

# MIRYAM

## Livshi Oz (Clothe yourself in Strength)

Tales of Biblical Heroines

BOSTON, MA

IN-PERSON CONCERT

THURSDAY, MAY 26 | 8pm

### TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

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#### Judith

##### *Récitatif*

Tandis que de la faim ou la guerre la livre,  
Bethulie alloit expirer,  
Le Cruel qui l'assiege avoit fait preparer  
Un superbe festin où Judith doit le suivre.  
Sans elle il ne sauroit plus vivre,  
Et déjà son amour ose se déclarer.

Whether famine or war dispatched it,  
Bethulie was going to die;  
The cruel one who besieges the city had prepared  
A superb feast where Judith must attend him.  
Without her he could not live any longer,  
And already his love dares to reveal itself.

##### *Air*

La seule victoire  
Me rendoit heureux,  
Et sans vous la gloire  
Eût borné mes vœux.

Victory alone  
Made me happy,  
And without you glory  
Would have limited my desires.

Mais la gloire est vaine  
Près de vois attraites,  
J'aime mieux ma chaîne,  
Que tous ses bien faits.

But glory is vain  
Beside your attractions,  
I prefer my chain  
To all its benefits.

##### *Récitatif*

Enfoncez le trait qui le blesse  
Judith, jetez sur luy les regards les plus doux,  
Hâtez, hâtez l'yvresse,  
Qui doit le livrer à vos coups.

Drive in the dart that wounds him,  
Judith, cast on him the sweetest glances,  
Hasten, hasten the drunkenness  
That must deliver him to your blows.

Ne le voyez-vous pas charmé de sa conquête,  
Qui boit l'amour et le vin à longs traits?  
Mais vainement l'Impie au triomphe s'apprête,  
Déjà de ses pavots épais,  
Le sommeil a couvert sa tête.

Don't you see him charmed by her conquest,  
He who drinks love and wine in long drafts,  
But in vain the impious one prepares himself for  
Already with its thick poppies  
Sleep has covered his head.

##### *Récitatif*

C'en est fait le repos, le silence, la nuit;  
Vous livrent à l'envi cette grande victime,  
Armez-vous, armez-vous et d'un bras magnanime,  
Eteignez dans son sang l'amour qui l'a séduit.

It is done; rest, silence, night  
Deliver this great victim to you, as you wished;  
Arm yourself, arm yourself, and with a strong arm  
Extinguish in his blood the love that has seduced him.

*Récitatif Mesuré*

Judith implore encor la celeste puissance,  
Son bras prêt à fraper demeure suspendu;  
Elle fremit de la vengeance,  
Soutenez son cœur éperdu.  
O Ciel! qui l'inspirez, soyez son assurance!

Judith again implores the heavenly power,  
Her arm, ready to strike, remains suspended;  
She trembles with vengeance.  
Sustain her distraught heart.  
O Heaven! you who inspire her, be her assurance.

*Air*

Le coup est achevé,  
Quelle gloire éclatante,  
Judith est triomphante,  
Israël est sauvé!

The blow is struck,  
What a glorious victory:  
Judith is triumphant,  
Israel is saved!

Pour ce Guerrier trop tendre,  
Il n'est plus de reveil,  
La mort vient de le prendre  
Dans les bras du sommeil.

For this too tender warrior,  
There is no more awakening,  
Death has just taken him  
In the arms of sleep.

*Récitatif*

Courez, courez Judith, que rien ne vous arrête,  
Un peuple allarmé vous attend;  
Allez sur vos remparts arborer cette tête  
Le présage assuré d'un triomphe plus grand.

Run, run, Judith, let nothing stop you,  
An alarmed people awaits you;  
Go mount this head on your ramparts,  
The sure omen of a greater triumph.

**Esther**

*Récitatif*

Par la souveraine Sagesse  
Esther fut amenée au trône des Persans;  
Seule, par ses charmes puissans,  
Du coeur d'Assuerus elle avoit la tendresse:

By sovereign Wisdom  
Esther was brought to the Persian throne;  
Alone, by her powerful charms,  
She softened the heart of Ahasuerus.

Mais que luy sert l'éclat d'un si haut rang?  
Dans ce moment fatal quel danger la menace?  
Elle apprend que des Juifs on a proscrit la race,  
Et le fer dans dix jours doit verser tout leur sang.

But what use to her is the luster of such a high rank?  
In this fatal moment what danger threatens her?  
She learns that the Jewish race has been condemned,  
And in ten days the sword will spill all their blood.

