

Opera Australia



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# the Golem

LARRY SITSKY





# the GOLEM

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Grand Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by Gwen Harwood

Dedicated to John Winther  
Commissioned by Opera Australia



Larry Sitsky (b. 1934)

## THE GOLEM

Libretto by Gwen Harwood

### *The Jews*

**Rabbi Judah Loew**, spiritual leader of the Jewish community in the Prague ghetto

**Rachel**, the Rabbi's daughter

**Perele**, the Rabbi's wife

**Isaac**, the Rabbi's son-in-law

**Jacob**, a disciple of the Rabbi

**Mordecai Meisel**, a rich Jewish Banker

**A Jew**

**The Golem**, named Joseph

Raymond Myers, *bass*

Linda Thompson, *soprano*

Julie Dalton, *soprano*

Patrick Togher, *tenor*

Lindsay Gaffney, *tenor*

Garrick Jones, *baritone*

John Miley, *tenor*

Kerry Henderson, *baritone*

### *The Christians*

**Thaddeus**, a Dominican Priest

**Cardinal Silvester**

**First Henchman**

**Second Henchman**

**Third Henchman**

Christopher Doig, *tenor*

Geoffrey Chard, *baritone*

Michael Terry, *tenor*

Graeme Macfarlane, *tenor*

Neil Kirkby, *baritone*

### *The Gypsies*

**Florea**, Meisel's servant

**First Sorcerer**

**Second Sorcerer**

**Gypsy Violinist**

Jolanta Nagajek, *mezzo-soprano*

Connell Byrne, *tenor*

Dominic Natoli, *tenor*

Veren Grigorov

### *Others*

**Old Blind Woman**

**Sepulchral Voice**

**Night Watchman**

Kerry Elizabeth Brown, *mezzo-soprano*

John Fernon, *tenor*

Patrick Togher, *tenor*

Chorus of Jews, chorus of Christians, chorus of Gypsies, offstage chorus

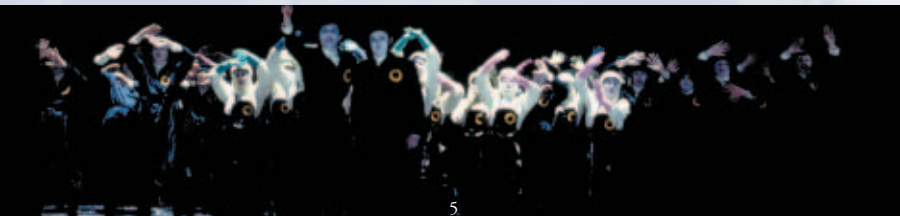
OPERA AUSTRALIA CHORUS

Chorus Preparation: Richard Gill

AUSTRALIAN OPERA & BALLET ORCHESTRA

Concertmaster: Robert Ingram

CHRISTOPHER LYNDON GEE, *conductor*



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<b>COMPACT DISC 1</b>		
[51'08]		
<b>ACT ONE</b>		
<b>Scene 1 – A street in the Prague Ghetto, outside Judah Loew's house</b>		
<b>MALKUTH: THE KINGDOM OF EARTH</b>		
<b>1</b>	Logos ... Om ... Adonai ... Aum ... Olam ha aziah (Choral Prelude)	14'53
	Great Solomon went a-walking (Rachel)	28
<b>Scene 2 – The Rabbi's dream</b>		
<b>YESOD: THE FOUNDATION, OR THE BALANCE OF NATURE</b>		
<b>2</b>	Shaddai ... Olam ha yezirah (Choral Interlude)	5'02
	All that is created and all that is spoken (Rabbi Loew)	32
<b>Scene 3 – The banks of the Moldau</b>		
<b>3</b>	The village dogs are howling (Isaac)	9'45
		33
<b>Scene 4 – Outside Mordecai Meisel's house</b>		
<b>4</b>	Knock on the door, and force your way in (Thaddeus)	4'05
		35
<b>GEVURAH: POWER</b>		
<b>5</b>	Azoth ... Agla ... (Choral Interlude)	2'19
		35
<b>Scene 5 – In the Rabbi's house</b>		
<b>6</b>	Pray tell me dear mother (Perele)	8'29
		36

CD TRACK		PLAYING TIME	PAGE
<b>7</b>	<b>Scene 6 – The street in front of the Rabbi's house</b> Let our people hear (Rabbi Loew)	6'25	39
<b>COMPACT DISC 2</b>		[65'29]	
<b>ACT TWO</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Scene 1 – Cardinal Silvester's room</b> BINAH: INTELLIGENCE Binah ... Olam ha Aziluth ... Yod He Va (Choral Interlude) Most high Rabbi Loew (Cardinal Silvester)	7'40	40
<b>2</b>	<b>Scene 2 – The Golem's journey</b> Gather round, and hear of the most foul deeds of horror. (Thaddeus)	8'05	42
<b>3</b>	TIPHERETH: BEAUTY, MERCY Rahamim ... Tiphereth ... Elohim ... Olam Ha Briah (Choral Interlude)	2'22	43
<b>4</b>	I hear the dogs (Old blind woman)	7'25	43
<b>5</b>	Gypsy, Gypsy, where are you going? (Gypsies)	8'37	45
<b>6</b>	<b>Scene 3 – A street in Prague outside the Courthouse</b> Age after age in exile (Choral Interlude) Back to Jew Street, Christ killers! (The Christians)	9'42	47

CD TRACK		PLAYING TIME	PAGE
<b>7</b>	NETZACH: VICTORY, ENDURANCE Nahash ... Tetragrammaton ... Vau He Yod He ... Sabaoth ... Nephesh (Choral Interlude)	3'02	49
<b>8</b>	<b>Scene 4 – Inside the Rabbi's house</b> Great Solomon went a-walking (Rachel)	6'57	49
<b>9</b>	<b>Scene 5 – A dark, obscure place in the town</b> Night phantom with no husband (First Sorcerer)	3'07	52
<b>10</b>	RACHEL'S VISION HESED: LOVE El Jave Hesh Adoshem (Choral Interlude)	5'02	52
<b>11</b>	Let my body return to earth. (The Golem)	3'24	53
<b>COMPACT DISC 3</b>		[61'22]	
<b>ACT THREE</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Scene 1 – The Disputation</b> HOD: MAJESTY Ruah, Ab ruah ... (Choral Interlude) In the name of the Father (Cardinal Silvester)	13'23	54
<b>2</b>	<b>Scene 2 – The Rabbi's study</b> Our holy books are destroyed (Rabbi Loew)	3'15	57

CD TRACK		PLAYING TIME	PAGE
	<b>Scene 3 – A lonely place</b>		
3	Is this the strong man of Israel? (First Henchman)	7'40	58
	<b>HOKHMAH: WISDOM</b>		
4	Gnosis ... Olam ha Aziluth ... Ieao Ao Y' Yah leao O ... (Choral Interlude)	2'43	61
	<b>Scene 4 – A street by the Ghetto gate</b>		
5	Mordecai Meisel is dead (Jacob)	4'32	61
	<b>Scene 5 – The Rabbi's street</b>		
6	Kill, kill, until the last Jew is dead (Thaddeus)	9'07	62
	<b>Scene 6 – The Jewish Cemetery in Prague</b>		
7	Now you are what I have always been (The Golem)	6'39	64
	<b>KETHER ELYON: SUPREME CROWN</b>		
8	Ehieh, elhai ... Kether Elyon ... Ain soph Aur ... (Choral Interlude)	3'56	65
	<b>Scene 7 – The attic of the Old Synagogue in Prague</b>		
9	Olam ha Yezirah. Shaddai (Isaac and Jacob)	5'30	65
10	Adoshem ... (Night Watchman)	3'56	65
	Total Playing Time	188'00	

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COMPOSER

**T**he Golem is, in every way, the largest in scale of Larry Sitsky's operas, the majority of which have been both short and more modest in their dimensions of casting and musical resources. *The Golem* is a grand opera in every sense of the word, requiring huge vocal, choral and instrumental forces to survey its three acts and 18 scenes. The libretto was written by Gwen Harwood, Sitsky's collaborator in all his other music theatre pieces. Six years in the writing, this *magnum opus*, commissioned by Opera Australia, was completed in 1980 and had its premiere on Friday, 14 October 1993 at the Sydney Opera House. This recording was made during that season.

The Golem is a powerful figure from Jewish folklore, a being created from the earth and endowed with life by magical means.

**RALPH LANE:** Larry, there is a part early in Act Three of the opera – the disputation between Thaddeus and Rabbi Loew – where the Rabbi says that we shouldn't confuse the law and the legends. Isn't it that legend of the Golem that stands as one of the most powerful things about this opera and all that surrounds it?

**LARRY SITSKY:** Yes, it's powerful and complex and very ancient and there are many aspects of *The Golem* that could be discussed. I guess we could home in on some of these aspects, at any rate. Maybe the first point I should make is that the version that I finally set is the most modern available to us and is as recent, if I can put it that way, as the 16th century, set in Prague. It's probably more accessible inasmuch as the historic personages that appear in the opera were a very real and documented people. In fact, the old Jewish Cemetery in Prague has, to this day, the tombstones of Rabbi Loew, the creator of this mythical being, or being as you wish to believe, and his disciples. They're buried in a grand circle in the Jewish Cemetery as though they are continuing their theological disputations.

