



# A Italia

*HWV 52*

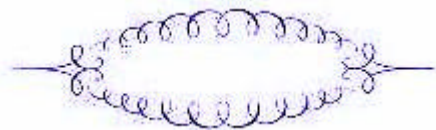
*Oratorio in tre atti*

*Musica di*

**George F riederic H andel**

*Libretto di Samuel Humphreys, da Athalie di J. Racine*

*Prima esecuzione: 10 Luglio 1733, Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford*



# *Personaggi*

**Athalia, Baalite Queen of Judah and Daughter of Jezebel (soprano)**

**Josabeth, Wife of Joad (soprano)**

**Joas, King of Judah (boy soprano)**

**Joad, High Priest (contralto)**

**Mathan, Priest of Baal, formerly a Jewish Priest (tenore)**

**Abner, Captain of the Jewish Forces (basso)**

**Chorus of Young Virgins**

**Chorus of Israelites**

**Chorus of Priests and Levites**

**Chorus of Attendants**

**Chorus of Sidonian Priests**

# *Atto primo*

**1. Sinfonia** (Allegro – Grave – Allegro)

**Scene the First**

*Josabeth, Priests and Chorus of Young Virgins and Israelites*

**2. Aria**

*Josabeth*

Blooming virgins, spotless train,  
tune to transport all your lays!  
Hail Jehovah's wond'rous reign,  
wake the dayspring with his praise!

**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. Aria 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! Tyrants! Ye in vain conspire!  
Wake the lute and strike the lyre!

#### **5. Recitativo**

##### *Abner*

When He is in his wrath reveal'd,  
where will the haughty lie conceal'd?

#### **6. Aria and 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*

Oh 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.

#### **Scene the Second**

*Enter Joad*

#### **7. Recitativo**

##### *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. Aria and Chorus**

### *Joad*

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

### *Israelites*

Hear from thy mercy seat,  
the groans thy tribes repeat,  
the sighs they breathe to thee,  
the groans, the sighs!

## **Scene the Third**

*Athalia, Chorus of Attendants and Sidonian Priests*

## **10. Arioso**

### *Athalia*

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. Recitativo**

### *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*

Ev'n 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. Arioso**

*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. Recitativo**

*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. Recitativo**

*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. Aria**

***Mathan***

Gentle airs, melodious strains!  
Call for raptures out of woe,  
lull the regal mourners' pains,  
sweetly soothe her as you flow.

**18. Aria**

***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. Recitativo**

***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.

**Scene the Fourth**

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

**21. Recitativo**

***Joad***

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

***Josabeth***

Oh 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. Aria**

***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!

**23. Recitativo**

***Abner***

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

***Joad***

This grief, oh 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. Aria and Chorus**

***Joad***

Gloomy tyrants, we disdain  
all the terrors you intend,  
all your fury will be vain,  
and in low confusion end!

*Israelites*  
Allelujah!

## *Atto secondo*

### **Scene the First**

*The Temple: Joas, Joad, Josabeth, Abner, Priests, Levites and Israelites and Chorus*

#### **25. Aria 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. Aria**

*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.

#### **27. Recitativo**

*Abner*

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

*Joad*

Oh 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, oh Abner, then his cause maintain?

## **28. Aria**

### ***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.

## **29. Recitativo**

### ***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!

## ***Scene the Second***

### ***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.  
(*to Josabeth*)  
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!

### ***Josabeth***

He has no father but kind heav'n alone.

### ***Athalia (to Josabeth)***

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. Aria

*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. Recitativo

*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 (to Josabeth)*

Princess, in discipline you much excel;  
whate'er you dictate he remembers well.  
But be assured that one revolving hour  
shall snatch your learned pupil from your pow'r.

### 32. Aria

*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.

*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.

*(Andante)*

***Josabeth***

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

### **34. Aria**

***Joas***

In Jehovah's awful sight,  
haughty tyrants are but dust.  
Those, who glory in their might,  
place in vanity their trust.

### ***Scene the Third***

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

### **35. Recitativo**

#### *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.

### **36. 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.

### **37. Recitativo**

#### *Abner*

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

### **38. 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.

#### *Israelites*

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

# *Atto terzo*

## *Scene the First*

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

### **39. Arioso**

#### *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!

### **40. Chorus of Young Virgins, Priests and Levites**

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

### **41. Accompagnato**

#### *Joad*

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

### **42. Aria 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!

#### *Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

O shining mercy!

#### *Joad*

Heav'n itself will now relieve me!

#### *Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

Oh shining mercy!

#### *Joad*

See, she falls...

#### *Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

Gracious pow'r...

*Joad*

... she bleeds...

*Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

... gracious pow'r...

*Joad, Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

... oh shining mercy, gracious pow'r,  
that aids us in the needful hour!

### **43. Recitativo**

*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*

Oh, Joas, Oh, 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!

### **44. Chorus of Young Virgins, Priests and Levites**

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

### **Scene the Second**

*Enter Mathan*

#### **45. Recitativo**

*Mathan*

Oh 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!

#### **46. Aria**

*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!

#### ***Scene the Third***

*Re-enter Joad*

#### **47. Recitativo**

*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!

#### **Scene the Fourth**

*Enter Athalia, Abner and Chorus of Sidonian Priests*

*Athalia*

Oh 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!

#### **48. Aria and Chorus**

*Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

Around let acclamations ring:

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!

*Young Virgins, Priests and Levites*

Bless the true church, and save the king!

**49. Recitativo**

*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?

Oh royal Joas, Oh my honour'd Lord!

**50. Aria**

*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!

**51. Recitativo**

*Athalia*

Where I am? Furies, wild desp Aria!

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!

## **52. Aria**

### *Mathan*

Hark! Hark! 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, oh earth, and be my grave!

## **53. Recitativo**

### *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.

## **54. Aria**

### *Athalia*

To darkness eternal  
and horrors infernal  
undaunted I'll hasten away.  
Oh tyrants, your treason  
shall in the due season  
weep blood for this barbarous day.

## **Scene the Last**

*Joas, Joad, Josabeth, Abner and Chorus*

## **55. Recitativo**

### *Joad*

Now, Josabeth, thy fears are o'er.

### *Josabeth*

Bless'd be his name, whom we adore.

## **56. 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;  
oh my dearest lord, believe me,  
thou shalt share them with my heart.

***Both***

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

**57. Recitativo**

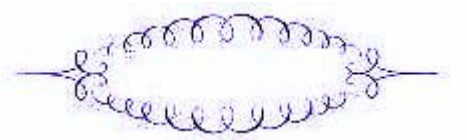
***Abner***

Rejoice, oh 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.

**58. Chorus of Young Virgins, Priests, Levites, Israelites**

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

***Fine dell'oratorio***



*A cura di*

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