



HÄNDEL *JEPHTHA* FABIO BIONDI

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
COLLEGIUM VOCALE GENT



James Gilchrist Mona Julsrud Elisabeth Jansson
Håvard Stensvold Marianne B. Kielland Elisabeth Rapp

HÄNDEL, GEORG FRIEDRICH (1685–1759)

JEPHTHA, HWV 70 (1752)

Libretto by Thomas Morell

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DISC 1 (80'34)

ACT ONE

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|-----|----------|------|
| [1] | Overture | 5'03 |
| [2] | Menuet | 1'23 |

SCENE 1

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| [3] | Accompagnato (Zebul): <i>It must be so</i> | 1'37 |
| [4] | Air (Zebul): <i>Pour forth no more unheeded pray'rs</i> | 4'56 |
| [5] | Chorus of Israelites: <i>No more to Ammon's god</i> | 3'06 |

SCENE 2

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| [6] | Recitative (Zebul, Jephtha): <i>But Jephtha comes</i> | 0'56 |
| [7] | Air (Jephtha): <i>Virtue my soul shall still embrace</i> | 4'01 |
| [8] | Recitative (Storgè): <i>'Twill be a painful separation</i> | 0'33 |
| [9] | Air (Storgè): <i>In gentle murmurs will I mourn</i> | 4'30 |

SCENE 3

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|------|--|------|
| [10] | Recitative (Hamor): <i>Happy this embassy</i> | 0'46 |
| [11] | Air (Hamor): <i>Dull delay, in piercing anguish</i> | 2'37 |
| [12] | Recitative (Iphis): <i>Ill suits the voice of love</i> | 0'29 |
| [13] | Air (Iphis): <i>Take the heart you fondly gave</i> | 3'08 |
| [14] | Recitative (Hamor): <i>I go. My soul, inspir'd</i> | 0'27 |
| [15] | Duet (Iphis and Hamor): <i>These labours past</i> | 4'25 |

SCENE 4

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 16 | Recitative (Jephtha): <i>What mean these doubtful fancies</i> | 2'23 |
| 17 | Chorus of Israelites: <i>O God, behold our sore distress</i> | 4'49 |

SCENE 5

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 18 | Recitative (Storgè): <i>Some dire event</i> | 0'31 |
| 19 | Air (Storgè): <i>Scenes of horror, scenes of woe</i> | 3'57 |

SCENE 6

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 20 | Recitative (Iphis, Storgè): <i>Say, my dear mother</i> | 0'55 |
| 21 | Air (Iphis): <i>The smiling dawn of happy days</i> | 2'00 |

SCENE 7

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 22 | Recitative (Zebul, Jephtha): <i>Such, Jephtha</i> | 0'36 |
| 23 | Chorus of Israelites: <i>When His loud voice in thunder spoke</i> | 4'04 |

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 24 | Recitative (Hamor): <i>Glad tidings of great joy</i> | 1'20 |
| 25 | Chorus of Israelites: <i>Cherub and seraphim</i> | 3'34 |
| 26 | Air (Hamor): <i>Up the dreadful steep ascending</i> | 4'56 |
| 27 | Recitative (Iphis): <i>'Tis well</i> | 0'23 |
| 28 | Air (Iphis): <i>Tune the soft melodious lute</i> | 3'36 |

SCENE 2

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 29 | Recitative (Jephtha): <i>Heav'n smiles once more</i> | 0'41 |
| 30 | Air (Jephtha): <i>His mighty arm</i> | 5'19 |
| 31 | Chorus: <i>In glory high</i> | 2'48 |

DISC 2 (78'14)

SCENE 3

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | Symphony | 0'46 |
| 2 | Recitative (Iphis): <i>Hail, glorious conqueror</i> | 0'24 |
| 3 | Air (Iphis) and Chorus of Virgins: <i>Welcome as the cheerful light</i> | 2'04 |
| 4 | Recitative (Jephtha): <i>Horror, confusion!</i> | 0'28 |
| 5 | Air (Jephtha): <i>Open thy marble jaws</i> | 3'08 |
| 6 | Recitative (Zebul, Jephtha): <i>Why is my brother thus afflicted?</i> | 1'13 |
| 7 | Accompagnato (Storgè): <i>First perish thou</i> | 2'07 |
| 8 | Recitative (Hamor): <i>If such thy cruel purpose</i> | 0'25 |
| 9 | Air (Hamor): <i>On me let blind mistaken zeal</i> | 1'54 |
| 10 | Quartet: <i>Oh, spare your daughter</i> | 1'58 |

SCENE 4

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 11 | Recitative and Accompagnato (Iphis): <i>Such news flies swift</i> | 1'28 |
| 12 | Air (Iphis): <i>Happy they</i> | 3'06 |
| 13 | Accompagnato (Jephtha): <i>Deeper, and deeper still</i> | 3'02 |
| 14 | Chorus: <i>How dark, O Lord, are Thy decrees</i> | 8'31 |

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 15 | Accompagnato (Jephtha): <i>Hide thou thy hated beams</i> | 2'21 |
| 16 | Air (Jephtha): <i>Waft her, angels</i> | 4'32 |
| 17 | Recitative (Iphis): <i>Ye sacred priests</i> | 0'39 |
| 18 | Air (Iphis): <i>Farewell, ye limpid springs</i> | 5'25 |
| 19 | Chorus of Priests: <i>Doubtful fear and rev'rent awe</i> | 3'16 |
| 20 | Symphony | 1'15 |

21	Recitative (Angel): <i>Rise, Jephtha</i>	1'15
22	Air (Angel): <i>Happy, Iphis, shalt thou live</i>	4'00
23	Arioso (Jephtha): <i>For ever blessed be Thy holy name</i>	1'00
24	Chorus of Priests: <i>Theme sublime of endless praise</i>	4'00

SCENE 2

25	Recitative (Zebul): <i>Let me congratulate</i>	0'32
26	Air (Zebul): <i>Laud her, all ye virgin train</i>	2'05
27	Recitative (Storgè): <i>Oh, let me fold thee</i>	0'19
28	Air (Storgè): <i>Sweet as sight to the blind</i>	2'09
29	Recitative (Hamor): <i>With transport, Iphis</i>	0'32
30	Air (Hamor): <i>'Tis Heav'n's all-ruling pow'r</i>	4'51
31	Recitative (Iphis): <i>My faithful Hamor</i>	0'23
32	Quintet: <i>All that is in Hamor mine</i>	3'46
33	Chorus of Israelites: <i>Ye house of Gilead</i>	3'58
34	Applause	0'47

TT: 157'46

JAMES GILCHRIST *tenor (Jephtha)*

MONA JULSRUD *soprano (Iphis)*

ELISABETH JANSSON *mezzo-soprano (Storgè)*

HÅVARD STENSVOLD *baritone (Zebul)*

MARIANNE B. KIELLAND *mezzo-soprano (Hamor)*

ELISABETH RAPP *soprano (Angel)*

COLLEGIUM VOCALE GENT

STAVANGER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA • FABIO BIONDI *conductor*

On 21st January 1751, George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) began work on the oratorio *Jephtha*. It is not known whether he had hoped to be able to include the work in the forthcoming oratorio season during Lent, but in any case it soon became clear that his ability to work was affected by the fact that he was losing sight in his left eye. On 13th February he had completed the final chorus of Act 2, ‘How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees’. In the manuscript of this movement, Handel himself wrote (in German) that he couldn’t continue his work because of eye problems. On this particular occasion, the cause was probably a passing infection; the day after the opening of the oratorio season (a performance of *Belshazzar* on 22nd February), he resumed work on *Jephtha* and finished the second act within four days. On 18th June, after the concert season had finished, he began work on the third act and, after a period of rest in the countryside in July, he was able to complete the oratorio by 30th August 1751.

