

Esther

Georg Friedrich Händel

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Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra

amare

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Esther

Versie Ton Koopman & Peter de Groot 2024:

een combinatie van HWV 50a (1718/20) en HWV 50b (1732)

[Oorspronkelijk libretto door Händel gebaseerd op het toneelstuk Esther (1689) van Jean Racine, een liturgisch drama geïnspireerd op het bijbelboek Esther.]

1. Overture

2. Air (Esther)

Alleluja!

3. Recitative (Mordecai)

With transport, lovely queen, I see
The wonders God has wrought for thee,
Thy blooming beauty he bestows,
To end dejected Zion's woes.
The Lord of Asia, on his throne,
Now languishes for thee alone,
And by thy empire in his breast,
Judea may again be blest.

4. Air (Mordecai)

So much beauty, sweetly
blooming,
Shall thy consort's soul enslave.
In thy lovely pow'r presuming,
Ask him all thy heart can crave.

5. Chorus

Kings' daughters were among thy
honourable women.

Upon thy right hand did stand the
queen in vesture of gold
And the king shall have pleasure in
thy beauty.

Kings shall be thy nursing fathers
And queens thy nursing mothers.

6. Recitative (Ahasverus, Haman)

Ahasverus

Let me with freedom thy petition
know,
Thy virtues merit all I can bestow.

Haman

O king, forever live! Thy slave's
request

Flows from the duty of a loyal
breast.

The vassal Jews, through all thy
realms, disdain

A due subjection to thy gracious
reign;

They boast, their God will plead
their cause,

Restore the temple, and their laws.

Ah! would my sovereign in his
slave confide,

I soon would humble their
pernicious pride,

Whose impious ardour to rebel
Captivity's too mild to quell.

Ahasverus

Go, settle then my realm's repose,
Avenge thy monarch on his foes;

Pursue their pride with a relentless
hand,

And purge rebellion from the
tainted land.

7. Recitative (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.

8. Air (Haman)

Pluck root and branch from out the
land:
Shall I the God of Israel fear?
Let their blood dye ev'ry hand,
No soul I'll spare.
Raze their dwellings to the ground,
And let their place no more be
found.

9. Chorus

Shall we the God of Israel fear?
No soul, no soul we'll spare.
Pluck root and branch from out the
land:
No soul, no soul we'll spare.

10. Air (Esther)

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

11. Recitative (Priest)

Me thinks, I see each stately tow'r
Of Salem rise by Esther's pow'r;
She shall break the captive chain,
And Zion learn our songs again.

12. Air (Esther)

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.

13. Recitative (Mordecai)

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.

14. Air (Mordecai)

O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide,
Shall we no more behold thee
glide
The fertile vales along?
As in our great forefathers' days,
Shall not thy hills resound with
praise,
And learn our holy song?

15. Chorus

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

ACT II

16. Chorus

Tyrants may a while presume,
They never shall receive their
doom.
But they soon shall trembling
know,
Stern justice strikes the surest
blow.

17. Recitative (Esther, Mordecai)*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.

18. 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.

19. Recitative (Esther)

I go before the king to stand.

Stretch forth, o king, thy scepter'd
hand!

20. Air (Esther)

Tears assist me, pity moving,

Justice cruel, fraud reproving.

Hear, O God, thy servant's prayer!

Is it blood that must atone?

Take, o take my life alone,

And thy chosen people spare.

21. Chorus

Save us, O Lord,

And blunt the wrathful sword!

22. Recitative (Ahasverus, Esther)*Ahasverus*

Who dares intrude into our
presence without our leave?

It is decreed, he dies for this
audacious deed.

Hah! Esther there! The law
condemns, but love will spare.

Esther

My spirits sink, alas! I faint.

Ahasverus

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 scepter in my
hand, sure sign of grace.

The bloody stern decree was
never meant,

My queen, to strike at thee.

23. Duet (Esther, Ahasverus)*Esther*

Who calls my parting soul from
death?

Ahasverus

Awake, my soul, my life, my
breath!

Esther

Hear my suit, or else I die.

Ahasverus

Ask, my queen, can I deny?

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 (Ahasverus)

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.

26. Recitative (Priest)

The king will listen to his royal fair,
And own her lovely prevalence of
prayer.

27. Chorus

Esther

God is our hope,
and he will show the king to show
mercy to Jacob's race.

Chorus

Blessed, blessed are all they that
fear the Lord.

God save the king,
Long live the king,
May the king live forever.
Amen, alleluja, amen!

ACT III**28. Air (Mordecai)**

Jehovah crown'd with glory bright,
Surrounded with eternal light,
Whose ministers are flames of fire:
Arise, and execute thine ire!

29. Chorus

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

**30. Recitative (Ahasverus,
Esther)**

Ahasverus

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?

Ahasverus

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.

Ahasverus

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!
O 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 pow'r possess'd,

Now thou tremblest, when distress'd.

33. Recitative (Ahasverus)

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 (Ahasverus)

Through the nation he shall be

Next in dignity to me;

All my people shall revere

Merit to their prince so dear.

Daily to his honour'd name

Incense shall on altars flame,

Whilst applauding crowds around

Shall his deathless fame resound.

35. Chorus

All applauding crowds around

Shall his deathless fame resound.

36. 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.

37. Air (Esther)

I'll proclaim the wond'rous story

Of the mercies I receive,

From the day spring's dawning glory

Till the fading day of eve.

All the blessings Heav'n is lending,

Well demand our grateful lays

To his radiant throne ascending,

Wafted on the wings of praise.

In exalted rapture joining,

We'll employ our happy days,

All our grateful powers combining

To declare his endless praise.

38. Soli & Chorus

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.

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.

For ever blessed be thy holy name,

Let heav'n and earth his praise proclaim.

The Lord his people shall restore,

And we in Salem shall adore.

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

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