



Esther

detto *Haman and Mordecai*

HWV 50a

Masque in sei scene

Musica di

George Frideric Handel

Libretto di Alexander Pope e John Arbuthnot, da Esther di Jean Racine

Prima esecuzione: 1718, Cannons, Edgeware

A cura di

http://it.groups.yahoo.com/group/Handel_forever

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Personaggi

Esther (soprano)
Ahasuerus, King of Persia (tenor)
Mordecai (tenor)
Haman (bass)
Israelite Woman (soprano)
Priest (alto)
First Israelite (tenor)
Second Israelite (bass)
Habdonah (bass)
Persian Officer (bass)
Chorus of Israelites
Chorus of Persian Soldiers

Atto primo

1. Overture

Scene 1

2. Recitative

Habdonah

'Tis greater far to spare than to destroy.

Haman

I'll hear no more; it is decreed,
All the Jewish race shall bleed.
Hear and obey, what Haman's voice commands.
Hath not the lord of all the east
Giv'n all his power into my hands?
Hear ye, all ye nations far and wide,
Which own our monarch's sway,
Hear and obey.

3. Air

Haman

Pluck root and branch from out the land:
Shall I the God of Israel fear?
Let Jewish blood dye ev'ry hand,
Nor age, nor sex I spare.
Raze, raze their temples to the ground,
And let their place no more be found.

4. Recitative

Persian Officer

Our souls with ardour glow
To execute the blow.

5. Chorus of Persian Soldiers

Shall we the God of Israel's fear?
Nor age, nor sex we'll spare.
Pluck root and branch from out the land:
Nor age, nor sex we'll spare.

Scene 2

6. Recitative

First Israelite

Now persecution shall lay by her iron rod;
Esther is queen, and Esther serves the living God.

7. Air

First Israelite

Tune your harps to cheerful strains,
Moulder idols into dust!
Great Jehovah lives and reigns,
We in great Jehovah trust.
Tune your harps. . . *da capo*

8a. Chorus of Israelites

Shall we of servitude complain,
The heavy yoke and galling chain?

9. Air

Israelite Woman

Praise the Lord with cheerful noise,
'Wake my glory, 'wake my lyre!
Praise the Lord each mortal voice,
Praise the Lord, ye heav'nly choir!
Zion now her head shall raise:
Tune your harps to songs of praise.
Praise the Lord. . . *da capo*

10. Recitative

Israelite woman

O God, who from the suckling's mouth
Ordainest early praise:

Of such as worship thee in truth,
Accept the humble lays.

11. Air

Second Israelite

Sing songs of praise, bow down the knee;
Our chains we slight,
Our yoke is light,
The worship of our God is free.
Zion again her head shall raise,
Tune all your harps to songs of praise.
Sing songs. . . *da capo*

8b. Chorus of Israelites

Shall we of servitude complain,
The heavy yoke and galling chain?

Scene 3

12. Recitative

Priest

How have our sins provok'd the Lord!
Wild persecution has unsheath'd the sword.
Haman hath sent forth his decree:
The sons of Israel all
Shall in one ruin fall.

13. Accompagnato

Priest

Methinks I hear the mother's groans,
While babes are dashed against the stones!
I hear the infant's shriller screams,
Stabb'd at the mother's breast!
Blood stains the murderer's vest,
And through the city flows in streams.

14a. Chorus of Israelites

Ye sons of Israel mourn,
Ye never to your country shall return!

15. Air

Priest

O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide,
Shall we no more behold thee glide
The fertile vales along?

As in our great fathers' days,
Shall not thy hills resound with praise
And learn our holy song?
O Jordan. . . *da capo*

14b. Chorus of Israelites

Ye sons of Israel mourn,
Ye never to your country shall return!

Scene 4

16. Recitative

Esther

Why sits that sorrow on thy brow?
Why is thy rev'rend head
With mournful ashes spread?
Why is the humble sackcloth worn?
Speak, Mordecai, my kinsman, friend,
Speak, and let Esther know,
Why all this solemn woe?

Mordecai

One fate involves us all!
Haman's decree,
To strike at me,
Hath said that ev'ry Jew shall fall.
Go, stand before the king with weeping eye.

Esther

Who goes unsummon'd, by the laws shall die.

17. Air

Mordecai

Dread not, righteous queen, the danger;
Love will pacify his anger;
Fear is due to God alone.
Follow great Jehovah's calling,
For thy kindred's safety falling;
Death is better than a throne.
Dread not. . . *da capo*

18. Recitative

Esther

I go before the king to stand.
Stretch forth, O king, thy scepter'd hand!

19. Air

Esther

Tears assist me, pity moving,
Justice cruel fraud reprovng.
Hear, O God, thy servant's prayer!
Is it blood that must atone,
Take, oh take my life alone,
And thy chosen people spare.

20. Chorus of Israelites

Save us, O Lord,
And blunt the wrathful sword!