So the central idea behind *The Golem* is man assuming godlike powers. The Rabbi, who knows the correct spells and the magic and the ceremony required to create artificial life, takes it upon himself to do so, thus putting himself in the position of God. It's an act that Rabbi Loew's colleagues would have thought heretical. He's driven to it because of the threat of persecution and the actual persecution of the Jews in Prague at that time. So that's how we begin. It immediately raises this very profound

question of man assuming certain roles and then having to bear the responsibility for his actions.

RL: In fact, at the end the Rabbi discovers that the Golem has gone out of control and has to be destroyed. It's a story that could be seen to have its parallels with Goethe's story, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but here, of course, there are rather more serious ramifications!

LS: Well, yes, and I would like to make the point that we've created Golems in our time. We call them other things, of course. We call them intercontinental ballistic missiles or atomic bombs and other things of that kind. But they're all Golems. They're made by humans under the guise of some sort of positive reason, but, in the end, they tend to go berserk and then we have to bear the responsibility for creating them. So I see that aspect of the opera as a morality tale, as a parable.

RL: How did the idea for a subject like *The Golem* arise in the first place?

LS: It was probably a piece that had to happen because of circumstances. I didn't initially plan to write an opera on this subject because I was already working on an opera based on Kafka. Gwen and I were going

to do an opera based on *The Trial*.

What happened was this. After [the one-act opera] *Lenz* was done, Opera Australia called me in and asked whether I would like to write a full-length opera because, by then, they'd heard me in my role as a one-act composer in both *Lenz* and *Fall of the House of Usher*. They said that they felt that I had the potential to write a big theatre piece and asked if I would be interested, and of course, I said yes. So, there was this kind of spectacle opera on order, at least that was the feeling I had when we first talked about it. They were interested in a big piece.

We got almost as far as the definitive version of the libretto of *The Trial* when I thought, just as a matter of form, that one should write to Max Brod, the executor of the Kafka estate, and get permission. I knew that the Kafka copyright was about to run out – it only had a few years left to run – and so I thought it was just a formality. Much to my dismay, I got a letter back from Brod saying, "I'm terribly sorry, I can't give you permission to write the opera because I've already promised the rights to [the Austrian composer] Gottfried von Einem," who, indeed, did write an opera on that subject.

Of course, had I known that this whole

thing was going to take 13 years or whatever, it wouldn't have mattered because Kafka is now out of copyright. But, at that time it seemed a real nuisance and there were a few years left to run. So I rang Gwen and told her the glad tidings and she got into a fury and ripped up the libretto, for which I was really sorry because I didn't have the final version and it was very good.

So, we were back to square one you see. It was soon after that as I was doing the dreaded weekly shopping and standing there at the check-out just praying that we would get out soon. Anyway, there was a bin there with remaindered books – you know, the kind of thing you see at supermarkets with 50 cent labels on them – and one of the books was *The Sword of the Golem* by the American contemporary writer, Abraham Rothberg. I idly picked it up and put it in the shopping bag and, as we drove out of the supermarket, I suddenly thought, "Hey, wait a minute, that's the one!" I remember turning the car around with my wife saying, "Have you gone completely mad?" and then going back inside to pick up another one or two copies of the thing. I sent one to Gwen and one to Opera Australia just to say if you like the idea then I'll get on with it. We didn't, of course, use the Rothberg novel – it was just

the idea of the Golem legend because then we went back to the original sources.

That's how it happened and, as I said at the beginning, maybe it was meant to be because, given the lack of a number of small circumstances, something completely different would have eventuated. The manager of Opera Australia at that time, Peter Hemmings, was encouraging me to write a big, grand opera but, of course, over the years things changed. Costs escalated and what was a good idea at the time probably became less of a good idea in the subsequent years and the thing had to wait for a while to get done.

RL: Indeed it did! The chronology of it, in fact, is that it was commissioned in 1974 and completed in 1980. Presumably that was owing to the many different drafts of the libretto followed by the actual composition of the music for a work that runs to some 180 minutes in performance. There's no doubting its status as a grand opera but, as you have said, it then had to wait a considerable time before going into production.

LS: It did. Management changed and policies changed and we went through a period at Opera Australia when no new works were being done and no Australian works in particular. Then we had a very public brawl

about the piece and, I must say, it really wasn't until a new regime came in with Moffatt Oxenbould and Donald McDonald that the atmosphere changed completely. Now there was obviously a very positive view towards new works by Australians, an ongoing commitment to performing music by our own composers and all that. That's when it all fell into place: what seemed like insurmountable problems before were solved in one very civilised meeting between myself and Moffatt and Donald. It was sorted out very amicably and we went ahead. They just said to me that if re-writes were necessary would I do them? And I remember saying, "Well, I'm a professional composer, of course I'll do them." That's what theatre and opera is all about, and in actual fact, as the piece grew in production, I did compose extra bits here and there as required. It's a very natural thing in the theatre.

**RL:** Still, they must have felt daunted by the fact that the opera requires nine individual tenor roles as well as a very large orchestra, including a grand piano, and a huge percussion section.

**LS:** A double chorus too! Yes, in fact I think now, looking back on it, I don't believe that the chorus in earlier years could have coped with the demands of the score. *The Golem*,

I think, is like some of its musical ancestors – well to my mind the ancestry is something like *Boris* of Mussorgsky and pieces of that ilk – anyway, the hero of the opera is the chorus. There are various name roles, of course, but the chorus, i.e. the people, is what the whole thing is about and so there is a fantastic amount of choral singing in the opera. I remember counting up the number of choral episodes; it is well over 20, and that could well be more than in most, if not all, operas.

**RL:** It is fortuitous that some of these choral interludes were, in fact, pre-existing compositions of yours because they then very nicely, and very neatly, came to perform a very real role in the work.

**LS:** Long before *The Golem* was even considered I'd composed a set of choral pieces called *The Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah*. These 10 short pieces – they're only a minute or two minutes each – then became the kind of pillars on which the whole edifice of the opera now rests. That's because they also 'document', if that's the right word, the progression from the first setting which is called 'Malkuth: the Kingdom of Earth' – the world we live in – to 'Kether Elyon: Supreme Crown' which is the unknowable light. The Kabbala teaches

that there are 10 steps between the physical world and the unknowable and these are the 10 steps to perfection, if you like, which of course is common currency in any theology. I should also say that the Kabbala itself, that body of mystical teaching of Jewish origin, is also considered by many Jews to be somewhat suspect, to have a dark aspect because it was used by magicians. You will find, I suspect, that many Orthodox Jews would disapprove of the use of the Kabbala in a music theatre piece.

For many centuries the teachings of the Kabbala were secret. They weren't actually written down again until fairly recent times and, of course, the whole notion of setting texts and names, words of power and the secret names of God to music is in itself, in some eyes, an heretical act.

**RL:** In addition to those words, the secret names of God and other attributes, the very powerful production of your opera by Barrie Kosky saw a variety of other elements superimposed on it as well. In particular, the suggestion that the persecution of the Jews in the Ghetto in Prague was synonymous with the Holocaust.

**LS:** Yes. That was already suggested in Gwen's earlier libretto. It's quite interesting that that aspect was discussed at one stage when

the libretto was approved by Opera Australia. I was told that it mightn't be a good idea to invoke modern history because some of the audience might find it too distressing, but Barrie chose to go ahead with that idea. It is very powerful of course and the parallels are obvious and continue to be present. We don't seem to have learnt much as human beings in that religious intolerance seems to be an everyday fact of life. When you pick up a newspaper it doesn't have to include the Jews. You only have to look at Yugoslavia, Ireland, the Middle East, Rwanda and so on. I think Barrie just decided that he needed to ram the point home: that this isn't something you can switch off by saying, "Oh it happened a few hundred years ago, we don't do this kind of thing anymore." So all sorts of powerful contemporary images were superimposed on essentially an historical drama.

Also, I had to make decisions about musical usages and I believe that the other strength of the opera is the use of either actual folk songs or composed folk songs – music from both the Christian and Jewish folk idiom of that time – because it allowed me then to juxtapose a folk language, musically speaking, with a contemporary musical language, my own sort of idiom, which has of course changed since *The*



*Golem* was written, but that's, as they say, another story. So, dramatically it suggests the existence of the everyday world and the magical world as parallel universes, if I can put it that way, and musically I think that is pushed right throughout the opera.

**RL:** Unifying the drama is your use of recurring leitmotifs, musical gestures representative of certain words or elements. The word "Earth", for instance, is accompanied by a figure in the strings and "Seal" by a different kind of figure in the woodwinds. There are motifs for the central character, for his name "Joseph", for "God" and so on. Similarly, rhythmic motifs abound, such as the one for "Israel", and they then recur as an aide-mémoire to re-emphasise the opera's basic elements.

I might add, to his credit, that Barrie Kosky was astute in picking up on the elemental significance of the earth in his production of your opera – earth, and more particularly, the mud from which the Golem was created. This was a constant that neither cast nor audience could ignore because the whole set, the whole time, was one big mud pit.

**LS:** When I first heard about this, I thought, "what's going to happen?" But it worked brilliantly, I think. As the characters evolved

and sang, the mud was spread around! It was everywhere and, yes, it is a kind of symbol: it wasn't just that the Golem was created out of it, although to see him rising out of the mud is an exciting theatrical event, just as it is at the end when he's pushed back into it and returns to the mud from which he was made. But the mud, the return to earth is, of course, a fate common to all of us. I believe it was also symbolic of the fact that we might begin our lives in a state of purity but, given the human condition, we don't tend to end them that way, and so all these characters become streaked with mud as the opera progresses. There were also lighter moments of course – like having to cover the orchestra pit because the mud had started to travel on to the laps of the musicians. I suspect if precautions hadn't been taken the front row of the audience would have got their share as well! So they were fairly hazardous undertakings in that respect too, but we survived them.