Handel retained enough of his eyesight to be able to lead the twelve concerts of the Lent season of 1752, which opened with a performance of *Jephtha* on 26th February. During the following spring and summer, however, it became clear that his eye problem was caused by something more serious than an infection. Handel visited a number of doctors, but even the renowned surgeon Samuel Sharp was unable to restore his sharpness of vision, and operations performed by the Royal Surgeon William Bromfield proved equally unsuccessful. In January 1753 a London newspaper reported that ‘Mr Handel has at length, unhappily, quite lost his sight’.

Like most composers working in the fields of theatre and opera, Handel reused much of his own music in new works and in transcriptions. He continued this practice when composing oratorios. That he also made considerable use of music by other composers is perhaps more particular for Handel. His oratorios differ from the established tradition of ‘parody masses’, however, in that Handel did not take recognized and well-known works as his point of departure, but rather music by unknown composers, without acknowledging his borrowings. It is clear that this procedure provided an inspiration which served to release Handel’s creative gifts. In *Jephtha* we find, besides

quotations from Handel's own works, material originating in masses by the Bohemian composer Franz Habermann (1706–83).

Based on the story of Jephtha in the Book of Judges in the Old Testament, and the drama (in Latin) *Jephthes sive Votum* by the Scottish scholar George Buchanan (1506–82), the libretto for Jephtha was written by Thomas Morell (1703–84). Morell had previously supplied the librettos for *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Alexander Balus* and *Theodora*, and would also contribute to the English version of *The Triumph of Time and Truth*. In his last oratorios Handel composed the leading soprano parts with the sweet and gentle voice of Giulia Frasi in mind, and it was Frasi who sang the part of Iphis at the first performance of *Jephtha* in 1752.

Act I opens with Zebul asking the Israelites to make Jephtha their new leader in the struggle against the Ammonites. Having previously been banished by his half-brother Zebul, Jephtha agrees to take on the responsibility on the condition that he will remain as the leader of the nation after the war. His wife Storgè laments the separation that the war will cause, and their daughter Iphis agrees to marry Hamor, a warrior, provided that the Israelites win the war. But Jephtha makes a fateful vow to God: if he is victorious, he will sacrifice the first thing he encounters at his return home after the battle.

At the beginning of Act II Hamor announces the victory of Jephtha. But when Jephtha himself returns, the first person to meet him is his daughter. The fatal vow becomes known and Jephtha's despair is boundless. Even though Iphis herself agrees to be sacrificed, the situation is desperate. The act closes with the choral movement 'How dark, o Lord, are Thy decrees!'

In the third act the sacrifice of Iphis is being prepared, but subsequently the plot departs from the Biblical original: an Angel appears and announces to Jephtha that his vow will be considered fulfilled if he dedicates his daughter to God 'in pure and virgin state fore'er'. This solution proves acceptable to all concerned and the oratorio can close on a humanistic and optimistic note.

During the 1730s and 1740s Handel attempted to develop the oratorio genre in various directions, but his audience – the emerging middle classes – was not always willing

to follow his lead. Oratorios with biblical texts were regarded as suitable for Lent, and the fact that dramatic scenes were not staged accorded well with the need to display a decorous piety in public life. Handel's experiments with more dramatic, secular oratorios therefore met with little success, but with the aid of skilful librettists he was still able to create that variety of characters which was so important to his art as a composer.

Jephtha was the last oratorio that Handel brought to completion. In it, as in several other oratorios, the choir represents the Israelites, following in the tradition of Greek drama. Most of the oratorios were composed after Handel had already stopped writing operas, but to the new genre he brought his ability to represent human emotions and conflicts in music, endowing the solo parts with individual characteristics that justify the subtitle often printed on the scores: 'an oratorio or sacred drama'.

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James Gilchrist began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time career in music in 1996. He regularly appears as a soloist with many leading orchestras and ensembles throughout Europe and America including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra. A keen recitalist, he appears in varied programmes with piano and harp accompaniment.

Mona Julsrud is a renowned concert soloist, who works regularly with all the major Norwegian orchestras. Aside from her frequent engagements in Norway, she collaborates with conductors such as Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Parrott, Phillip Herreweghe and Frans Brüggen. Mona Julsrud has performed at most of the major Norwegian festivals as well as at many European and North American festivals.

Born in Oslo, the bass-baritone **Håvard Stensvold** is one of Scandinavia's most sought-after opera, oratorio, and recital singers with a broad repertoire. He regularly appears

with the major Scandinavian orchestras and has worked with conductors such as Fabio Biondi, Paul Goodwin and Lars Ulrik Mortensen. He also devotes much time to contemporary music.

The Swedish mezzo-soprano **Elisabeth Jansson** studied in Munich, London and Copenhagen. She has performed with orchestras such as the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Danish National Radio Orchestra under conductors including Sir Neville Marriner, Ádám Fischer, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Andrew Parrott. She also appears in opera and has been a member of the Royal Danish Opera since 2005.

The Norwegian mezzo-soprano **Marianne Beate Kielland** has quickly established herself as one of Scandinavia's foremost singers. She regularly works with conductors such as Frans Brüggen, Harry Christophers, Philippe Herreweghe and Manfred Honeck. She is highly regarded as a concert and opera singer, appearing regularly in major concert halls and at festivals throughout Europe and Japan.

Elisabeth Rapp is French, but now lives in Berlin. Since 2003 she has sung as a soprano in Collegium Vocale Gent and is often invited to perform solo parts with that ensemble. Under the direction of Fabio Biondi she has performed music by Telemann as well as the role of the Angel in this production of *Jephtha*.

Collegium Vocale Gent was founded in 1970 by Philippe Herreweghe. It was one of the first ensembles to apply the then-new ideas concerning baroque practice in vocal music performances. From the mid-1980s the ensemble acquired international fame and was invited to all the major concert halls and music festivals around the world. The repertoire of Collegium Vocale Gent is not limited to one particular stylistic period but ranges from renaissance to contemporary music. The ensemble works together with various leading baroque orchestras as well as with traditional symphony orchestras. It has collaborated with conductors such as René Jacobs, Iván Fischer and

Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Collegium Vocale Gent is sponsored by the Flemish Community, the Province of Eastern Flanders and the city of Ghent.