*Air*

Ah! quelle affreuse image  
Se trace à ses esprits?  
Que de pleurs! que de cris!  
Quel horrible carnage!

Ah! What a hideous scene  
She imagines!  
What tears! What cries!  
What horrible carnage!

Le barbare courroux  
Opprime l'innocence;  
La Vieillesse et l'Enfance  
Expirent sous ses coups:  
Ciel! prenez leur deffense,  
Les abandonnez-vous?

The angry barbarian  
Oppresses the innocent;  
Youth and Age  
Expire under his blows:  
Heaven! come to their defense.  
Do you abandon them?

*Récitatif*

De vôtre Epoux,  
Esther, il faut chercher l'appuy.  
Mais vous tremblez? du Temeraire,  
Qui sans son ordre ose approcher de luy,  
Le trépas est le prompt salaire.

Eh quoy n'osez-vous faire un genereux effort?  
C'en est fait. Elle part, et le Ciel la rassure.  
En vain de sa vertu se trouble la Nature,  
Elle va pour les Juifs s'exposer à la mort.

Elle approche; à l'aspect du Trône redoutable  
Elle tombe, et d'effroy son coeur se sent glacer:

Mais son Epoux touché du trouble qui l'accable,  
Luy fait grace, et vient l'embrasser.

*Air*

Venez, bannissez ces allarmes,  
Et ranimez-vous à ma voix.  
Esther, vos vertus et vos charmes  
Vous ont mise au dessus des loix.

Ecoutez mon coeur qui soupire,  
Partagez-en la vive ardeur;  
De la moitié de mon Empire,  
Je voudrois payer ce bonheur.

*Récitatif*

Ainsi devant son Maître, Esther a trouvé grace,  
La fortune des Juifs bien-tôt change de face;  
Et le perfide Aman, de leur sang alteré,  
Epreuve avec la mort qui punit son audace,  
L'affront qu'à l'Innocent il avoit préparé.

*Air*

Souvent la verité timide  
Du trône n'ose s'approcher;  
Si vous voulez qu'elle vous guide,  
Roys, c'est à vous de la chercher.  
Chassez le mensonge perfide,  
Qui la force de se cacher.

Esther, you must seek  
the support of your spouse.  
But are you trembling? For the reckless one  
Who without his order dares to approach him,  
Death is the prompt reward.

But what, do you not dare to make a generous effort?  
It is done. She leaves, and Heaven reassures her.  
In vain does Nature worry about her virtue,  
For the Jews she is going to risk death.

She approaches; at the sight of the formidable throne  
She falls, and feels her heart freeze with terror;

But her spouse, touched by her trouble,  
Spares her and comes to embrace her.

Come, banish these alarms,  
And revive at the sound of my voice.  
Esther, your virtues and your charms  
Have put you above the law.

Listen to my sighing heart,  
Share its strong passion;  
With half my empire  
I wish to pay for this happiness.

Thus before her master Esther has found grace;  
The fortune of the Jews is soon reversed;  
And the perfidious Haman, deprived of their blood,  
Undergoes, with the death that punishes his audacity,  
The shame that he had prepared for the innocent.

Often timid truth  
Dares not approach the throne;  
If you wish it to guide you,  
Kings, it is up to you to seek it:  
Drive out the perfidious lie  
That obliges it to hide itself.

## Yedid Nefesh

Hebrew text available on concert program webpage  
at [www.BLEMF.org](http://www.BLEMF.org)

Yedid nefesh, av harachaman  
M'shokh avdakh el r'tzonakh.  
Yarutz avdakh k'mo ayal  
Yishtachave el mul hadarakh  
Ki yerav lo y'didutakh  
Minofet tzuf mi kol ta'am.

Hadur na'eh ziv ha'olam  
Nafshi cholat ahavatakh  
Ana El na, refanah lah.  
B'harot la no'am zivakh  
Az titchazek v'titrapeh  
V'haytah lakh shifchat olam.

Vatik yehemu na rachmekha  
V'chus na al ben ohavakh  
Ki zeh kama nichsof nichsaf  
Lirot b'tiferet uzakh.  
Anah Eli, machmad libi,  
Chusa na v'al na titalam.

Higaleh na, ufros chaviv  
Alay et sukkat sh'lomakh.  
Ta'ir eretz mi k'vodakh,  
Nagilah v'nism'cha bakh.  
Maher ahuv ki va mo'ed  
V'choneini ki'mei ha'olam.