**RL:** Your mention that people were sprayed with mud, thus achieving an involvement in the production that they perhaps hadn't quite bargained for, also reminds me of the intense involvement that some members of the cast had with the production. For

example, Kerry Henderson, the baritone who created the title role, travelled to Prague to immerse himself in the ambience of the Ghetto as it still exists.

**LS:** Indeed, Barrie and Michael Anderson, the designer, both went to Prague as well. The set of *The Golem* which looked like the rooftops of Prague with the angles of the roofs all being askew, and just a little surreal, reminded me somewhat of the set for that famous silent film, *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*. It had that sort of claustrophobic atmosphere and that all happened because Barrie and Michael went to Prague and wandered around for a while. Barrie told me he was very moved by the old Jewish Cemetery and Quarter and the fact of going into the Old-New Synagogue, which is where all this was supposed to have happened. It's still there. It actually survived all these years, it survived the Second World War and the Nazis.

**RL:** Larry, I spoke earlier about the 'virtuosity' of the libretto of *The Golem*. When I read Gwen's libretto for the first time, I was absolutely in awe at how powerful that prose was. It must be thrilling for any composer to read something that imaginative and to

take inspiration from it in the way that you so obviously did.

**LS:** Ralph, all I can say is that working with someone like Gwen made the job a thousand times easier. Over the years, of course, we established a kind of team spirit and she knew the kinds of words that I respond to, and all that. But even given all that, Gwen was extraordinary not only because of the power of her language, which you can experience by reading writings apart from her libretti, but also because she was meticulous in her research.

Just as a little example of that, I remember when I first submitted the libretto to Opera Australia, someone – I don't know who because I wasn't given the names of the assessors – but someone wrote in one of the assessments that Mrs Harwood obviously had confused her Anglican background with central Europe; this was a reference to a scene in the opera where prayers are offered to William of Norwich and Simon of Trent. Of course, Gwen pointed out, very correctly, that these were figures who were in fact worshipped as saints in Europe at the time. She didn't make that kind of mistake. Yes, they were supposed martyrs of English origin who were worshipped in Europe and all her research, be it the Christian or Jewish aspect, was absolutely accurate and

in-depth, so I never had to worry about that side of it at all.

Then there was her capacity to fashion, to flesh out these people who could, after all, just be kinds of cardboard cutouts – archetypal ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’, cardinals and whoever. But the words that are ascribed to these people immediately give them flesh on the bones that I can respond to musically. Gwen was also crafty because she knew that if she repeated a word a number of times, I would seize on it as a composer, and that’s exactly what happens in *The Golem*. You know, the things that we talked about – leitmotifs and so on. Gwen knew that I would respond to that so she dangled a sort of carrot in front of me and waited for me to take the bait, which I inevitably did. But it was wonderful working with her.

Mostly it was done by mail or, occasionally, by telephone. Of course, we went through a number of drafts shaping each scene, then shaping each act and finally shaping the whole opera. For me, that’s absolutely critical; I can’t actually begin to compose the music until the libretto is in its correct place and order and duration. It is inevitable for someone like myself that if those elements aren’t in place, the music won’t work either. So Gwen and I spent a

lot of time getting that right, and it was only when the libretto was in its final form that I sat down and began to work on the music. Of course, even after reading the first draft, sounds begin to shape themselves in your head and that was certainly the case here. However, I wouldn’t dream of putting them into any final or definitive shape until all this other stuff has happened and Gwen was an absolute master at that. She wrote libretti for a number of other composers as well and it was just fantastic working with her.

**RL:** The mastery for me, I think, was in the way that she so deftly wove quotations from the Book of Proverbs, Psalms, other parts of the Old Testament and even bits of the New Testament into the story that she had concocted from the legend.

**LS:** Well, Gwen regarded the Saint James version of the Bible as poetry and she could quote huge slabs of it from memory without any problem whatsoever. So it wasn’t artificial for her. The stuff was there in her head and it simply, as you say, got woven into her own words. I know when Antony Ernst was preparing an in-house booklet to hand out to the singers when he was researching the story and the libretto, he was astonished at the number of biblical

references in the libretto. They’re huge! Some of them I didn’t even know until he pointed them out to me. Gwen didn’t necessarily identify them because I sensed that she thought if you don’t know them, it’s either your problem or you’re ignorant. Well, I was ignorant!

But it’s a wonderful aspect and it gives the narrative and the flow of Gwen’s words a kind of biblical stateliness, I feel, and I tried to mirror that in the music, the kind of ... what’s the word? ... slow? ... not slow, perhaps noble? ... anyway, a spacious, unfolding of the drama. It is a kind of epic of a biblical nature, I feel. But Ralph, you know when the two of us first started talking about this, I just wanted to say that, to me, it was both biblical *and* historical. That’s why the ancestry of this opera (given my background) is *Boris Godunov* or *Prince Igor*, pieces of the kind where the two strands – history and legend – go side by side. The role of the people as the chorus is very strong in both. So, all that, I believe, is the result of my background, if you like, and people that came to the opera and have a similar background used to say to me, “Yeah, you know, it reminds us of Mussorgsky” which to me is the greatest compliment that can be paid. That’s because I happen to think that the greatest opera of all time is *Boris*.

**RL:** Larry, you have touched on the importance of *Boris Godunov* as well as obliquely referring to your own Jewish origins. Is there anything that you would particularly like to say about the effect that writing *The Golem* had on you?

**LS:** Oh, that is a tough question, isn’t it? I think that the answer lies both on a personal and a kind of social level. That is, when the Sitsky family first came to this country in 1951, I don’t think that it would have been possible for someone like myself to ever contemplate writing such a piece because I thought that we had to assimilate. So, I would have run a mile from this kind of notion because it didn’t become comfortable to explore one’s own culture until quite a few years later. I mean, we now accept that we are a mix of a huge number of cultures. I happen to think that wonderful and moving, and that it will be our ultimate saviour artistically, if not in other ways as well. So now, it’s perfectly okay to sort of say, “I’m from whatever background it is, I’m exploring my own ethnic roots.” So, I couldn’t have written this piece before, even if I had had the experience and the technique to do so. That’s the answer on a social level.

On a personal level, I think something similar needs to be said in that I’ve never

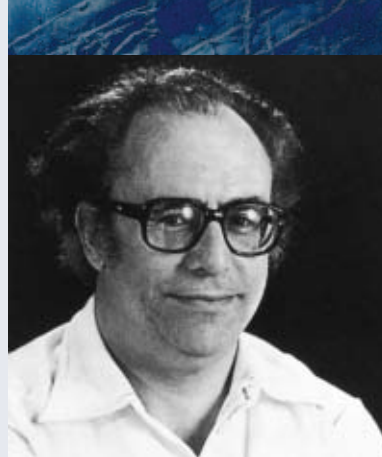
practised the Jewish faith, although my grandfather was fairly strict. The household was only semi-Orthodox you might say, and I think I rebelled against observance quite early. Certainly I have never been a regular to the synagogue or anything like that. So in a way, some of my friends of non-Jewish origin have found it strange that I've done this opera and they point out, correctly, that after all I'm not a practising Jew in a sense.

But I think that, for me, what I've done is possible because of my background. That is, I understand the story, I relate to the folk music; all that, technically, is possible, but I'm trying in my own convoluted way to say that the moral of the story transcends my being a Jew or a Christian or a Muslim or anything else. It just happens, as a fact of birth, that I have this background – a Jewish Russian background.

So the piece came out this way. But there's no reason why someone of a different background could not have tackled the same subject. It would have come out differently, that's all. So, I'm not preaching this from any sort of sectarian point of view, although there are various prayers in it that suggest perhaps that I'm a devout, Orthodox Jew. Well, that's not so. That prayer, for instance, at the very end of *The Golem*, sung by the unaccompanied high tenor – its

very cruel ending on a high C, being doubly cruel, because the singer doesn't even appear on stage, and unless you're in the know you haven't a clue who sings that wonderful high note – well, that prayer was sent to me by the current Rabbi in Prague's Old-New Synagogue. It's not a literal transcription, but merely my impression of a prayer that is sung every Friday night in the Old-New Synagogue in memory of Rabbi Loew. I find it very moving that, ever since the 16th century, this man has been remembered in this way and so, that very devout ending to *The Golem* comes from there.

By the way, the ending of Act One of the opera is similarly significant because it concludes with a Hebrew chorus 'Ani Maa'min' (I believe the Messiah will come), which was sung by the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto when they were being taken to their deaths. It did not form part of my original ending to that Act, but I was prevailed upon by Barrie Kosky, during the staging rehearsals, to provide this more extended and emotion-charged conclusion to tie in with his vision for the production.



Larry Sitsky

Larry Sitsky occupies an important place in Australian contemporary music as a composer, pianist, musicologist, teacher, lecturer and broadcaster. Born in Tianjin (Tientsin), China, in 1934, he began piano studies at a very early age and by the age of 11 had given his first recital and begun his composing career. In 1951, he came to Australia with his parents and was subsequently awarded various scholarships at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music. His main teachers there were Winifred Burston,

the Australian pianist, and Raymond Hanson, the composer.

