

PLAYBILL

BETH TZEDEC ZOOM THEATRE



Maccabees: The Musical

Featuring the Book of Judith

December 17, 2020/2 Tevet 5781

7:00 pm

Communal Candle Lighting

First Blessing - Patti and Sheldon Rotman

Second Blessing – Susan Smirnoff and Kirk Zachary

Cantor Ezer – Hanerot Halalu/Maoz Tzur

Act One - Maccabees

With the death of Alexander, his policy of religious tolerance dies as well. His empire is divided up and Antioch Epiphanes IV, becomes King of the Seleucid Empire, which includes the Jewish state. He embarks on a policy of promoting Greek culture (Hellenism) and prohibiting Jewish practices, on pain of death. His partner in assimilation – a Hebrew priest (Jason) who *purchased* the position of High Priest. Antiochus' first targets – desecrating the Temple in Jerusalem and introducing pagan idolatry.

The twin policies of promoting of Hellenism and prohibiting Judaism reach the city of Modein, about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The local altar is defiled; a pagan sacrifice is offered and Mattathias, an elderly and otherwise unremarkable member of the local priesthood is so angered that he kills two desecraters, one Jew and the other, the King's enforcer.

Both symbolically and in reality, Mattathias has not only started a revolt against the King but also a civil war against assimilated Jews who prefer Greek culture and customs.

Mattathias, his wife and five children flee to the mountains along with others and successfully launch their revolt, led by his son Judah the Maccabi (Judah the Hammer), who achieves military success after success.

Despite the number of surprising victories under Judah's military leadership, Act One ends with a jolt of reality. Eleazar, younger brother of Judah, dies in battle and we learn there are two immutable rules about war. Rule Number One is that young men die. And rule number two is, you cannot change Rule Number One.

Act Two – The Book of Judith

Although not part of the Maccabean history, the story of Judith *is* considered a Hanukkah story that takes places in the same general time frame as the Maccabean revolt.

The Hebrew city of Bethulia is surrounded by Assyrian forces led by General Holofernes, who institutes a blockade as a prelude to conquest. The locals know of Holofernes' reputation for savagery in battle and are paralyzed with fear. Except one person. **Judith.**

A local widow, Judith first puts on sackcloth and prays and then changes into "garments of gladness - bracelets, chains, rings, sandals and earrings and braids her hair to draw the eyes of all men that should see her"; packs provisions in a satchel and along with her maid, seeks refuge in Holofernes' military camp.

Her ruse is successful; Holofernes is intrigued by her and alone they share the food she brought – primarily foods containing salty cheese, which makes him very thirsty, which leads him to consuming a remarkable amount of wine, which leads him to fall heavily asleep, which leads Judith to cut off his head, place it in the now empty satchel and return to Bethulia with her maid.

Holofernes' attendant discovers he is dead, his head is missing and so is Judith. The Assyrian troops panic, abandon the siege and flee. A song of thanks is offered to God. And as described in the Book of Judith, "Thanks to Judith, the children of Israel never experienced fear in her lifetime nor for a long time after her death".

Act Three – Maccabees

The King orders attack followed by attack on Judah's forces; each time led by a new commander. New commander – same result. Each skirmish ends in defeat for the King.

Judah escalates the military stakes by splitting his forces in battle, using some to re-take the Temple. Once the Temple grounds are under the control of Judah's forces, loyal priests attend to its cleansing and preparation for re-dedication and find a single cruse of sanctified oil, sufficient for a single day.

Celebrating their victory, the sacred lamp is lit with the single vial of sanctified oil and fed with the faith and hope that it stay lit as needed; which it does for eight days

The community resolves to celebrate these miracles for eight days beginning each year on Kislev 25, "with mirth and gladness and an acknowledgment of God's wonders". Which we did together tonight.

The cast of Maccabees: The Musical Featuring the Book of Judith consists of Canadians and Americans, united in using their love of music to celebrate Jewish moments in engaging, innovative, unconventional and unique ways during the pandemic. And sharing their passion with others.



CAST IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Arnie Ursaner

Barry Frankel

Darcy Dalton

Debbie Rothstein

Gary Elman

Karen Frankel

Lorraine Gangbar

Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin

Sharon Yale

Larry Wallach

The Soundtrack to *Maccabees: The Musical featuring the Book of Judith*® is available to **Spotify**® and **Amazon Music**® subscribers. For music links, please contact Larry Wallach at lfw@wallach.ca

Feedback is always welcome at lfw@wallach.ca

Please join us for Motown Megillat Esther ® on February 25, 2021. The Soundtrack will be available to **Spotify**® and **Amazon Music**® subscribers.

The soundtrack to Megillat Ruth: The Musical is now available to **Spotify**® and **Amazon Music**® subscribers. For music links, please contact Larry Wallach at lfw@wallach.ca

Wear a Mask – Stay in your Bubble – Maintain social distancing –
and be a **Macca-believer** in Miracles for 2021.