My soul's beloved, merciful father,  
Draw your servant to your will.  
Your servant will run like a gazelle,  
He will bow before your splendor.  
For to him, your love is sweeter,  
Than the dripping honeycomb, and any taste at all.

Resplendent, beautiful, radiance of the world,  
My soul is sick for your love,  
Please, O God, heal her now,  
By the beauty of your radiance, by showing her.  
Then she will be strong, she will be healed,  
And she will be your handmaiden forever more.

Ancient one, rouse, please, your mercy.  
Please have pity on the son of your beloved,  
For so much has this yearning been,  
To see your strength, in its beauty,  
Please, my god, the love of my heart,  
Hurry, please, and do not hide yourself.

Please, be revealed and spread the covering, beloved,  
Upon me, the shelter of your peace,  
Illuminate the earth with your nobility  
We will rejoice in you, we will be in festivity  
Hurry, beloved, for the time has come,  
And be good to me, like days long ago.  
--(transl. adapted from Sefaria.org)



## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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Élisabeth Claude Jacquet de La Guerre (1665-1729) was well-known during her lifetime as a brilliant singer, harpsichordist, and composer of instrumental and vocal music. Born in Paris to a family of musicians and harpsichord-builders, the young Élisabeth Claude Jacquet impressed King Louis XIV when she played for him at Versailles at the age of five. She would later go on to join his court, marry an organist named Marin de La Guerre and enjoy a long and illustrious career.

For this program, we have selected four pieces that showcase Jacquet de La Guerre's range, versatility, and expressivity: Sonata no. 3 in F Major and the final movement from Suite in D Minor, both published in 1707, and two cantatas from her 1708 collection, *Cantates françoises sur des sujets tirez de l'Écriture* (French Cantatas on Scriptural Subjects). The text for both cantatas was written by the poet Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672-1731), who also wrote libretti for other prominent French composers, including Marin Marais and André Campra.

The cantatas you will hear today tell the stories of two Jewish heroines: Judith and Esther. Judith was a young widow who defended the Israelites against an attack by King Nebuchadnezzar's forces; she seduced the Assyrian general, Holofernes, plied him with cheese and wine until he became intoxicated, and then beheaded him. The original language and date of authorship of the Book of Judith are disputed; the oldest surviving copy is in the septuagint (the Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures). References to Judith appear in medieval rabbinic literature, including the *midrash ma'aseh Yehudit* (the deeds of Judith) and *Sefer Shulchan ha-melekh*, the Ladino translation of the *Shulchan Aruch* (the mid-16th century compendium of Jewish legal codes.) Medieval rabbinic literature placed Judith's narrative during the Hasmonean Dynasty and the Maccabean Revolt, which led to a tradition of Sephardic Jews telling the story of Judith during Hanukkah. The figure of Judith also captured the imaginations of Christian artists and composers during the Renaissance and Baroque, inspiring the famous masterworks of Rembrandt and Artemisia Gentileschi. In Jacquet de la Guerre's cantata, the characters of Judith and Holofernes are rendered in

vibrant detail: we hear Holofernes' inebriated swagger, Judith's anguish, and her pious resolve.

Esther's story parallels Judith's in many ways: a beautiful young woman facing the destruction of her people ingratiates herself with a powerful man and, through her bravery and cunning, saves the Israelites. Esther's story is recorded in *Megillat Esther*, which is part of the Tanakh and is traditionally chanted on Purim. In the Book of Esther, we read about Esther's ascension to the throne in a bid to warn King Ahashverosh of his advisor's plan to exterminate the Jews of Persia and assassinate the king. Esther undergoes this mission at grave personal risk, and she succeeds- the scheming advisor, Haman, is thwarted and Esther and her family are exalted. Jacquet de la Guerre's cantata celebrates Esther's bravery, but saves the most tender, loving moments for King Ahashverosh; one can see how Jacquet de la Guerre's setting might have flattered her patron, King Louis XIV.

We close our program with a new setting of the Jewish liturgical poem, Yedid Nefesh. Yedid Nefesh, which has become a beloved part of Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat services, mingles grief and longing with transcendent peace. I wrote the opening theme of my setting two years ago as a simple two-part congregational melody. During the height of the pandemic, the text of Yedid Nefesh was often on my mind; it comforted me and helped me process my grief. This past summer, I returned to the melody. Over the period of a month, I added to it every week and it became a contemplative practice; listening to the text and letting my response flow out. I wrote the second movement while a dear friend was undergoing a painful but life-saving treatment. *Ana, El na, r'fanah la. (Please, God, heal her):* In the Torah, Moses cries out these words when Miryam is stricken by a sudden illness, and they have become part of the Mi Shebeirach prayer for healing. I offer this piece today as a prayer: may you find meaning through your longings; may those in need of healing find *r'fuah shleimah*; may you be enveloped in a sukkah of peace.