In the past twenty years the **Stavanger Symphony Orchestra** has won international acclaim, mainly owing to the deliberate and consistent use of two different artistic directors for different repertoire. Fabio Biondi is currently responsible for the orchestra's work in the baroque and classical repertoires, whilst the American Steven Sloane is engaged as principal conductor with a particular responsibility for later repertoire. Previous artistic directors have included Frans Brüggen, Alexander Dmitriev, Philippe Herreweghe and Susanna Mälkki. The orchestra has toured extensively, making its US début in 2011 with concerts in Carnegie Hall and elsewhere. Numerous recordings of 20th-century Norwegian music have contributed to the development and reputation of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. Since 1990, Statoil has been the principal sponsor of the orchestra, whose patron is HRH Prince Haakon.

Born in Palermo, **Fabio Biondi** began his career as a violinist at the age of twelve, performing his first solo concert with the RAI Symphony Orchestra. At an early age he was introduced to pioneers of the new approach to baroque music, something that was to change the direction of his career. In 1990, Fabio Biondi founded Europa Galante, an ensemble which rapidly became the most internationally renowned Italian ensemble of baroque music. As a soloist and conductor he has collaborated with orchestras such as Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg, the European Baroque Orchestra, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. In March 2005 Fabio Biondi took on the role of artistic director for baroque music of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

Am 21. Januar 1751 begann Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759) mit der Arbeit an dem Oratorium *Jephta*. Wir wissen nicht, ob er gehofft hatte, das Werk schon in der kommenden Oratorien-Saison während der Passionszeit aufzuführen zu können; auf jeden Fall wurde bald klar, dass seine Arbeit dadurch beeinträchtigt wurde, dass sein Sehvermögen auf dem linken Auge nachzulassen begann. Am 13. Februar beendete er den Schlusschor des zweiten Aktes „How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees“ („O Herr, wie dunkel ist für uns doch dein Beschluss“). Im Manuskript dieses Satzes notierte Händel, dass er seine Arbeit aufgrund von Augenproblemen nicht fortsetzen könne. In diesem Fall handelte es sich vermutlich nur um eine vorübergehende Infektion; am Tag nach der Eröffnung der Oratorien-Saison (einer Aufführung von *Belshazzar* am 22. Februar) nahm er die Arbeit an *Jephta* wieder auf und vollendete den zweiten Akt innerhalb von vier Tagen. Am 18. Juni, als die Konzertsaison vorbei war, begann er, am dritten Akt zu arbeiten, und nach einer Ruhezeit auf dem Land im Juli konnte er das Oratorium am 30. August 1751 abschließen..

Händels Augen waren gut genug, dass er die 12 Passions-Konzerte im Jahr 1752 leiten konnte – eröffnet wurde die Saison mit *Jephta* am 26. Februar. Während des folgenden Frühjahrs und Sommers stellte sich jedoch heraus, dass sein Augenleiden durch etwas Ernsteres als eine Infektion hervorgerufen wurde. Händel konsultierte einige Ärzte, aber auch der berühmte Chirurg Samuel Sharp konnte seine Sehschärfe nicht wiederherstellen, und einige Operationen durch den königlichen Chirurgen William Bromfield waren ebenso erfolglos. Im Januar 1753 berichtete eine Londoner Zeitung, dass Händel sein Augenlicht verloren habe.

Wie die meisten Komponisten, die für Theater und Oper arbeiteten, verwendete Händel viel von seiner eigenen Musik in neuen Werken und Transkriptionen wieder. Bei der Komposition von Oratorien setzte er diese Praxis fort. Dass er auch recht häufig Musik von anderen Komponisten heranzog, ist vielleicht eher nur für Händel typisch. Seine Oratorien unterscheiden sich von der etablierten Tradition der „Parodiemessen“ insofern, als dass Händel keine allseits bekannten Werke als Vorlage wählte, sondern eher auf Musik von unbekannten Komponisten zurückgriff, ohne dabei seine Anleihen

einzugestehen. Fest steht jedoch, dass diese Prozedur dazu beitrug, sein kreatives Potenzial freizusetzen. Bei *Jephta* diente neben eigenen Werken musikalisches Material aus Messen des böhmischen Komponisten Franz Habermann (1706–83) als Vorlage.

Das Libretto für *Jephta* stammt von Thomas Morell (1703–84), basierend auf der Jephta-Geschichte im Buch der Richter aus dem Alten Testament und dem lateinischen Drama „Jephtes sive Votum“ des schottischen Gelehrten George Buchanan (1506–82). Morell hatte schon die Libretti für *Judas Maccabäus*, *Alexander Valus* und *Theodora* geliefert und würde auch zu der englischen Fassung von *Il Trionfo* beitragen. Die exponierten Sopranstimmen in seinen letzten Oratorien komponierte Händel mit der lieblichen Stimme der Sopranistin Giulia Frasi im Ohr, die dann auch bei der Uraufführung von *Jephta* im Jahr 1752 die Rolle der Iphis sang.

Zu Beginn des ersten Aktes bittet Zebul die Israeliten, Jephta zu ihrem Anführer im Kampf gegen die Ammoniter zu machen. Zuvor war Jephta von seinem Halbbruder Zebul verbannt worden, sodass er die Verantwortung nur unter der Bedingung, dass er nach dem Krieg Anführer des Volkes bleiben würde, auf sich nehmen möchte. Seine Frau Storgè beklagt die Trennung, die durch den Krieg entstehen wird, und ihre Tochter Iphis stimmt der Hochzeit mit Hamor, einem Krieger, zu, vorausgesetzt, die Israeliten gewinnen den Krieg. Jephta aber legt einen schicksalhaften Schwur gegenüber Gott ab: Wenn er siegt, wird er das erste, das ihm bei seiner Rückkehr entgegen kommt, opfern.

Im zweiten Akt verkündet Hamor den Sieg Jephtas. Als dieser heimkehrt, ist die erste Person, die ihm entgegen kommt, seine Tochter. Der fatale Schwur wird bekannt, und Jephtas Verzweiflung ist grenzenlos. Obwohl Iphis selbst der Opferung zustimmt, ist die Situation verzweifelt. Der Akt schließt mit dem Chorsatz „How dark, o Lord, are Thy decrees“.

Im dritten Akt wird die Opferzeremonie für Iphis vorbereitet, aber nach und nach entfernt sich die Handlung von der biblischen Vorlage: Ein Engel erscheint und verkündet Jephta, dass sein Schwur als erfüllt gilt, wenn seine Tochter sich bereit erklärt, ihr Leben lang dem Herrn als Jungfrau zu dienen. Diese Lösung ist für alle Beteiligten

akzeptabel, und so kann das Oratorium mit einer humanistischen und optimistischen Note enden.