From 1958-1961 he continued his studies in San Francisco with the pianist Egon Petri who granted him a scholarship. During his years in America, Larry Sitsky presented numerous recitals, which included performances of contemporary Australian music. His first acknowledged mature composition, the Sonata for Solo Violin (1959), was first performed during his time in the USA. On his return from America, he first took up a lectureship at the Queensland Conservatorium, lecturing also at the University of Queensland. Later, he moved to the newly established Canberra School of Music as the first Head of Keyboard Studies, later becoming the Head of both the Composition and Musicology Departments.

Larry Sitsky's output is wide-ranging and prolific. He has written six operas, all in collaboration with Gwen Harwood, and he has completed numerous commissions including works for Opera Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Musica Viva and many others.

His keyboard music includes teaching material. *Century* (1982), for example, consists of 128 pieces for young players; there are also some very ambitious works such as the

various Fantasias, the *12 Mystical Preludes* (for piano), the *7 Meditations on a Symbolist Art* (for organ) and the Concerto for Two Pianos. His instrumental music is extensive and his chamber music includes a series of five trios, two string quartets and many other combinations. He frequently uses titles and references attesting to his interest in ancient mythologies and other esoteric teaching, as well as mainstream literature and he has also explored music connected with his ethnic background. Diversity is evident in his song cycles which utilise poets as varied as Li-Po, Walt Whitman and the Australian, Christopher Brennan.

Larry Sitsky has become an acknowledged authority on the music and aesthetic theories of Busoni. His *Concerto for Orchestra: Realisation and Completion of Busoni's Fantasia Contrappuntistica* has a special place in his output. His book, *Busoni and the Piano*, was published by Greenwood Press in the USA. Following the publication of this book, he was awarded two further contracts, one on the *Classical Reproducing Piano Roll* and another on *Anton Rubinstein: The Piano Music*.

Larry Sitsky has championed Australian piano music, as well as the lesser trodden paths of the mainstream repertoire. He has recorded a set of Australian piano music, featuring the best of our more recent music

and he has edited a volume of new Australian piano music for Breitkopf and Härtel. His recitals tend to feature works from his own special fields: the great Russian tradition and virtuosos music by Busoni and the other early 20th-century composers.

Over recent years, Larry Sitsky has been the recipient of many honours. He received the first prestigious Australia Council Music Board fulltime Fellowship for Composition; he was the first Australian composer to be invited to the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics on a travelling Fellowship; a similar Fellowship took him to China. Sitsky had served on various committees where he has been an indefatigable fighter for the rights of the Australian composer.

### Gwen Harwood

Born at Taringa, Queensland, 1920, Gwen Harwood grew up in Brisbane. She was raised in a family of strong women; her grandmother, who introduced her to poetry, earned her own living until she was 80 and her mother was a feminist who was interested in community issues. Her wide-ranging interests included literature, philosophy and music. Music was very important to the family; her father played



the piano and violin and both Gwen and her brother were given piano lessons. Gwen aspired to become a musician eventually deciding that she would never be successful as a performer and so became a music teacher, organist at the All Saints Church of England in Brisbane and a member of the Handel society. Later she was able to use her love of music when writing libretti for various musical projects.

In 1945, Gwen Harwood née Foster married William Harwood, an academic linguist, and moved reluctantly to Tasmania where she never felt at home. They had

four children of which the youngest two were twins; it was the era when women were expected to stay at home, which she did. Harwood was not a glamorous star, nor was she the stereotypical starving artist. She was an ordinary, warm and motherly woman who, at the same time as being very caring, had a cheeky sense of humour and a sharp tongue. She was always very animated and lively, with no airs or graces for public show.

It was after moving to Tasmania that she seriously began writing poetry and found her lifelong passion for the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein whose works of philosophy influence all of her works. Gwen Harwood did not write for fame. In fact she used many pseudonyms, due also to a distinct lack of interest in women's literary work at the time, which she railed against. Many times, she sent manuscripts to her brother in Queensland who then published them for her.

Harwood's work was regarded as a very private matter, and was never shown until it was finished. Her early work saw the creation of two characters, Professor Eisenbart, a maturing nuclear physicist and Professor Kröte, an alcoholic European musician. They appeared in many of her poems and Kröte in particular was still seen in some of



her later work. These two complete opposites juxtaposed together show her lighter side while still making poignant statements. She also explored the subject of pain in her poetry, both physical and otherwise.

Gwen Harwood's poems, stories, critical essays and reviews have appeared regularly in a diversity of Australian journals since the early 1960s and she wrote libretti for composers Larry Sitsky, James Penberthy, Don Kay and Ian Cugley. Gwen Harwood also wrote an impressive body of touching, witty and revealing letters and postcards to friends around the country.

Her best-known work includes *The Lion's Bride* (1981), *Bone Scan* (1988) and her volume of letters, *Blessed City* (1990). Gwen Harwood's list of honours includes: The *Meanjin* Poetry Prize (1975), The Robert Frost Award (1977) and the Patrick White Literary Award (1978). She received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Tasmania in 1988, and, in 1994, Honorary Doctorates from the University of Queensland and Latrobe University. *Bone Scan* won the Victorian Premiers' Literary Award and J. J. Bray Award, 1990; *Blessed City* won *The Age* Book of the Year Award, 1990. Gwen Harwood died in 1995.



## THE GOLEM

### Synopsis by Alison Jones

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The action of *The Golem* takes place in 16th century Prague

#### ACT ONE

##### Scene 1: A street in the Prague Ghetto, outside Judah Loew's house

Rachel sings at the window of her father's house as two sorcerers set up in the street below. The Rabbi draws her away as the sorcerers exhort the people to give money so they may summon up spirits. The Rabbi tries to stop the sorcerers from fleecing the people, but they do not leave until Thaddeus arrives, following a group of Christians who are persecuting some Jews and driving them back into the Ghetto. Thaddeus urges restraint for the time being, though looks forward to the time when the Jews must "embrace the Cross, or die." The Christians leave, singing, and the Rabbi blesses his people.

##### Scene 2: The Rabbi's dream

Under the influence of a claim made by one of the sorcerers, that it would be possible for the righteous to create a force that would destroy their enemies, the Rabbi dreams of creating a Golem to destroy the enemies of Israel.

##### Scene 3: The banks of the Moldau

With his students, Isaac and Jacob, the Rabbi creates a Golem from the earth – a being of great strength – and names him Joseph, telling him his function is to protect the Jews of Prague.

##### Scene 4: Outside Mordecai Meisel's house

The Golem repels and binds a would-be attacker outside the house of Mordecai Meisel, a rich banker. Thaddeus attempts to have someone leave a dead Christian child in the ghetto so he can accuse the Jews of ritual murder. He threatens vengeance against Meisel. The students light a fire outside the house, but the Golem throws them into it.

##### Scene 5: In the Rabbi's house

Isaac and the Golem are studying, but the singing of Perele and Rachel, who are embroidering, distracts the Golem. Rachel is curious about this new servant and Florea, who brings a letter from her master Meisel, flirts with the Golem. Left alone with him, Rachel tries to find out about his background, but he is called away by the Rabbi.

##### Scene 6: The street in front of the Rabbi's house

The Rabbi tells the people of a plot against Meisel, but assures them that the King has promised to protect the Jews against false accusations of murdering Christian children.

The Jews dance in celebration. The Golem dances with Florea, and Rachel with Jacob, until all present join in the Hebrew chorus 'Ani Maa'min'.

## ACT II

### Scene 1: Cardinal Silvester's room

Cardinal Silvester warns the Rabbi that an accusation has been brought by Thaddeus against Mordecai Meisel, claiming that he has murdered Florea and that her blood is being kept for Passover bread. The Rabbi assures him that Florea, a Gypsy, will be found and brought back. He sends the Golem to find her.

### Scene 2: The Golem's journey

Thaddeus incites the Christians against the Jews. The Golem searches for Florea, receiving refreshment on the way from an old, blind woman. He finds Florea with her lover at the Gypsy camp. She tries to seduce the Golem and then taunts him, but he obliges her to follow him.

### Scene 3: A street in Prague outside the Courthouse

Christians accuse Meisel of having murdered Florea and the Rabbi tries to comfort him. The Golem arrives with Florea, to the rejoicing of the Jews. They are attacked by soldiers, but the Golem protects them.

### Scene 4: Inside the Rabbi's house

Rachel asks the Golem about his journey, then asks her father about the Golem. Perele is afraid of the Golem and asks the Rabbi to send him away. Meisel, freed, offers to provide a dowry for Rachel, suggesting that Jacob would make a good husband.

### Scene 5: A dark, obscure place in the town

Rachel asks the sorcerers to tell her fortune. They hypnotise her and she sees a vision of herself with the Golem. Suddenly he appears beside her and they embrace. They are discovered by Florea and three henchmen, who taunt them and assault Rachel. The Golem defends Rachel and the henchmen run away. When the Rabbi, Isaac and Jacob arrive, the Golem mistakes Jacob for one of the assailants; he is ready to attack him, but Jacob reminds him that he is a servant and leads Rachel away. The Golem expresses his passion for Rachel.

## ACT III

### Scene 1: The Disputation

Cardinal Silvester assembles a court to hear charges against the Jews, which are brought by Thaddeus, who again brings up the accusation of the murder of Christian children. The Cardinal declares the Jews

defeated in the disputation, that their books are in error, and orders them to be burnt. The Golem tries to comfort the weeping Rabbi, arguing that the destruction of the books will not mean the destruction of their message.

