awakes me,
Compassion forsakes me,
All softness and mercy away!
My foes with confusion
Shall find their illusion
And tremble before me today.
My vengeance awakes me. . . *da capo*

Exit Athalia.

33. Duet

Josabeth

My spirits fail, I faint, I die!

Joas

Ah, why?

Josabeth

The grave shall hide my head!

Joas

Is hope for ever fled?

Josabeth

My grief's too great to bear,
For thee sorrows rend me.

Joas

Kind Heav'n will defend me.

Josabeth

Thy ardours affect me.

Joas

He sure will protect me.

Josabeth

Whate'er this tyrant may decree,
O God, I place my trust in thee!

Scène 3

Re-enter to them Joad, Chorus of Young Virgins, and Chorus of Priests and Levites.

34. Recitative

Joad

Dear Josabeth, I trembled whilst my woe
Did in its first emotions wildly flow;
But when at last thou didst the pang
control,
My fading joy re-kindled in my soul.

35. Duet

Joad

Cease thy anguish, smile once more,
Let thy tears no longer flow!
Judah's God, whom we adore,
Soon to joy will change thy woe.

Josabeth

All his mercies I review,
Gladly with a grateful heart,
And I trust he will renew
Blessings he did once impart.

Both

Whate'er this tyrant may decree,
Returning joys we soon shall see.

36. Recitative

Abner

Joad, ere day has ended half his race,
Again expect me in this sacred place.

37. Chorus

Young Virgins

The clouded scene begins to clear,
And joys in single trains appear.

Priests and Levites

When crimes aloud for vengeance call,
The guilty will be doomed to fall.

Tutti

Rejoice, O Judah, in thy God,
The proud alone shall feel his rod!
Whilst blessings, with a mild decree,
His mercy now prepares for thee.



ACTE III

Scène 1

Joad, Joas, Josabeth, Chorus of Young Virgins, Chorus of Priests and Levites.

38. Accompagnato

Joad

What sacred horrors shake my breast!
Ah, 'tis the pow'r divine confess'd!
Who can his energy control?
He comes, he comes, and fires my soul!

39. Chorus of Virgins, Priests and Levites

Unfold, great seer, what Heav'n imparts,
And speak glad tidings to our hearts!

40. Accompagnato

Joad

Let harmony breathe soft around,
And aid my raptures with the sound!

41. Solo and Chorus

Joad

Jerusalem, thou shalt no more
A tyrant's guilty reign deplore;
No longer with dejected brow
Shall solitary sit as now.
Her fury soon shall cease to grieve thee,
Destin'd vengeance swiftly flies!
Heav'n itself will now relieve me!
See, she falls, she bleeds, she dies!

Virgins, Priests and Levites

O shining mercy, gracious pow'r
That aids us in the needful hour!

42. Recitative

Joad

Eliakim

Joas

My father!

Joad

Let me know:
Should Heav'n on thee a diadem bestow,
What reign of Judah's kings wouldst thou
that day
Choose for the model of thy future sway?

Joas

Should God such glory for my lot ordain,
Like righteous David I would wish to reign.

Joad

O Joas, O my king, thus low to thee
I pay the homage of my bended knee!

Joas

Is this reality, or kind deceit?
Ah, can I see my father at my feet?

Josabeth

Ye sacred bands, who serve the God of
truth,
Revere your sov'reign in that royal youth!



43. Chorus of Virgins, Priests and Levites

With firm united hearts, we all
Will conquer in his cause, or fall!

Scène 2

Enter Mathan.

44. Recitative

Mathan

O princess, I approach thee to declare
How much thy welfare is my care.

Josabeth

What means, proud Mathan, thy intrusion
here?
Has Heav'n no vengeance for thy crimes to
fear?

Mathan

Fair Josabeth, though you insult me so,
Trust me, in Mathan you behold no foe!

45. Air

Josabeth

Soothing tyrant, falsely smiling,
Virtue's foes I ne'er shall fear;
Flatt'ring sounds and looks beguiling
Lose their artful meaning here.
Go, thou vain deceiver, go,
Alike to me a friend or foe!

Scène 3

Re-enter Joad.

46. Recitative

Joad

Apostate priest! How canst thou dare
To violate this house of pray'r?

Mathan

Joad, I scorn thy proud insulting mien;
Prepare to answer thy offended queen!

Scène 4

Enter Athalia, Abner and Chorus of Sidonian Priests.

Athalia
O bold seducer, art thou there?
Where is the youth, inform me, where?

Joad
Ye priests, the youth before her bring!
Proud woman, there, behold our king!

47. Solo and Chorus

Virgins, Priests and Levites
Around let acclamations ring:
Hail, royal youth, hail royal youth,
Long live the king!

Joad
Reviving Judah shall no more
Detested images adore;
We'll purge with a reforming hand
Idolatry from out the land.
May God, from whom all mercies spring,
Bless the true church, and save the king!

Virgins, Priests and Levites
Bless the true church, and save the king!



48. Recitative

Athalia
Oh, treason, treason, impious scene!
Abner, avenge thy injur'd queen!

Joad
Great chief, behold thy royal Joas there,
Preserv'd by Josabeth's successful care!
Thy dauntless loyalty of soul I know,
Thou canst not be to David's race a foe.

Abner
Does Heav'n this blessing then at last
accord?
O royal Joas, O my honour'd Lord!

49. Air

Abner
Oppression, no longer I dread thee,
Thy terrors, proud queen, I despise!
Thy crimes to confusion have led thee,
And Judah triumphant shall rise!

50. Recitative

Athalia
Where I am? Furies, wild despair!
Where are my guards, my vassals, where?
Mathan, invoke thy God to shed
His vengeance on each rebel's head!

Mathan
He hears no more, our hopes are past,
The Hebrews' God prevails at last!
Alas, alas, my broken vow,
His dreadful hand is on me now!

51. Air

Mathan
Hark! His thunders round me roll,
His angry, awful frowns I see,
His arrows wound my trembling soul:
Is no more mercy left for me?
Ah no, he now denies to save.
Open, O earth, and be my grave!

52. Recitative

Joad

Yes, proud apostate, thou shalt fall,
Thy crimes aloud for vengeance call!

Athalia

I see all hopes, all succours fail,
And Judah's God will now prevail;
I see my death this day decreed,
But, traitors, I can dare to bleed.
Let Jezebel's great soul my bosom fill,
And ev'n in death, proud priest, I'll triumph
still.

53. Air

Athalia

To darkness eternal
And horrors infernal
Undaunted I'll hasten away.
O tyrants, your treason
Shall in the due season
Weep blood for this barbarous day.

Scène 5 finale

Joas, Joad, Josabeth, Abner and Chorus.

54. Recitative

Joad

Now, Josabeth, thy fears are o'er.

Josabeth

Bless'd be his name, whom we adore.

55. Duet

Joad

Joys, in gentle trains appearing,
Heav'n does to my fair impart;
And, to make them more endearing,
I shall share them with my heart!

Josabeth

Softest joys would but deceive me,
Hadst thou not thy happy part;
O my dearest lord, believe me,
Thou shalt share them with my heart.

Both

I / You shall / shalt share them with my /
thy heart.

56. Recitative

Abner

Rejoice, O Judah, this triumphant day!
Let all the goodness of our God display,
Whose mercies to the wond'ring world
declare
His chosen people are his chosen care.

57. Chorus of Virgins, Priests, Levites, Israelites

Give glory to His awful name,
Let ev'ry voice His praise proclaim!