Während der 1730er und -40er Jahre versuchte Händel, das Genre des Oratoriums in verschiedene Richtungen weiterzuentwickeln, aber sein Publikum – das neue Bürgertum – war nicht immer bereit, seinem Weg zu folgen. Oratorien mit biblischem Inhalt sah man als angemessen für die Passionszeit an, und die Tatsache, dass die dramatischen Szenen nicht auf einer Bühne dargestellt wurden, kam dem Wunsch, eine anständige Frömmigkeit im öffentlichen Leben zu demonstrieren, entgegen. Händels Experimente mit dramatischeren, weltlichen Oratorien hatten daher wenig Erfolg, aber mit Hilfe fähiger Librettisten konnte er trotzdem vielschichtige Charaktere kreieren, was für seine Kunst als Komponist so wichtig war.

Jephtha war das letzte Oratorium, das Händel vollendete. Hier, wie in mehreren anderen Oratorien, repräsentiert der Chor die Israeliten, womit der Tradition des griechischen Dramas Folge geleistet wird. Die meisten seiner Oratorien entstanden, als Händel aufgehört hatte, Opern zu komponieren; in das neue Genre brachte er aber seine Fähigkeit ein, menschliche Emotionen und Konflikte in Musik zu übertragen, indem er die Solorollen mit individuellen Charakteristika ausstattete, die den in den Partituren oft zu findenden Untertitel „an oratorio or sacred drama“ rechtfertigten.

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James Gilchrist arbeitete zunächst als Arzt, bevor er 1996 eine Vollzeitkarriere als Musiker aufnahm. Er tritt regelmäßig mit führenden Orchestern und anderen Ensembles in ganz Europa und Amerika auf, u.a. dem Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, dem Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich und dem Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra. Als Liedsänger bestreitet er abwechslungsreiche Programme mit Klavier- oder Harfenbegleitung.

Als renommierte Konzertsolistin tritt **Mona Julsrud** regelmäßig mit allen bedeutenden Orchestern Norwegens auf. Sie arbeitet mit Dirigenten wie Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Parrott, Phillip Herreweghe und Frans Brüggen zusammen und war bei den wichtigsten norwegischen sowie bei vielen europäischen und nordamerikanischen Festivals zu hören.

Håvard Stensvold wurde in Oslo geboren und ist einer der gefragtesten Opern-, Oratorien- und Liedsänger Skandinaviens, der auf ein breit gefächertes Repertoire zurückgreifen kann. Er tritt regelmäßig mit den wichtigsten skandinavischen Orchestern auf und arbeitet mit Dirigenten wie Fabio Biondi, Paul Goodwin und Lars Ulrik Mortensen zusammen. Er setzt sich auch sehr für zeitgenössische Musik ein.

Die schwedische Mezzosopranistin **Elisabeth Jansson** studierte in München, London und Kopenhagen. Sie ist mit Orchestern wie der Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields und dem Danish National Radio Orchestra aufgetreten unter Dirigenten wie Sir Neville Marriner, Ádám Fischer, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos und Andrew Parrott. Sie ist gleichermaßen im Konzert wie in der Oper zu hören und seit 2005 fest an der Königlichen Oper Kopenhagen engagiert.

Die norwegische Mezzosopranistin **Marianne Beate Kielland** hat sich schnell als eine der besten Sängerinnen Skandinaviens etabliert. Sie arbeitet regelmäßig mit Dirigenten wie Frans Brüggen, Harry Christophers, Philippe Herreweghe und Manfred Honeck zusammen. Als sehr geschätzte Konzert- und Opernsängerin ist sie regelmäßig in bedeutenden Konzertsälen und bei Festivals in ganz Europa und Japan zu hören.

Die französische Sopranistin **Elisabeth Rapp** ist seit 2003 Mitglied des Collegium Vocale Gent und übernimmt häufig solistische Partien in diesem Ensemble. Unter der Leitung von Fabio Biondi hat sie Musik von Telemann gesungen sowie die Rolle des Engels in der vorliegenden *Jephtha*-Produktion.

Das **Collegium Vocale Gent** wurde 1970 von Philippe Herreweghe gegründet. Als eines der ersten Ensembles wandte es die damals neuen Erkenntnisse barocker Aufführungspraxis an. Seit Mitte der 1980er Jahre ist das Ensemble auch international bekannt und wurde weltweit in alle bedeutenden Konzerthäuser und zu wichtigen Festivals eingeladen. Das Repertoire des Chores beschränkt sich nicht auf eine Epoche, sondern reicht von der Renaissance bis zu zeitgenössischer Musik. Das Ensemble arbeitet mit vielen führenden Barockorchestern wie auch mit traditionellen Sinfonieorchestern zusammen unter Dirigenten wie René Jacobs, Iván Fischer und Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Das Collegium Vocale Gent wird von der Flämischen Gemeinschaft, der Provinz Ost-Flandern und der Stadt Gent unterstützt.

In den vergangenen zwanzig Jahren hat das **Stavanger Symphony Orchestra** sich ein internationales Renommee erworben, vor allem durch den bewussten und konsequenten Einsatz von zwei unterschiedlichen künstlerischen Leitern für unterschiedliches Repertoire. Fabio Biondi ist zurzeit für die Erarbeitung barocker und klassischer Werke verantwortlich, während der Amerikaner Steven Sloane als Chefdirigent besonders für späteres Repertoire zuständig ist. Frühere künstlerische Leiter des Orchesters waren u.a. Frans Brüggen, Alexander Dmitriev, Philippe Herreweghe und Susanna Mälkki. Das Orchester hat viele Tourneen unternommen und wird 2011 zum ersten Mal in den USA spielen mit Konzerten u.a. in der Carnegie Hall. Zahlreiche Einspielungen von norwegischer Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts haben zur Entwicklung des SSO beigetragen. Seit 1990 ist Statoil Hauptsponsor des Orchesters, das unter der Schirmherrschaft von SKH Kronprinz Haakon steht.

Fabio Biondi wurde in Palermo geboren und begann seine Laufbahn als Geiger im Alter von zwölf Jahren, als er sein erstes Solokonzert mit dem RAI Symphony Orchestra gab. Schon früh begegnete er Pionieren der historischen Aufführungspraxis, wodurch seine Karriere nachhaltig beeinflusst wurde. 1990 gründete Fabio Biondi das Ensemble Europa Galante, welches bald Italiens international bekanntestes Barock-

ensemble wurde. Als Solist und Dirigent hat er mit Orchestern wie Santa Cecilia in Rom, dem Salzburger Mozarteum-Orchester, dem European Baroque Orchestra, dem Zürcher Kammerorchester und dem Mahler Chamber Orchestra zusammen gearbeitet. Im März 2005 wurde Fabio Biondi zum künstlerischen Leiter für Barockmusik beim Stavanger Symphony Orchestra ernannt.

Le 21 janvier 1751, Georges Frédéric Haendel (1685–1759) commença à travailler sur l’oratorio *Jephtha*. On ne sait pas s’il espérait pouvoir l’inclure dans la saison d’oratorios du carême suivant, mais il devint rapidement évident que sa capacité de travail était affectée par la perte graduelle de son œil gauche. Le 13 février, il avait terminé le chœur final du deuxième acte «How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees». Dans le manuscrit de ce mouvement, Haendel écrivit lui-même (en allemand) qu’il ne pouvait pas continuer son travail suite à son trouble oculaire. A ce moment-là, la cause était probablement une infection passagère ; le lendemain de l’ouverture de la saison des oratorios (une exécution de *Belshazzar* le 22 février), il reprit le travail sur *Jephtha* et termina le second acte en quatre jours. Le 18 juin, après la fin de la saison des concerts, il se mit au travail sur le troisième acte et, après un temps de repos à la campagne en juillet, il put terminer l’oratorio le 30 août 1751.