### Scene 2: The Rabbi's study

Meisel hopes that the King will protect them, but the Rabbi is not convinced. Meisel asks the Rabbi to help him make his will, but they are interrupted by cries of pain from outside.

### Scene 3: A lonely place

Florea and her accomplices have made the Golem drunk, overpowered him and are torturing him. He is released by the Jews, but Florea tells the Rabbi that the Golem is a sorcerer who has bewitched Rachel. The Rabbi broods about the nature of the creature he has made, realising that he reflects his own passions and carries out deeds which he does not dare do.

### Scene 4: A street by the Ghetto gate

Jacob and the Golem discuss the death of Meisel and the fate of his nephews, his heirs, who were deprived of their inheritance and tortured. Thaddeus incites the Christians against the Jews again.

### Scene 5: The Rabbi's street

The Christians attack the Jews. Jacob fights with Thaddeus and kills him. The Christians break into the Rabbi's home and kill Rachel. The Golem carries her body out and places it by the side of Perele, who mourns for her daughter. The Golem goes berserk, seizing a sword and killing Jews as well as Christians. He is about to attack the Rabbi, who fends him off with an incantation. He drops the sword and carries Rachel's body away.

### Scene 6: The Jewish Cemetery in Prague

The Golem sits on a grave in the cemetery with Rachel's body. In his grief he is about to violate her when the Rabbi appears with Isaac and Jacob. The Rabbi orders the Golem to sleep in the attic of the synagogue that night.

### Scene 7: The attic of the Old Synagogue in Prague

Assisted by Jacob and Isaac, the Rabbi removes the holy seal from the forehead of the Golem, depriving him of life. The ghetto's night watchman is heard intoning the Jewish creed, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one'.

## ACT ONE

## Scene 1 – A street in the Prague Ghetto, outside Judah Loew's house

*(Two Sorcerers set up a brazier in the street and kindle a smoky fire. Men and women gather round the brazier. Rachel appears at the upper window of the Rabbi's house.)*

## MALKUTH: THE KINGDOM OF EARTH

## CHORAL PRELUDE

1 Logos ... Om ... Adonai ... Aum ... Olam ha aziah

## RACHEL

Great Solomon went a-walking  
out of his palace of silver and gold.

O, Solomon walked in his glory  
among the lilies of the field.

The lilies bowed in the wind to sing:

"We are lovelier than you, great King."

*(The sorcerers begin to display amulets and charms to the crowd.)*

*The sorcerers are obviously charlatans, preying on an oppressed people.)*

## FIRST SORCERER

The smoke of your torment goes up forever and ever. Gather close. We will show  
you great and marvellous signs.

## RACHEL

Great Solomon went a-walking  
under the cedars of Lebanon.

It was the time of the singing of birds.

The winter rain was over and gone.

The nightingales came close to sing:

"We know more of love than you, great King."

*(The second sorcerer displays a representation of the Tree of Sephiroth.)*

Great Solomon went a-walking

Round his neck were chains of gold.

"O vanity of vanities,"

sang all the lilies of the field.

*(The Rabbi appears at the window, draws Rachel away and closes the curtains.)*

## FIRST SORCERER

By the seven divine words, and the seven human words, the seven heavens, the seven planets,  
the seven oceans, the seven abysses, I call you up, most secret spirits.

## SECOND SORCERER

Spirit of Burning, rise! Spirit of Knowledge, rise! Spirit of Glory, rise! See, they rise behind the smoke.

## FIRST SORCERER

The end of days is approaching. The golden age is coming. Your torments will vanish like smoke.  
*(Some of the crowd hand him coins which he casts into a bowl.)*

## SECOND SORCERER

Give us money. The spirits will speak.

## FIRST SORCERER

By the Name which is not pronounced, I bid you answer. By the most mysterious  
Number I bid you speak.

## A JEW

When will our Messiah come?

*(The second Sorcerer extends the money bowl. The Jew drops in a coin, and sparks fly up from the fire.)*

## SEPULCHRAL VOICE

Prepare yourselves. The Anointed One will come. There are strange stars in the heavens.  
Scourge yourselves. Give away your possessions.

## A JEW (Spoken)

There! In the smoke! A shadow moving without a head!

*SECOND SORCERER (Sing-song, almost perfunctory: he has done this many times before.)*

Protect yourselves against the Evil Eye.

*(He moves among the crowd, selling amulets.)*

Bless your wife's barren womb.  
Drive Lilith away from your child's cradle.  
*(The door of the Rabbi's house opens. The Rabbi steps out.)*  
Keep away the demons of night.  
Bind the influence of the stars.  
Turn copper into gold.  
Bring death to your enemies.

RABBI LOEW

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die," said the Lord God.  
*(The crowd turns to the Rabbi. The Sorcerers draw away.)*  
Does not God say: "The wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them."

THE JEWS *(Spoken)*

Then let him save us from the malice of Christians, from the shame and the spitting,  
and the torture, and the fire. Let him send his redeemer to save us.

FIRST SORCERER

Give us your gold. We will draw down the spirit of the stars. We will teach you the  
mysterious words that are not spoken by any mouth.

SECOND SORCERER

Give us your gold. We will raise up the power that will destroy your enemies.  
*(The Rabbi is disturbed by what the Sorcerers are saying.)*

RABBI LOEW

God alone can create.

FIRST SORCERER

Is it not true that if the righteous wished, they could create a world?

RABBI LOEW

I will not dispute with magicians. I will not hear your falsehoods. You shall not rob my people.  
*(Confused shouting in the background. Two Christian guards follow a mob of Christians who are humiliating a party of Jews. The Jews are harnessed together to pull a cart while the Christians whip them. The guards do not interfere.)*

THE CHRISTIANS

Back to Jew-Street! Christ-killers!  
*(Thaddeus the priest enters and stands near the Sorcerers. He whispers to them. They pack up their display.)*  
Usurers! Vile poisoners of the earth!  
*(Rabbi Loew unties the Jews. Thaddeus restrains the whippers.)*

THADDEUS

Enough! Enough! They are back inside the Ghetto walls, where dogs and usurers belong.

THE CHRISTIANS

They fill up with money like a sponge. We'll squeeze them dry.

THADDEUS

Here they must stay from dusk to daybreak, here in these walls with the devils of darkness.  
Soon, soon the day will dawn when they must embrace the Cross, or die.

THE CHRISTIANS *(Spoken)*

Christ killers! Poisoners of the earth!  
*(The bell of the Angelus sounds.)*

THE JEWS *(Whispered)*

Are we made of iron? Is our flesh made of steel? That we should bear these burdens.  
*(The Christians begin to exit.)*

THE CHRISTIANS

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.  
*(During this the Rabbi tries to comfort his people.)*

THE JEWS

He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and  
thick clouds of the skies.

Are we made of iron? Is our flesh made of steel that we should bear these burdens? *(Uttered)*  
Age after age in exile, tasting the sorrows of death.  
*(The Jews exit.)*

SECOND SORCERER *(Offstage)*

Is it not true that if the righteous wished, they could create a world?



RABBI LOEW (*As the Rabbi sings, he looks at his own body and limbs*)

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, when as yet there were none of them.

### Scene 2 – The Rabbi's dream

*(The scene changes to the Rabbi's dream. As the chorus sings, the following Hebrew letters glow against the dark background: Ato, Bra, Golem, Devub, Hachomer, v'Tigzar, Zedim, Chevel, Torfe, Yisroel.)*

### YESOD: THE FOUNDATION, OR THE BALANCE OF NATURE

CHORAL INTERLUDE (*Offstage*)

2 Shaddai, Shaddai. Olam ha yezirah  
*(The Rabbi wakes.)*

RABBI LOEW

All that is created and all that is spoken issue from one Name. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Earth, air, water, fire! I will call the elements together, and the lights that shine into the elements.

*(He calls Isaac.)*

Isaac, my gentle son-in-law, come to me. Isaac!

*(Isaac comes to the Rabbi's side.)*

Isaac, born under the sign of fire! My breath is in me, the spirit of God is in my nostrils.

It is written, I also am formed out of clay.

Jacob, my disciple, come to me. Jacob!

*(Jacob comes to the Rabbi's side.)*

Jacob, born under the sign of water!

From what is finest in the earth, God created Adam.

We also are formed out of clay. I have been answered in a dream. Create a Golem out of clay, who will destroy the enemies of Israel. Out of the thick darkness where God is, a sign has been given. We shall take earth, and make a Golem to destroy the enemies of Israel.

*(The Rabbi, Isaac and Jacob begin to traverse the stage in silence.)*

### Scene 3 – The banks of the Moldau.

*(The Rabbi, Isaac and Jacob cross the stage with lights.)*

ISAAC

3 The village dogs are howling. The angel of death is here tonight.

JACOB

A strange face appeared in the upper windows, a face looking out from the shadow of death. *(They set down their lights in the clay among drifting mists. Their actions are formal and trance-like. The Rabbi models clay.)*

RABBI LOEW

In the first hour of creation, the earth was gathered to make man.

ISAAC

In the second hour of creation, Adam lay in earth, an unformed Golem.

JACOB

In the third hour his limbs took shape.

ISAAC (*Terror-stricken*)

No more, no more, Rabbi.

*(In awe.)*

If we create a Golem we must bring about the death of God.

*(Isaac and Jacob walk around the Golem as if in a dance.)*

RABBI LOEW

At the third hour Adam lay, a Golem, without life or spirit.

JACOB and ISAAC

Shaddai. Olam ha yezirah. Shaddai.