Scene 5

21. Recitative

Ahasuerus

Who dares intrude into our presence without our leave?
It is decreed,
He dies for this audacious deed.
Ah! Esther there!
The law condemns, but love will spare.

Esther

My spirits sink, alas I faint.

Ahasuerus

Ye powers, what paleness spreads her beauteous face!
Esther, awake, thou fairest of thy race.
Esther, awake and live, 'tis my command!
Behold the golden sceptre in my hand,
Sure sign of grace. The bloody stern decree
Was never meant, my queen, to strike at thee.

22. Duet

Esther

Who calls my parting soul from death?

Ahasuerus

Awake, my soul, my life, my breath!

Esther

Hear my suit, or else I die.

Ahasuerus

Ask, my queen, can I deny?

23. Air

Ahasuerus

O beauteous queen, unclose those eyes!
My fairest shall not bleed;
Hear love's soft voice that bids thee rise
And bids thy suit succeed.
Ask, and 'tis granted from this hour,
Who shares our heart shall share our pow'r.
O beauteous queen. . . *da capo*

24. Recitative

Esther

If I find favour in thy sight,
May the great monarch of the east
Honour my feast,
And deign to be his servant's guest.
The king and Haman I invite.

25. Air

Ahasuerus

How can I stay when love invites?
I come, my queen, to chaste delights.
With joy, with pleasure, I obey,
To thee I give the day.
How can I stay. . . *da capo*

26. Recitative

First Israelite

With inward joy his visage glows,
He to the queen's apartment goes.

Second Israelite

Beauty has his fury charm'd,
And all his wrath disarm'd.

27. Chorus of Israelites

Virtue, truth and innocence
Shall ever be her true defence.
She is Heav'n's peculiar care,
Propitious Heav'n will hear her pray'r.

28. Accompagnato

Priest

Jehovah crown'd with glory bright,
Surrounded with eternal light,
Whose ministers are flames of fire:

Arise, and execute thine ire!

29. Chorus of Israelites

He comes, He comes to end our woes,
And pour His vengeance on our foes.
Earth trembles, lofty mountains nod!
Jacob, arise to meet thy God!
He comes, He comes to end our woes,
And pour His vengeance on our foes.

Scene 6

30. Recitative

Ahasuerus

Now, O queen, thy suit declare.
Ask half my empire, and 'tis thine.

Esther

O gracious king, my people spare,
For in their lives, you strike at mine.
Reverse the dire decree!
The blow is aimed at Mordecai and me.
And is the fate of Mordecai decreed,
Who, when the ruffian's sword
Sought to destroy my royal Lord,
Brought forth to light the desperate deed?

Ahasuerus

Yes, yes, I own,
To him alone
I owe my life and throne.
Say then, my queen, who dares pursue
The life to which reward is due?

Esther

'Tis Haman's hate
That signed his fate.

Ahasuerus

I swear by yon great globe of light
Which rules the day,
That Haman's sight
Shall never more behold the golden ray.

31. Air

Haman

Turn not, O queen, thy face away.
Behold me prostrate on the ground!

Oh speak, his growing fury stay,
Let mercy in thy sight be found.

32. Air

Esther

Flatt'ring tongue, no more I hear thee!
Vain are all thy cruel wiles!
Bloody wretch, no more I fear thee,
Vain thy frowns and vain thy smiles.
Tyrant, when of power possess'd,
Now thou tremblest, when distress'd.
Flatt'ring tongue. . . *da capo*

33. Recitative

Ahasuerus

Guards, seize the traitor, bear him hence!
Death shall reward the dire offence.
To Mordecai be honour paid:
The royal garment bring,
My diadem shall grace his head,
Let him in triumph through the streets be led,
Who saved the king.

34. Air

Haman

How art thou fall'n from thy height!
Tremble, ambition, at the sight!
In power let mercy sway,
When adverse fortune is thy lot,
Lest thou by mercy be forgot,
And perish in that day.
How art thou fall'n. . . *da capo*

35. Chorus of Israelites

The Lord our enemy has slain,
Ye sons of Jacob, sing a cheerful strain!
Sing songs of praise, bow down the knee.
The worship of our God is free!
The Lord our enemy has slain,
Ye sons of Jacob, sing a cheerful strain!
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let Heav'n and earth his praise proclaim.

Alto solo

Let Israel songs of joy repeat,
Sound all the tongues Jehovah's praise.
He plucks the mighty from his seat,

And cuts off half his days.

Chorus

For ever bless'd be thy holy name,
Let Heav'n and earth his praise proclaim.

Esther, Mordecai

The Lord his people shall restore,
And we in Salem shall adore.

Chorus

For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let Heav'n and earth his praise proclaim.

Bass I, II

Mount Lebanon his firs resigns,
Descend, ye Cedars, haste ye Pines
To build the temple of the Lord,
For God his people has restor'd.

Chorus

For ever bless'd be thy holy name,
Let Heav'n and earth his praise proclaim.

Fine