Haendel garda assez de vision pour pouvoir diriger les douze concerts du carême de 1752, saison qui s’ouvrit sur une exécution de *Jephtha* le 26 février. Au cours du printemps et de l’été suivants cependant, il devint clair que son problème de vue était causé par quelque chose de plus sérieux qu’une infection. Haendel se rendit chez plusieurs médecins mais même le renommé chirurgien Samuel Sharp ne put lui rendre la précision de sa vue et les opérations pratiquées par le chirurgien royal William Bromfield furent tout aussi inutiles. En janvier 1753, un journal de Londres écrivait que «M. Haendel a malheureusement fini par perdre la vue.»

Comme la plupart des compositeurs travaillant dans les domaines du théâtre et de l’opéra, Haendel réutilisa beaucoup de sa propre musique dans de nouvelles œuvres et dans des transcriptions. C’est ce qu’il faisait aussi dans la composition de ses oratorios. Un trait très particulier à Haendel est qu’il utilisait beaucoup de musique d’autres compositeurs. Ses oratorios diffèrent de la tradition reconnue de «messes de parodies» car Haendel ne partait pas d’œuvres établies et bien connues, mais plutôt de musique de compositeurs inconnus, sans toutefois reconnaître les emprunts qu’il faisait. Il est clair cependant que Haendel y trouvait une inspiration qui lui permettait de donner libre cours à ses dons créateurs. Outre les citations des propres œuvres de Haendel,

Jephtha comprend du matériel en provenance des messes du compositeur bohémien Franz Habermann (1706–83).

A partir du récit de Jephté dans le Livre des Juges de l'Ancien Testament et le drame (en latin) *Jephtes sive Votum* de l'érudit écrivain écossais George Buchanan (1506–82), le livret de *Jephtha* fut écrit par Thomas Morell (1703–84). Morell avait déjà fourni les livrets de *Judas Maccabæus*, *Alexander Balus* et *Theodora* et il devait aussi contribuer à la version anglaise de *The Triumph of Time and Truth*. Dans ses derniers oratorios, Haendel composa les principales parties de soprano en pensant à la douce et agréable voix de Giulia Frasi et c'est Frasi qui chanta la partie d'Iphise à la création de *Jephtha* en 1752.

Le premier acte s'ouvre sur Zebul demandant aux Israélites de choisir Jephtha (Jephté) comme leur chef de guerre contre les Ammonites. Ayant déjà auparavant été chassé par son demi-frère Zebul, Jephté accepte d'assumer cette responsabilité à la condition qu'il reste le chef du peuple après la guerre. Sa femme Storgè déplore la séparation causée par la guerre et leur fille Iphise accepte d'épouser Hamor, un guerrier, si les Israélites sortent gagnants. Mais Jephté fait un vœu fatal à Dieu : s'il est victorieux, il offrira en sacrifice la première personne qu'il rencontrera à son retour après la bataille.

Au début du deuxième acte, Hamor annonce la victoire de Jephté. Mais quand Jephté lui-même rentre chez lui, la première personne qu'il rencontre est sa fille. Le vœu fatal devient connu et Jephté sombre dans le désespoir. Même si Iphise accepte d'être sacrifiée, la situation est désespérée. L'acte se termine sur le choral « How dark, o Lord, are Thy decrees ».

Dans le troisième acte, on prépare le sacrifice d'Iphise mais l'intrigue s'éloigne ensuite de l'original biblique : un ange apparaît et annonce à Jephté que son vœu sera considéré comme accompli s'il dédie sa fille à Dieu « dans un état pur et virginal perpétuel ». Cette solution est acceptée de tous et l'oratorio peut se terminer sur une note humaniste et optimiste.

Dans les années 1730 et 1740, Haendel essaya de développer l'oratorio comme genre dans diverses directions mais son public – les classes moyennes émergentes –

ne consentait pas toujours à suivre ses idées. Les oratorios sur des textes bibliques étaient considérés comme convenants au carême et le fait que l'action dramatique n'était pas mise en scène concordait avec le besoin de montrer une piété bienséante dans la vie publique. Les expériences de Haendel avec des oratorios profanes plus dramatiques remportèrent donc peu de succès mais, grâce à des librettistes habiles, il put encore peupler ses œuvres d'une variété de personnages, chose si importante dans son art.

Jephtha est le dernier oratorio terminé par Haendel. Comme dans plusieurs autres oratorios, le chœur y représente les Israélites, suivant la tradition du théâtre grec. La plupart des oratorios furent composés après que Haendel eût cessé d'écrire des opéras mais il apporta à ce nouveau genre son habilité à décrire en musique des émotions et des conflits humains, dotant les parties solos des caractéristiques individuelles qui justifient le sous-titre souvent imprimé dans les partitions : « un oratorio ou drame sacré ».

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James Gilchrist commença sa carrière comme médecin pour se tourner entièrement vers la musique en 1996. Il se produit régulièrement comme soliste avec plusieurs orchestres et ensembles importants partout en Europe et aux Etats-Unis dont l'Orchestre Royal du Concertgebouw, l'Orchestre du Tonhalle de Zurich ainsi que le Chœur et l'Orchestre Monteverdi. Donnant volontiers des récitals, il chante des programmes variés avec accompagnement de piano et de harpe.

Mona Julsrud est une soliste de concert renommée qui travaille régulièrement avec tous les principaux orchestres norvégiens. En plus de ses fréquents engagements en Norvège, elle travaille souvent avec de grands chefs dont Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Parrott, Phillip Herreweghe et Frans Brüggen. Mona Julsrud a chanté à la plupart des principaux festivals norvégiens ainsi qu'à plusieurs festivals européens et nord-américains.

Né à Oslo, le baryton-basse **Håvard Stensvold** est l'un des chanteurs les plus demandés pour l'opéra, l'oratorio et le récital grâce à son vaste répertoire. Il se produit continuellement avec les meilleurs orchestres scandinaves et il a travaillé avec des chefs de la trempe de Fabio Biondi, Paul Goodwin et Lars Ulrik Mortensen. Il consacre aussi beaucoup de temps à la musique contemporaine.

La mezzo-soprano suédoise **Elisabeth Jansson** a étudié à Munich, Londres et Copenhague. Elle a chanté avec l'Academy of St-Martin-in-the-Fields et l'Orchestre de la Radio Nationale Danoise entre autres dirigés par exemple par Sir Neville Marriner, Ádám Fischer, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos et Andrew Parrott. Elle se produit dans les salles de concert et sur les scènes d'opéra et elle fait partie de l'Opéra Royal Danois depuis 2005.