RABBI LOEW

Stone of gold from the bowels of the earth, phoenix from the heart of fire, stream of water from the rock. Whirlwind, you ardours and sanctities, authorities and regents, voices and acclamations, Adonai, Tetragrammaton, Zabaoth, Elohim, Ain Soph Aur.

ISAAC

At the fourth hour Adam's soul was cast into him.

JACOB

He breathed in the breath of life and became a living soul.

RABBI LOEW

Into your mouth I put the Name of God.

*(A cloud of steam rises from the Golem's body. A wind rises. The three men stand still as the Golem begins to glow with light. With immense dignity ...)*

I set this seal of the Most Holy One upon your forehead.

*(The Golem rises up slowly. He takes an enormous breath, and the three men are literally sucked towards him. He exhales. Isaac and Jacob are blown away. The Rabbi stands firm.)*

My creature, my servant. In the fifth hour Adam stood upright. In the sixth hour he named the creatures.

THE GOLEM

I am here. What is my name?

RABBI LOEW

I name you Joseph. When I speak, you will answer: Rabbi. Joseph, my servant ...

THE GOLEM

Rabbi.

RABBI LOEW

What I command, you will perform.

THE GOLEM

Rabbi.

RABBI LOEW

You have the power of the elements. I am your master. If I take from your forehead the seal of the most Holy Name, you will return to the dust from which you were made.

THE GOLEM

Rabbi.

RABBI LOEW

You will work in my household as a servant. I have made you to protect the Jews of Prague. Come with me to your city, your people. I am your master, your strength shall be great.

THE GOLEM

Take me where I must go.

RABBI LOEW

Follow me through the darkness. You are the watchman of the House of Israel.

*(The Rabbi goes off, carrying his light. The stage is in darkness.)*

THE GOLEM *(As an echo. As the Golem sings in darkness, his face materialises, disappears, hovers.)*

I am the watchman of the House of Israel. While the city sleeps, I guard our people. I hate their enemies with a perfect hatred.

#### Scene 4 – Outside Mordecai Meisel's house

*(A light shows in an open window. A figure creeps towards the window with a bundle wrapped in a prayer shawl. The man puts the bundle down and starts to climb in. The Golem pushes him sideways against the wall and dislocates his arms. The man faints. Thaddeus and three students appear with flickering lights.)*

THADDEUS

- 4 Knock on the door, and force your way in. You know where you will find the dead Christian child. Call me, and I will call the night watchman.

*(As the students move towards the house their lights fall on the man with the dislocated arms. He is bound up with ropes in a butcher's cart.)*

Dear God, who has done this? Tied fast like a pig's carcass. Mordecai Meisel, your house shall burn. The flames will lick all Christian debts away. Set fire to Meisel's house, set it alight. The rich Jew will burn, burn, burn.

*(The students kindle a fire against the wall. Smoke rises. The Golem seems to materialise out of darkness.)*

It is true, then, the Rabbi is a sorcerer. What monster is this?

*(Thaddeus runs away. The Golem hurls the students into their fire. They scream. He trusses them together.)*

THE GOLEM

I am the watchman of the House of Israel.

*(The stage is in darkness. Projected on a screen are mediaeval pictures of oppression and persecution of the Jews, Christian representations of the blood libel, Jews being forced to wear the yellow badge.)*

GEVURAH: POWER

CHORAL INTERLUDE

- 5 Azoth ... Agla ...

### Scene 5 – In the Rabbi's house

*(Isaac and the Golem are studying. Rachel and her mother are embroidering. The Golem is distracted by the women's singing and sways about.)*

PERELE

6 Pray tell me dear mother,  
shall I have a husband?  
If I am to marry,  
then who shall it be?

RACHEL

Will it be a Rabbi  
well-learned in the Torah?  
My friends are all married  
but who will marry me?

PERELE

Will it be a cobbler  
who sits patching slippers?

RACHEL

My friends are all married  
but who will marry me?  
Will it be a tailor  
who sits with his needle?  
My friends are all married  
but who will marry me?

PERELE

Sing more softly, Isaac is teaching Joseph to read.

RACHEL

Why does the new servant not work in the house?

PERELE

Your father has forbidden it. He works only for the Synagogue.

RACHEL

I will ask my father if he may work for us.

PERELE

You know what they say: the more flesh, the more worms. The more property, the more anxiety. The more women, the more witchcraft. The more maidservants, the more lustfulness. The more menservants, the more thieving.

THE GOLEM

I am no thief!

ISAAC

Joseph, be calm. No one called you a thief. It is written: he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.

THE GOLEM

It is written: a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

RACHEL

How fast he learns!

*(Jacob enters.)*

PERELE

Joseph, what will become of you if your anger flares at a foolish proverb?

JACOB

Joseph, remember what you are. A servant.

RACHEL

He is not like any servant I have ever known.

ISAAC

Joseph, let us return to our studies. Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

JACOB

The rod and reproof give wisdom.

*(Rachel scowls at Jacob. Perele smiles at him. Florea, Mordecai Meisel's servant, enters with a letter.)*

JACOB

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.

FLOREA

Was there ever a Jew who could not quote scripture to his own purpose? And you, Yosele, are you learning to quote scripture? We Christians know a word or two. (*Seductively*) The glory of young men is in their strength.

PERELE (*Sharply*)

What is your business here?

FLOREA

I have a letter for the Rabbi from my master.

PERELE

Take it to him and be gone.

FLOREA (*Mock curtsy*)

Rebbitzen! Farewell Yosele, we shall meet again.

RACHEL

For the lips of a strange woman drip as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil.

JACOB

Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain. (*Exit*)

(*Florea laughing as she exits.*)

PERELE

I must attend to the cares of the household. (*Exit*)

ISAAC

I must talk with the Rabbi. (*Exit*)

RACHEL

Joseph. Yosele. Tell me the truth. Where do you come from? Who is your father?

THE GOLEM

The Rabbi is my father now, and I am his obedient son.

RACHEL

That is no answer. Who is your mother?

THE GOLEM

Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Earth, the mother of all, is my mother. I am formed out of the dust.

RACHEL

You are like a prince of another country.

THE GOLEM

Will you lift me up with the wind of your breath?

RABBI LOEW (*Offstage*)

Joseph, Joseph!

THE GOLEM

I am here, Rabbi!

(*The Golem and Rachel stare intently at each other for a moment, then the Golem exits. Rachel looks after him with longing and sings.*)

RACHEL

My friends are all married, but who will marry me?

**Scene 6 – The street in front of the Rabbi's house**

(*The Rabbi stands with Perele, Rachel, Isaac, Jacob and Mordecai Meisel. Crowds of Jews are on either side.*)

RABBI LOEW

7

Let our people hear: the foul plot against our friend and benefactor Mordecai Meisel has been disclosed. I come to you with King Rudolf's proclamation. The foul slanders and false accusations against the Jews are condemned by the King, who has issued a solemn decree under his royal seal, forbidding anyone in his kingdom to bring the blood accusation against the Jews. Neither shall the courts of the kingdom honour such charges. No longer shall all Jews be charged with the crime of one Jew.

JACOB

Who can believe this? The unholy slander will never end.

RABBI LOEW

Look, I have the seal of the King. The lie of the blood accusation will never be told again.



MORDECAI MEISEL

Judah Loew, as a friend I thank you for what your servant Joseph has done to protect me and my household.

RABBI LOEW

Where is my servant Joseph? Call him here.

*(Rachel goes inside the house.)*

ISAAC

Let Israel rejoice in the Lord. Let the children of Zion be joyful. *(A circle begins to form.)* Let them praise his name in the dance. Let them sing praises with the timbrel and the harp.

*(The Jews begin dancing. The Golem appears, dancing with Florea. Rachel returns and sees the Golem. Jacob draws her into the dance. The Rabbi, with uplifted arms, blesses the scene.)*

THE JEWS

Lord, where shall we find you?

Are you hidden from the world?

Lord, where shall we not find you?

The world is full of your glory.

Alleluyah.

HEBREW CHORUS

Ani Maa'min

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## CD II

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### ACT II

#### Scene 1 – Cardinal Silvester's room

*(The Cardinal and the Rabbi are gradually revealed.)*

BINAH: INTELLIGENCE

CHORAL INTERLUDE

1

Binah ... Olam ha Aziluth ... Yod He Va

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Most high Rabbi Loew, I call you here in secret. Once more the blood libel is to be brought

against your people. Holy Rabbi, you are nobly born and have friends among the great. Your writings are honoured.

RABBI LOEW

God did not choose Israel for the merits of the patriarchs. What is it you have to say?

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Rabbi, I would protect you if I could, but there are forces I cannot control.

RABBI LOEW

In Israel the forces of the soul prevail. In other nations, the forces of this world.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Is not your exile proof that God has forsaken you?

RABBI LOEW

This is not the time for disputation. Tell me what I should know.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Thaddeus has a witness against the Jews. The witness will swear that Mordecai Meisel's servant, the Christian girl Florea, has been murdered, and that her blood is kept by Jews in a silver goblet for the baking of your Passover bread.

RABBI LOEW

She is alive. Meisel will bring her to you.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

She is missing.

RABBI LOEW

She is a Gypsy. She has been missing before. She will return.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

She is gone. Meisel has been thrown into prison.

RABBI LOEW

Do you believe the blood accusation?

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Rabbi, Rabbi, you and I are reasonable men.