--Alicia DePaolo

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

*(Director Alicia DePaolo biography in program book)*

During her quarter-century career as baroque violinist, **Marika Holmqvist** has appeared as a guest concertmaster for orchestras and opera companies on three continents, directed ensembles on both sides of the Atlantic, and served as concertmaster and artistic co-director for groups in the USA such as Sinfonia New York and the Boston-based ensemble, Cambridge Concentus. Currently her leadership positions include Zenith Ensemble (New England), Pegasus Early Music (Rochester, NY) and Washington Bach Consort (DC), among others. In addition to her extensive performance career, she is also a dedicated and passionate educator and has served as coach and guest leader for baroque operas at Cornell, Harvard and Rutgers universities, as well as given master-classes and lectures at institutions across Europe. Alongside her master's degree in baroque violin performance from the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague in the Netherlands, she also graduated with a master's in baroque violin pedagogy—the first such degree ever granted in Europe. Her 20-odd recordings include the Grammy-nominated Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with the Trinity Wall Street Choir and Baroque Orchestra. Marika has a Finn's love for the outdoors and when she is not performing or teaching, you will most likely find her cross country skiing, hiking, kayaking, or gravel or mountain biking.

Internationally respected baroque cellist and violist da gamba **Shirley Hunt** brings fierce imagination and integrity to the music of the Renaissance, Baroque, and Contemporary eras. Praised by *The Strad* as “stylish and accomplished,” she embraces an eclectic musical life as a multi-instrumental soloist and collaborator. Ms. Hunt recently released her third CD, *J.S. Bach Suites & Sonatas Vol. 3*. Ms. Hunt's previous recordings have been praised for “soulful renditions,” “high-wire interpretations,” and “a resonant, singing tone that stays in the mind” (*Facts & Arts*). In high demand as viola da gamba soloist and continuo cellist for the Passions, Cantatas, and Concertos of J.S. Bach, Ms. Hunt performs and records extensively with the nation's leading period instrument ensembles including Boston Baroque, Handel and Haydn Society, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, The Sebastians, TENET, Les Bostonades, Sonnambula, and RUCKUS. She is a founding member of the Cramer Quartet, a period instrument string quartet performing classical and early romantic repertoire. Ms. Hunt can be heard on the Parma, Centaur, NCA, CORO, and Origin Classical labels. She has served on the faculty of the California Institute of the Arts and the San Francisco Renaissance and Baroque Workshop, and has appeared as an invited guest at MIT, Harvard, and Princeton. She has taught masterclasses at University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, Adelphi University, Cornish College of the Arts, and the Universi-

dad Nacional Autónoma de México. In 2018, Ms. Hunt's recording of the viol music of C.F. Abel was featured in a multimedia installation by the Mexican visual artist Mauricio Cervantes in Oaxaca, Mexico.

**Dylan Sauerwald** is a distinctive historical keyboardist and conductor. At the keyboard, he has been praised for his “fleet fingers” and “sophisticated playing,” (*Capriccio*), and as a conductor, his productions have been called “heart-wrenching and self-reflecting” (*OperaWire*). Mr. Sauerwald has performed in venues from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art to Taipei's National Recital Hall, and his playing is featured in the BBC historical drama *Poldark*. As a recording artist, Mr. Sauerwald can be heard on the New Focus, Coro, and Urtext labels, as soloist and continuo player on the harpsichord, organ, fortepiano, and lautenwerck. A champion of early opera, he has led productions of rarely-performed works acclaimed as “refined and flexible,” (*Boston Globe*) “fearless,” (*Voce di Meche*) and “a remarkable musical experience” (*OperaWire*). He is in demand as a guest conductor, appearing with Des Moines Metro Opera, MIRYAM, Dorian Baroque, the Cantanti Project, Ensemble Musica Humana, and others. Mr. Sauerwald directs Polyphemus, an early music collective and concert series in lower Manhattan, and is Director of Music at the New Dorp Moravian Church. He can be heard performing with the Handel & Haydn Society, Emmanuel Music, Lorelei Ensemble, Trinity Bach Vespers, Three Notch'd Road, Dorian Baroque, The Weckmann Project, Ensemble Musica Humana, and many others. He lives in New York City and holds a Bachelor of Music degree in early keyboard performance from McGill University and a Master of Music degree from Boston University.