La mezzo-soprano norvégienne **Marianne Beate Kielland** s'est rapidement établie comme l'une des meilleures cantatrices de la Scandinavie. Elle travaille souvent avec les chefs Frans Brüggen, Harry Christophers, Philippe Herreweghe et Manfred Honeck entre autres. Elle est hautement appréciée au concert comme à l'opéra, se produisant régulièrement dans les grandes salles de concert et à des festivals partout en Europe et au Japon.

Née en France, **Elisabeth Rapp** vit maintenant à Berlin. Elle chante depuis 2003 dans le pupitre des sopranos du Collegium Vocale Gent qui la sollicite régulièrement pour des solos. Sous la direction de Fabio Biondi, elle a eu un grand plaisir à interpréter des pièces de Telemann et le rôle de l'ange dans cette production de *Jephtha*.

Fondé en 1970 par Philippe Herreweghe, le **Collegium Vocale Gent** fut l'un des premiers ensembles à appliquer les idées alors nouvelles de pratique baroque en musique vocale. Vers 1985, l'ensemble se fit remarquer sur la scène internationale et fut invité à chanter dans toutes les grandes salles de concert et festivals de musique du monde. Le répertoire de Collegium Vocale Gent ne se limite pas à une période stylistique parti-

culière mais couvre la musique de la Renaissance à celle contemporaine. L'ensemble travaille avec plusieurs grands orchestres baroques ainsi qu'avec des orchestres symphoniques traditionnels. Il a collaboré avec René Jacobs, Iván Fischer et Yannick Nézet-Séguin entre autres chefs. Collegium Vocale Gent bénéficie de l'aide financière de la communauté flamande, de la province des Flandres orientales et de la ville de Gand.

Les vingt dernières années, l'**Orchestre Symphonique de Stavanger** a gagné l'acclamation internationale grâce surtout au recours délibéré et conséquent à deux directeurs artistiques pour des répertoires différents. Fabio Biondi est présentement responsable du travail de l'orchestre dans les répertoires baroque et classique tandis que l'Américain Steven Sloane, engagé comme chef attitré, répond particulièrement du répertoire subséquent. Frans Brüggen, Alexander Dmitriev, Philippe Herreweghe et Susanna Mälkki figurent sur la liste de ses directeurs artistiques. L'orchestre a beaucoup voyagé ; il fait ses débuts américains en 2011 avec des concerts au Carnegie Hall entre autres. De nombreux enregistrements de musique norvégienne du 20^e siècle ont contribué au développement et à la réputation de l'Orchestre Symphonique de Stavanger. Statoil en est le principal commanditaire depuis 1990 et son protecteur est son Altesse Royale le Prince Haakon de Norvège.

Né à Palerme, **Fabio Biondi** entreprit sa carrière de violoniste à l'âge de douze ans, donnant son premier concert solo avec l'Orchestre Symphonique de la RAI. Il fut introduit jeune aux pionniers de la nouvelle pratique en musique baroque, ce qui devait changer la direction de sa carrière. En 1990, Fabio Biondi fonda Europa Galante, un ensemble qui devint rapidement l'ensemble italien de musique baroque le plus renommé au monde. En tant que soliste et chef, il a dirigé l'orchestre de Santa Cecilia à Rome, celui du Mozarteum de Salzbourg, l'Orchestre Baroque Européen, l'Orchestre de Chambre de Zurich et l'Orchestre de Chambre Mahler. En mars 2005, Fabio Biondi entra en fonction comme directeur artistique de l'Orchestre Symphonique de Stavanger pour la musique baroque.

JEPHTHA

ACT ONE

Disc 1 1 Overture – 2 Menuet

Scene 1

Zebul, with his brethren and Chorus.

3 Accompagnato

Zebul

It must be so, or these vile Ammonites,
Our lordly tyrants now these eighteen years,
Will crush the race of Israel.
Since Heav'n vouchsafes not, with immediate choice,
To point us out a leader, as before,
Ourselves must choose. And who so fit a man
As Gilead's son, our brother, valiant Jephtha?
True, we have slighted, scorn'd, expell'd him hence
As of a stranger born, but well I know him:
His gen'rous soul disdains a mean revenge
When his distressful country calls his aid.
And perhaps Heav'n may favour our request
If with repentant hearts we sue for mercy.

4 Air

Zebul

Pour forth no more unheeded pray'rs
To idols deaf and vain.
No more with vile unhallow'd airs
The sacred rites profane.

5 Chorus of Israelites

No more to Ammon's god and king,
Fierce Moloch, shall our cymbals ring,
In dismal dance around the furnace blue.
Chemosh no more
Will we adore
With timbrell'd anthems to Jehovah due.

Scene 2

Enter Jephtha and Storgè.

6 Recitative

Zebul

But Jephtha comes. Kind Heav'n, assist our plea.
O Jephtha, with an eye of pity look
On thy repentant brethren in distress.
Forgetful of thy wrongs, redress thy sire,
Thy friends, thy country in extreme despair.

Jephtha

I will, so please it Heav'n, and these the terms:
If I command in war, the like command,
Should Heav'n vouchsafe us a victorious peace,
Shall still be mine.

Zebul

Agreed. Be witness, Heav'n.

7 Air

Jephtha

Virtue my soul shall still embrace,
Goodness shall make me great.
Who builds upon this steady base
Dreads no event of fate.
Virtue my soul...

8 Recitative

Storgè

'Twill be a painful separation, Jephtha,
To see thee harness'd for the bloody field.
But ah, how trivial are a wife's concerns
When a whole nation bleeds, and grov'ling lies,
Panting for liberty and life.

9 Air

Storgè

In gentle murmurs will I mourn,
As mourns the mate-forsaken dove,
And sighing wish thy dear return
To liberty and lasting love.

Exeunt.

Scene 3

Enter Hamor and Iphis.

[10] Recitative

Hamor

Happy this embassy, my charming Iphis,
Which once more gives thee to my longing eyes,
As Cynthia, breaking from th' involving clouds
On the benighted traveller. The sight
Of thee, my love, drives darkness and despair.
Again I live, in thy sweet smiles I live,
As in thy father's ever-watchful care
Our wretched nation feels new life, new joy.
Oh haste, and make my happiness complete!

[11] Air

Hamor

Dull delay, in piercing anguish,
Bids the faithful lover languish,
While he pants for bliss in vain.
Oh, with gentle smiles relieve me.
Let no more false hopes deceive me,
Nor vain fears inflict a pain.

[12] Recitative

Iphis

Ill suits the voice of love when glory calls,
And bids thee follow Jephtha to the field.
Act there the hero, and let rival deeds
Proclaim thee worthy to be call'd his son,
And Hamor shall not want his due reward.

[13] Air

Iphis

Take the heart you fondly gave,
Lodg'd in your breast with mine.
Thus with double ardour brave,
Sure conquest shall be thine.
Take the heart...

[14] Recitative

Hamor

I go. My soul, inspir'd by thy command,
Thirsts for the battle. I'm already crown'd
With the victorious wreath, and thou, fair prize,
More worth than fame or conquest, thou art mine.