RABBI LOEW

We have the promise of the King himself: Where there has been no crime, no one shall be punished. He has promised that the blood libels would end.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

A King cannot make promises for the mob. Reason does not reach them. They long to destroy you.

RABBI LOEW

We must hope for a miracle. In this world, there is one order; but in the upper world, another order. May one world penetrate the other!

CARDINAL SILVESTER

Of what order is the exile of Israel?

RABBI LOEW

We will dispute together, but not now. I thank you for your warning.

*(The Rabbi leaves. Outside the door the Golem is waiting. They whisper together.)*

RABBI LOEW

Joseph, how did you find me?

THE GOLEM

Earth can show me which is the right road.

RABBI LOEW

Go quickly then. Find Meisel's missing servant. You know her. Find her. Bring her quickly home.

## Scene 2 – The Golem's Journey

*(A moving background of Prague and the countryside. Dream-like, not realistic.)*

THADDEUS

2 Gather round, and hear of the most foul deeds of horror.

THE CROWD *(An acolyte holds up a banner of St. Simon for the crowd to see.)*

Blessed Simon of Trent, sweet child, pray for us.

THADDEUS

The perfidious Jews, the Christ-murderers, murder Christians for their blood.

THE CROWD

Blessed William of Norwich, pray for us.

THADDEUS

They declare that the coming of their Messiah will be hastened by the blood of sacrificed gentile virgins.

THE CROWD

Blessed Hugh of Lincoln, pray for us.

THADDEUS

Out of hatred they crucify Christian children.

THE CROWD

Innocent martyrs, pray for us.

THADDEUS

The synagogue is the beginning and ending point of murder.

*(The scene changes to the countryside. The Golem kneels on the earth and smells it.)*

THE GOLEM

Earth, my mother, show me my path. Mother of pure waters, heal me. Mother of the beasts, nourish me. Mother of the winds, uplift me. Mother of shady trees, refresh me.

*(The Golem continues his journey.)*

TIPHERETH: BEAUTY, MERCY

CHORAL INTERLUDE *(The scene changes: an old blind woman sits by her door.)*

3 Rahamim ... Tiphereth ... Elohim ... Olam Ha Briah ...

OLD BLIND WOMAN

4 I hear the dogs sporting on the road. I hear the wind singing in the height. The Lord does not desert his saints; they are kept forever. The prophet Elijah has come at last.

THE GOLEM

Peace be to you.

OLD BLIND WOMAN

The wine is set for you.

*(The Golem takes the wine and drinks.)*

THE GOLEM

I thank you. May I rest awhile?

OLD BLIND WOMAN

The redeemed of the Lord shall come singing to Zion, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. *(She stretches her arm to him)* Give me your blessing.

THE GOLEM

Who am I that I should bless you? Give me your blessing, let me be your son, let me believe that my bones grew in your womb, that I grew strong to honour you. Let me believe that I was a child among children.

OLD BLIND WOMAN

My eyes are long lost, but my spirit sees you as one who journeys in the wilderness, one by whom fire will come down and consume the enemies of Israel.

THE GOLEM

Before I spoke I had a vision of the generations of men, all kings, all leaders, all people.

OLD BLIND WOMAN

Did you see the Messiah who is to come?

THE GOLEM

I saw the streams turned to pitch, and the dust into brimstone, and the land burning pitch. It was not quenched night nor day; the smoke went up forever and ever; from generation to generation earth lay waste.

*(The old woman weeps. The Golem kneels down and takes her hands.)*

THE GOLEM

I saw the eyes of the blind opened.

OLD BLIND WOMAN

The Lord who made Heaven and Earth bless you.

*(Darkness falls. The scene is lit by the fires of a Gypsy camp. The Gypsies are singing in front of their cave, a fiddler playing.)*

GYPSIES

5

Gypsy, Gypsy, where are you going?

Over the stones where the stream is flowing,

To the rich man's house where the lights are glowing

To bring a sweet woman home to my bed.

Why does the rich man gasp and quiver?

Why does his lady laugh and shiver?

The Gypsy is leading her over the river,

Into the forest to share his bed.

*(The Golem looks huge in the firelight. The Gypsies stop singing.)*

THE GOLEM

She is here.

MALE GYPSY

Who is here?

THE GOLEM

She is here. Where is she hiding?

*(Floreas appears at the cave mouth, yawning, arm in arm with her Gypsy lover.)*

FLOREA *(Mockingly)*

The great Jew! The Rabbi's servant! Have you come to carry water and chop wood for us, Yosele?

THE GOLEM

I have come to take you home.

FLOREA

This is my home, Jew, here or anywhere.

THE GOLEM

You are to come. Your master's life is in danger.

FLOREA

I have no master here. Leave us.

*(The Gypsies leave; the fiddler remains. The Golem and Florea confront one another.)*

Well now, Yosele, how did you find me?

### THE GOLEM

Earth shows me the right road.  
(*Florea tries to seduce the Golem.*)

### FLOREA

Come with me. Come into the darkness.

### THE GOLEM

I cannot.  
(*Florea undresses and stands in the firelight.*)

### THE GOLEM

At the seventh hour Eve was given to Adam. At the eighth hour they lay down together.  
(*The Golem gazes at Florea. We see the Rabbi as in a dream.*)

### VOICE OF RABBI LOEW

Joseph, I command you to return. (*The Golem shakes his head.*) At the ninth hour Adam looked at the Tree of Knowledge. Joseph, of that tree you shall not eat. (*Florea stretches out her arms. Joseph is drawn towards her.*) Return, return!

### FLOREA (*Impatiently*)

What is there to be afraid of? Have you never known a woman? What harm can come to you?

### VOICE OF RABBI LOEW

By the Name which may not be spoken, I command you.  
(*The Golem comes out of his trance and throws Florea's clothes at her.*)

### THE GOLEM

Dress yourself and come with me, or I will break the bones of your legs and carry you.

### FLOREA

Eunuch! Has the Rabbi gelded you?  
(*Florea follows the Golem. The fiddler plays mockingly.*)

### Scene 3 – A street in Prague outside the Courthouse

(*Rabbi Loew and the Jews on one side of the street, the Christians on the other. The stage gradually fills. The crowd of Christians and Jews is restless and volatile – much jostling and bailiffs attempting to keep order.*)

### CHORAL INTERLUDE

6 Age after age in exile, sorrow filling the heart with darkness,  
The words of the prophets blowing to ashes in the wind,  
Caught in the web of cruel cities, where the day is blackness,  
Women ravished, young men hanged, the old beaten, dishonoured,  
Is this what you see, Lord, is this what you can bear to see?

### THE CHRISTIANS (*Shouted*)

Back to Jew Street, Christ killers! Usurers! Vile poisoners of the earth!  
(*Meisel's entrance. Judges and military saluted by fanfares. Meisel, in prison clothes, is led on by bailiffs.*)

### THE CHRISTIANS

The Jew banker!  
Our King is in his power!  
Usurer! Moneylender!  
Drinker of Christian blood!  
You have murdered your faithful servant.

### RABBI LOEW

Courage, my friend. God will deliver you.

### MORDECAI MEISEL

Where is the King? Is there no help from him? I have asked the King to intercede. Surely there is a word, a sign?

### RABBI LOEW

He is absent from the town. You must put your trust in God.

### MORDECAI MEISEL

Surely the King will help me. Where is the King?

### THE CHRISTIANS

Our King will not help a moneylender.  
Down with the heathen, the infidels, the traitors.

### THADDEUS

The day of reckoning is come.

### THE CHRISTIANS

We will teach the Jews how to reckon.

### THE JEWS

Meisel is not guilty. Set him free.

### THADDEUS

You call for your merchant. Once you called for Barabbas. Weep for yourselves and for your children.  
*(Bailiffs are stopping fights. Thaddeus leads the Christians into the doorway of the Court, reviling Meisel. The Golem arrives with Florea.)*

### RABBI LOEW

There has been no bloodshed. She is alive, she is here. Meisel's servant is here, alive and unharmed.  
*(The Golem delivers Florea to the Rabbi. Two bailiffs take her into the court. Meisel faints and is carried in. The Rabbi follows. The Jews weep and embrace each other and begin to sing and dance. The Golem stands between Isaac and Jacob. Courtroom doors shut.)*

### THE JEWS

Our help is here in the name of the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.

### JACOB

The Christian dogs are hungry. They bark and sharpen their teeth. When they come again our people will scuttle away like rats. They will whisper and squeak in corners.

*THE JEWS (Singing softly in a trance-like state.)*

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

### JACOB

Our children will die young, our young men will not grow old.

### ISAAC

The Lord is on my side. I will not fear.

*(Jacob begins to draw people out of the dance.)*

### JACOB

The Lord is a man of war! Let your courage stir in your body, in your thighs, your back, your belly, your chest. Breathe in strength, fear nothing, do not cling to life. Take history into your

hands, put off your garments of humiliation. *(Some of the Jews begin tearing off their yellow badges.)*  
We will number them to the sword! Their sons and their daughters shall fall by the sword!

### THE JEWS

The Lord is a man of war! The sword of the Lord is filled with blood!

*(Soldiers enter and beat the Jews. The Golem protects the Jews and drives the soldiers off.)*

### NETZACH: VICTORY, ENDURANCE

### CHORAL INTERLUDE

[7] Nahash ... Tetragrammaton ... Vau He Yod He ... Sabaoth ... Nephesh

### Scene 4 – Inside the Rabbi's house

*(Rachel is sitting by a window.)*

### RACHEL

[8] Great Solomon went a-walking  
and all the singers of Israel came,  
O, with cymbals and harps and psalteries  
to sound the glory of his name.  
He heard the storks on the rooftop sing:  
“We are wiser far than you, great King.”

