

Senior Play Project -*Dream of Queen Esther*, 1920, a Biblical Drama in Three Acts

American Playwright, Walter Ben Hare

Faculty Director, Llyn Scott (0953 510 013)

Possible Dates: December 25-26 (dress rehearsals), 27-28 (performances) OR

December 26-27 (dress rehearsals), 28-30 (performances) Dates are only suggestions for now.

Cast of Characters (3 Men, 16 Women)

King Ahasuerus of Persia

Mordecai, a captive Jew of Shushan

Hegai, the King's Chamberlain

Esther, a Jewish Heroine

Meesha Zabeel, her Servant, an old woman

Hanana, a little Jewish maid

Koosh, an Ethiopian slave girl

Kazma Shimeel, a Persian singer

Lady Ozoona, a beautiful Shushan Maid

Jakosha, a languid Lily

Princess Zuecca, a proud Maid from Media

Jewish Children, in Mordecai's care

Persian Rose Maids, in Act II

Characters in Esther's Dream

Witch of Endor I Samuel 28

Rebecca Genesis 24

Miriam Exodus 2

Deborah Judges 4

Adah Judges 11

Martha John 11

Ruth Ruth 1

Electa First John 1

Story of the Play

Mordecai is a noble captive Jew living in the Persian city of Shushan. He is loved by all and dwells with his slave Meesha Zabeel and his adopted daughter, Esther. Hegai comes to him and informs him that the King is about to choose a wife from among the maidens of the kingdom and that Esther has been selected to present herself for the contest. Mordecai thinks that if Esther be chosen Queen she may help her people, who are the captives of the King.

The King, in disguise, has saved the life of Esther and she cherishes a high regard for the unknown hero and therefore hesitates before presenting herself before the King, as she loves the man who saved her life, not knowing that it was the King himself. Mordecai tells her to enter the contest for the sake of her people and Esther hesitates between love and duty. She sleeps and has a vision! Eight heroines of biblical history appear to her and tender their advice. The first act closes with several beautiful tableaux, a scarf dance.

The second act is in the palace of the King. The King tells his chamberlain, Hegai, that he saved the life of a little unknown maiden and that he hopes she will be one of the contestants. The King retires and several Maidens enter for the contest. Each thinks that she will be the chosen Queen to the comical delight of Koosh, a little Ethiopian handmaiden, who attends the contestants. One by one the maidens are rejected until Esther appears. The King recognizes her and she is chosen Queen to the delight of Koosh. A Flower Dance and Song occur in this act and the act ends with a tableau: The Crowning of Esther.

The third act of the play takes place nine years after the second act. The King neglects his wife and through A DREAM OF QUEEN ESTHER the wicked influence of Haman, one of his princes, issues a decree that all the Jews in his kingdom are to be slaughtered. Mordecai visits Esther and in a great patriotic and dramatic scene appeals to her to save their people by going before the King and pleading for them. Meesha, the old nurse of Esther, loves her and warns her that if she appears before the King without his invitation it may mean her death. Mordecai pleads for his people, Meesha pleads for Esther to save herself. Esther decides to appeal to the King and "if I perish, I perish." She appears before the King, who receives her and promises to aid her people. Among the characters introduced in the play are Rebecca, Deborah and the five points of the Eastern Star, Esther, Adah, Ruth, Martha and Electa.

Synopsis of the Acts

Act I—The housetop of Mordecai in the city of Shushan in Persia. Mordecai laments the fall of Jerusalem. A message from the King. Esther commanded to enter the contest for Queen of the realm. Mordecai ponders on the message. The little Jewish children sing and make merry on the housetop. Mordecai conducts their evening devotions. Esther appears and Mordecai delivers the

King's message. Esther tells her nurse Meesha of her adventure outside the city gates. Esther dreams and eight heroines of Jewish history appear before her--Witch of Endor, Rebecca, Deborah, Miriam, Adah, Ruth, Martha and Electa. Scarf tableaux.

Act II—In the palace of the King. The King is weary of the maidens who have appeared before him and tells Hegai of the beautiful maid he rescued without the city gates. Kasma sings the Rose Song with drill by eight Rose Maidens. Several maidens air their charms to the delight of Koosh, a funny little Ethiopian slave girl. Each is rejected by the King. Esther is chosen Queen.

Act III—Nine years later. The Queen is sad at the neglect of the King. Mordecai appears and tells the Queen that all the Jews are to be slain at the order of the King. He begs her to intercede for her people. Meesha explains that to do this without the King's invitation would be almost certain death. Esther accepts the sacrifice. "If I perish, I perish !" Esther appears before the King, who receives her, "The fairest among millions, altogether lovely." The King promises to save her people and the Feast of Purim is established.