[15] Duet

Iphis and Hamor

These labours past, how happy we!
How glorious will they prove,
When gath'ring fruit from conquest's tree,
We deck the feast of love!

Exeunt.

Scene 4

Jephtha, alone.

[16] Recitative

Jephtha

What mean these doubtful fancies of the brain?
Visions of joy rise in my raptur'd soul,
There play awhile, and set in darksome night.
Strange ardour fires my breast; my arms seem strung
With tenfold vigour, and my crested helm
To reach the skies. Be humble still, my soul!
It is the Spirit of God, in whose great name
I offer up my vow.

If, Lord, sustain'd by Thy almighty pow'r,
Ammon I drive, and his insulting bands,
From these our long-uncultivated lands,
And safe return a glorious conqueror,
What, or whoe'er shall first salute mine eyes,
Shall be forever Thine, or fall a sacrifice.

'Tis said.

Attend, ye chiefs, and with united voice
Invoke the holy name of Israel's God.

[17] Chorus of Israelites

O God, behold our sore distress,
Omnipotent to plague or bless!
But turn Thy wrath, and bless once more
Thy servants, who Thy name adore.

Exeunt.

Scene 5

Storgè, alone.

[18] Recitative

Storgè

Some dire event hangs o'er our heads,
Some woeful song we have to sing
In misery extreme. O never, never
Was my foreboding mind distressed before
With such incessant pangs.

[19] Air

Storgè

Scenes of horror, scenes of woe,
Rising from the shades below,
Add new terror to the night;
While in never-ceasing pain,
That attends the servile chain,
Joyless flow the hours of light.
Scenes of horror...

Scene 6

Enter Iphis.

[20] Recitative

Iphis

Say, my dear mother, whence these piercing cries
That force me, like a frightened bird to fly
My place of rest?

Storgè

For thee I fear, my child;
Such ghastly dreams last night surpris'd my soul.

Iphis

Heed not these black illusions of the night,
The mocking of unquiet slumbers, heed them not.
My father, touch'd with a diviner fire,
Already seems to triumph in success,
Nor doubt I but Jehovah hears our pray'rs.

[21] Air

Iphis

The smiling dawn of happy days
Presents a prospect clear,
And pleasing hope's all-bright'ning rays
Dispel each gloomy fear;
While ev'ry charm that peace displays
Makes spring-time all the year.
The smiling dawn...

Exeunt.

Scene 7

Enter Zebul, Jephtha and Chorus.

[22] Recitative

Zebul

Such, Jephtha, was the haughty king's reply:
No terms, but ruin, slavery and death.

Jephtha

Sound, then, the last alarm! And to the field,
Ye sons of Israel, with intrepid hearts,
Dependent on the might of Israel's God.

[23] Chorus of Israelites

When His loud voice in thunder spoke,
With conscious fear the billows broke,
Observant of his dread command.
In vain they roll their foaming tide,
Confin'd by that great pow'r,
That gave them strength to roar.
They now contract their boist'rous pride,
And lash with idle rage the laughing strand.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Enter Hamor, Iphis and Chorus.

[24] Recitative

Hamor

Glad tidings of great joy to thee, dear Iphis,
And to the house of Israel I bring.
Thus then, in brief. Both armies in array
Of battle rang'd, our general stept forth
And offer'd haughty Ammon terms of peace,
Most just and righteous; these with scorn refused,
He bade the trumpet sound. But scarce a sword
Was ting'd in hostile blood, ere all around
The thund'ring Heavens open'd and pour'd forth
Thousands of armed cherubim, when straight
Our general cried: 'This is Thy signal, Lord,
I follow Thee, and Thy bright heav'nly host.'
Then rushing on proud Ammon, all aghast,
He made a bloody slaughter, and pursued
The flying foe till night bade sheathe the sword,
And taste the joys of victory and peace.

[25] Chorus of Israelites

Cherub and seraphim, unbodied forms,
The messengers of fate,
His dread command await;
Of swifter flight, and subtler frame
Than lightning's winged flame,
They ride on whirlwinds, directing the storms.

[26] Air

Hamor

Up the dreadful steep ascending,
While for fame and love contending,
Sought I thee, my glorious prize.
And now, happy in the blessing,
Thee, my sweetest joy possessing,
Other honours I despise.
Up the dreadful steep...

[27] Recitative

Iphis

'Tis well.
Haste, haste, ye maidens, and in richest robes
Adorn me, like a stately bride,
To meet my father in triumphant pomp.
And while around the dancing banners play,

[28] Air

Iphis

Tune the soft melodious lute,
Pleasant harp and warbling flute,
To sounds of rapt'rous joy;
Such as on our solemn days,
Singing great Jehovah's praise,
The holy choir employ.
Tune the soft...

Exeunt.

Scene 2

Enter Zebul, Jephtha, Hamor and Chorus.

[29] Recitative

Jephtha

Heav'n smiles once more on His repentant people,
And victory spreads wide her silver wings
To soothe our sorrows with a peaceful calm.

Zebul, thy deeds were valiant,
Nor less thine, my Hamor;
But the glory is the Lord's.

[30] Air

Jephtha

His mighty arm, with sudden blow,
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.
They fell before him, as when through the sky
He bids the sweeping winds in vengeance fly.
His mighty arm...

[3] Chorus

In glory high, in might serene,
He sees, moves all, unmov'd, unseen.
His mighty arm, with sudden blow
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.

Scene 3

Disc 2 [1] Symphony

Enter Iphis, Storgè and Chorus of Virgins.

[2] Recitative

Iphis

Hail, glorious conqueror, much lov'd father, hail!
Behold thy daughter, and her virgin train,
Come to salute thee with all duteous love.

[3] Air

Iphis

Welcome as the cheerful light,
Driving darkest shades of night,
Welcome as the spring that rains
Peace and plenty o'er the plains.

Chorus of Virgins

Welcome thou, whose deeds conspire
To provoke the warbling lyre,
Welcome thou, whom God ordain'd
Guardian angel of our land!
Thou wert born His glorious name
And great wonders to proclaim.

[4] Recitative

Jephtha

Horror, confusion! Harsh this music grates
Upon my tasteless ears. Begone, my child,
Thou hast undone thy father! Fly, begone,
And leave me to the rack of wild despair!

Exit Iphis.

[5] Air

Jephtha

Open thy marble jaws, O tomb,
And hide me, earth, in thy dark womb,
Ere I the name of father stain,
And deepest woe from conquest gain.
Open thy marble jaws...

[6] Recitative

Zebul

Why is my brother thus afflicted? Say,
Why didst thou spurn thy daughter's gratulations,
And fling her from thee with unkind disdain?

Jephtha

O Zebul, Hamor and my dearest wife,
Behold a wretched man,
Thrown from the summit of presumptuous joy,
Down to the lowest depth of misery.
Know, then, I vow'd the first I saw should fall
A victim to the living God. My daughter,
Alas, it was my daughter, and she dies.

[7] Accompanato

Storgè

First perish thou, and perish all the world!
Hath Heav'n then bless'd us with this only pledge
Of all our love, this one dear child, for thee
To be her murderer? No, cruel man!

Let other creatures die?
Or Heav'n, earth, seas and sky
In one confusion lie,
Ere in a daughter's blood,
So fair, so chaste, so good,
A father's hand's embued.

Let other creatures...

[8] Recitative

Hamor

If such thy cruel purpose, lo, your friend
Offers himself a willing sacrifice,
To save the innocent and beauteous maid!

[9] Air

Hamor

On me let blind mistaken zeal
Her utmost rage employ.
'Twill be a mercy there to kill
Where life can taste no joy.
On me...

[10] Quartet

Zebul

Oh, spare your daughter,

Storgè

Spare my child,

Hamor

My love!

Jephtha

Recorded stands my vow in Heav'n above.

Storgè

Recall the impious vow, ere 'tis too late.

Jephtha

I'll hear no more, her doom is fix'd as fate!

Hamor, Zebul, Storgè

And think not Heav'n delights
In Moloch's horrid rites.

Scene 4

Enter Iphis.

[11] Recitative & Accompagnato

Iphis

Such news flies swift, I've heard the mournful cause
Of all your sorrows. Of my father's vow
Heav'n spoke its approbation by success.
Jephtha has triumph'd, Israel is free.

For joys so vast too little is the price
Of one poor life. But oh, accept it, Heav'n,
A grateful victim, and thy blessing still
Pour on my country, friends, and dearest father!

[12] Air

Iphis

Happy they! This vital breath
With content I shall resign,
And not murmur or repine,
Sinking in the arms of death.
Happy they...

[13] Accompagnato

Jephtha

Deeper, and deeper still, thy goodness, child,
Pierceth a father's bleeding heart, and checks
The cruel sentence on my falt'ring tongue.
Oh, let me whisper it to the raging winds,
Or howling deserts; for the ears of men
It is too shocking. Yet have I not vow'd?
And can I think the great Jehovah sleeps,
Like Chemosh and such fabled deities?
Ah no; Heav'n heard my thoughts, and wrote them down;
It must be so. 'Tis this that racks my brain,
And pours into my breast a thousand pangs
That lash me into madness. Horrid thought!
My only daughter, so dear a child,
Doom'd by a father! Yes, the vow is past,
And Gilead hath triumph'd o'er his foes.
Therefore, tomorrow's dawn... I can no more.

[14] Chorus

How dark, O Lord, are Thy decrees,
All hid from mortal sight,
All our joys to sorrow turning,
And our triumphs into mourning,
As the night succeeds the day.
No certain bliss,
No solid peace,
We mortals know
On earth below,
Yet on this maxim still obey:
‘Whatever is, is right.’

ACT THREE

Scene 1

Jephtha, Iphis, Priests and Chorus.

[15] Accompanato

Jephtha

Hide thou thy hated beams, O sun, in clouds
And darkness, deep as is a father’s woe;
A father, off’ring up his only child
In vow’d return for victory and peace.

[16] Air

Jephtha

Waft her, angels, through the skies,
Far above yon azure plain,
Glorious there, like you, to rise,
There, like you, for ever reign.
Waft her...

[17] Recitative

Iphis

Ye sacred priests, whose hands ne’er yet were stain’d
With human blood, why are ye thus afraid
To execute my father’s will? The call of Heav’n
With humble resignation I obey.

[18] Air

Iphis

Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods,
Ye flow’ry meads and leafy woods;
Farewell, thou busy world where reign
Short hours of joy and years of pain.
Brighter scenes I seek above
In the realms of peace and love.

[19] Chorus of Priests

Doubtful fear and rev’rent awe
Strike us, Lord, while here we bow,
Check’d by Thy all-sacred law,
Yet commanded by the vow.
Hear our pray’r in this distress,
And Thy determin’d will declare.

[20] Symphony

[21] Recitative

Angel

Rise, Jephtha, and ye rev’rend priests, withhold
The slaughterous hand. No vow can disannul
The law of God, nor such was its intent
When rightly scann’d; yet still shall be fulfill’d.
Thy daughter, Jephtha, thou must dedicate
To God, in pure and virgin state fore’er,
As not an object meet for sacrifice,
Else had she fall’n an holocaust to God.
The Holy Spirit, that dictated thy vow,
Bade thus explain it, and approves thy faith.

22 Air

Angel

Happy, Iphis, shalt thou live,
While to thee the virgin choir
Tune their harps of golden wire,
And their yearly tribute give.
Happy, Iphis, all thy days,
Pure, angelic, virgin-state,
Shalt thou live, and ages late
Crown thee with immortal praise.

23 Arioso

Jephtha

For ever blessed be Thy holy name,
Lord God of Israel!

24 Chorus of Priests

Theme sublime of endless praise,
Just and righteous are thy ways;
And thy mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Scene 2

Enter Zebul, Storgè, Hamor and Chorus of Israelites.

25 Recitative

Zebul

Let me congratulate this happy turn,
My honour'd brother, judge of Israel!
Thy faith, thy courage, constancy and truth
Nations shall sing, and in their just applause,
All join to celebrate thy daughter's name.

26 Air

Zebul

Laud her, all ye virgin train
In glad songs of choicest strain.
Ye blest angels all around,
Laud her in melodious sound.
Virtues that to you belong,
Love and truth demand the song.

27 Recitative

Storgè

Oh, let me fold thee in a mother's arms,
And with submissive joy, my child,
Receive thy designation to the life of Heav'n.

28 Air

Storgè

Sweet as sight to the blind,
Or freedom to the slave,
Such joy in thee I find,
Safe from the grave.
Still I'm of thee possess'd,
Such is kind Heav'n's decree
That hath thy parents bless'd
In blessing thee.

29 Recitative

Hamor

With transport, Iphis, I behold thy safety,
But must forever mourn so dear a loss,
Dear, though great Jephtha were to honour me
Still with the name of son.

30 Air

Hamor

'Tis Heav'n's all-ruling pow'r
That checks the rising sigh;
Yet let me still adore
And think an angel by,
While thus each charm and beauteous line
With more than human lustre shine.
'Tis Heav'n's...

31 Recitative

Iphis

My faithful Hamor, may that Providence
Which gently claims or forces our submission,
Direct thee to some happier choice.

32 Quintet

Iphis

All that is in Hamor mine,
Freely I to Heav'n resign.

Hamor

All that is in Iphis mine.
Freely I to Heav'n resign.

Iphis

Duteous to the will supreme,
Still my Hamor I'll esteem.

Hamor

Duteous to almighty pow'r,
Still my Iphis I'll adore.

Iphis, Hamor, Storgè, Jephtha, Zebul
Joys triumphant crown thy days,
And thy name eternal praise.

33 Chorus of Israelites

Ye house of Gilead, with one voice,
In blessings manifold rejoice.
Freed from war's destructive sword,
Peace her plenty round shall spread,
While in virtue's path you tread;
So are they blest who fear the Lord.
Amen. Hallelujah.



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