*THE GOLEM (At the window)*

Why were the storks wiser than King Solomon?

### RACHEL

Because they taught wisdom to their young. So, Joseph, you have found Meisel's servant.  
I hear that she will not speak to you.

### THE GOLEM

I have learned wisdom, like the young storks. I want nothing of that Gypsy whore.

### RACHEL

You are changed. You are gentler and stronger. Tell me about your journey.

### THE GOLEM

Not now, not here. I saw what I had never seen, the sun rising over the pure threshold of Earth.  
In the solitude of the forest creatures spoke to me. I drank the wine set for Elijah.

RACHEL

Tell me your story.

THE GOLEM

Not here, not now. *(The Golem exits. The Rabbi enters from the opposite side of stage.)*

RABBI LOEW

To whom were you talking?

RACHEL

To your servant Joseph. Tell me, father, where did you find him? He knows the law as well as any student. He remembers everything. He is stronger than any man I have ever known.

RABBI LOEW

What is he to you? He is the sexton of the synagogue and a faithful servant.

What else should concern you?

*(Perele enters. She signals for Rachel to leave. Rachel runs out, upset.)*

THE GOLEM *(First heard clearly, then gradually receding)*

Great Solomon went a-walking  
out of his palace of silver and gold.

O, Solomon walked in his glory  
among the lilies of the field.

The lilies bowed in the wind to sing:

“We are lovelier than you, great King.”

PERELE

Joseph is singing in the courtyard. He is not the same as the dumb servant you brought home.

Why do you need him now? Send him away, he can earn his living.

RABBI LOEW

He was nothing. He came with nothing. I must provide for him. Evil times are coming,  
and we will need him.

PERELE

I am afraid of him, Judah, he is breaking us apart. Sometimes I think he is a demon. Remember  
that demons can eat and drink, demons can procreate and die.

*(Meisel enters.)*

RABBI LOEW

Mordecai, my friend, I rejoice to see you walking in freedom.

MORDECAI MEISEL

Once again, Judah, I have to thank you. I have come, too, on another errand. Your daughter is  
as dear to me as my own flesh. Allow me to provide her dowry.

RABBI LOEW

Dear friend, we have not yet chosen her a husband.

*(Mordecai and Perele exchange knowing looks.)*

PERELE

There is an excellent husband under your nose. A young man of ambition, your student, Jacob.

RABBI LOEW

Jacob! Indeed he is an excellent scholar, but a poor man. How will he provide?

MORDECAI MEISEL

It will be arranged. I am not rich for nothing. Let me change my money into righteousness.  
It is written, if your brother be poor, and his hand fail, then you shall uphold him.

RABBI LOEW

A cup of wine to seal the future!

*(Perele brings wine. They drink. As they drink and talk, the Golem can be heard in the distance,  
then getting louder.)*

THE GOLEM

Great Solomon went a-walking  
under the cedars of Lebanon.

It was the time of the singing of birds.

The winter rain was over and gone.

The nightingales came close to sing:

“We know more of love than you, great King.”

**Scene 5 – A dark obscure place in town**

*(The two Sorcerers stand by their smoking brazier. Rachel appears, veiled. The Sephiroth are displayed.)*



FIRST SORCERER

- 9 Night phantom with no husband,  
Night fiend with no wife,  
Choir of ghosts, fiends of the whirlwind,  
Dark intelligences, and you, mother of devils,  
We bind you by our spells.

RACHEL

Can you tell the future? Can you see what is to come?

SECOND SORCERER (holds up a wand)

What do you see?

RACHEL

A wand of black ebony, with characters of gold.

FIRST SORCERER

By the key of Solomon the great King, we unlock the mysteries.  
(He swings a censer in front of Rachel, who is gradually hypnotised.)

(RACHEL'S VISION: Rachel and the Golem are in a field of flowers. Children come to them and leap up in their arms. The Star of David glows in the sky. The children dance and she and the Golem embrace.)

HESED: LOVE

CHORAL INTERLUDE

- 10 El Jave Hese Adoshem.  
(The sorcerers steal away. The Golem appears. He puts his arms on Rachel's shoulders.)

RACHEL

Joseph, how did you find me?

THE GOLEM

I could find you in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the earth. You have nourished my heart, my sister, my spouse. I could find you in the wilderness, in the desolation of the grave.  
(They move into an embrace. Florea in the shadows watches as the Golem kisses Rachel. Florea beckons. Three rough men approach.)

FIRST HENCHMAN

So! the Rabbi's daughter plays the whore with her father's servant!

SECOND HENCHMAN

Shall we help them to keep the Ten Commandments?

THIRD HENCHMAN

They say the God of Israel never sleeps. Is he watching them now?  
(The first two try to hold the Golem while the third kisses Rachel. The Golem goes berserk and smashes the men up. Florea runs away. Jacob runs to the scene and raises Rachel from where she has fallen. The Golem mistakes him for another attacker and is about to strike him.)

JACOB

Joseph!

(The Golem shakes himself.)

THE GOLEM

You are too late. I have put an end to their insults.  
(The Golem goes to help Rachel, but the words of Jacob halt him.)

JACOB

Joseph, remember what you are. A servant.  
(They exchange looks of hatred. Jacob leads Rachel away.)

THE GOLEM

- 11 Let my body return to earth.  
I have tasted love, I have drunk my death.  
Earth, my mother, to whom all creatures are equal,  
you know whom I love, she is set on my heart as a seal.  
Give her to me in the brightness of her body.  
Immensity of the starry space, give me the darkness of her hair.  
Shadowy caves, give me the darkness of her thighs.  
Vineyards of the hills, give me her breasts ripening with desire.  
Spring rain on the snowy blossom, give me her nakedness.  
Or tear from my forehead the word of Truth, and leave me death;  
Dissolve me, return me to the elements, let my tongue whisper again among the grasses,  
Let me be ash in the whirlwind, water streaming from the fountain mouth.  
(The Golem weeps.)

## Act III

## Scene 1 – The Disputation

*(A large court with multi-coloured textiles. The chorus sings HOD: MAJESTY, as the Cardinal and his clergy assemble formally. They are rich in vestments. City officials are in uniform. The Jews enter wearing yellow hats and armbands. Last of all Thaddeus in his Dominican habit, and the Rabbi.*

HOD: MAJESTY

CHORAL INTERLUDE

1

Ruah, Ab ruah ...

CARDINAL SILVESTER

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. *(He blesses the assembled people. The Jews do not kneel.)* Come now, let us reason together. Most learned Rabbi, you are here to dispute charges made against the Jews. It is written: if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land but if you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured by the sword.

RABBI LOEW

Is the disputation, then, to begin with a threat?

CARDINAL SILVESTER

So spoke one of your prophets, Isaiah. Our gracious King Rudolph has allowed you to live among us.

RABBI LOEW

We have lived in Bohemia for seven hundred years.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

You will be heard in peace and charity. Answer your brother Thaddeus.

THE CHRISTIANS

Procedentum spon sum de thalamo. Prophetavit simbacum calamo. Querem progresum divina gratia strictaligat in cunis fascia. Ergo benedicamus Domini.

THADDEUS

If yours is the true faith, why does God permit your long exile?

RABBI LOEW

God is with us in exile.

THADDEUS

You live like leeches on Christians. You do not till the soil.

RABBI LOEW

You forbid us to own land.

THADDEUS

You are usurers. Did not Christ drive moneylenders from the Temple?

THE CHRISTIANS

Usurers! Usurers!

RABBI LOEW

He did not borrow from them.

*(The Jews laugh. They are silenced by bailiffs.)*

THADDEUS

Your chief priests said: “We have no king but Caesar.”

RABBI LOEW

Your merciful Church has said: “Death to the Jews.”

THE CHRISTIANS

Death to the Jews.

THADDEUS

You crucified the Son of God.

THE JEWS

O protect us Lord, protect us from the torments and sorrows and tears of this world.

RABBI LOEW

If your Jesus is God, how could we kill him?

THADDEUS

Your Rabbi, Simon Ben Yochai says: “The best among the gentiles deserves to be slain.”

RABBI LOEW

There is a difference between the law and the legends.  
(*There is a round of applause for Thaddeus.*)

THADDEUS

You have no sacraments. You require Christian blood for your Passover. You desecrate the Host.  
You poison our wells. You sacrifice Christian children.

THE CHRISTIANS

Blessed Simon of Trent, sweet child, pray for us.

THE JEWS

Yo vo adir veyigolenu.

THE CHRISTIANS

Blessed William of Norwich, pray for us.

THE JEWS

Yo vo adr veyigolenu

THE CHRISTIANS

Blessed Hugh of Lincoln, pray for us.

THE JEWS

Un vos vet ermevaser sein? Kiyovo mosciach tzi Keinu.

RABBI LOEW

Our commandments forbid us to kill. You bring these ancient libels to inflame hatred against us.

THE JEWS

Gvald, gvald ven veter Kumen. Sha! Mt Shrie er vetshon Kumen Ven zsche, vet dos sein, bim he roh vo yo menu. Ah!

THADDEUS

Our Mother our Church is ever merciful. I call you to her mercy before she brings her earthly power to cleanse you.

CARDINAL SILVESTER

The Jews are declared defeated in this disputation. Their books are in error, and shall be burned.  
(*The Jews wail and gather round the Rabbi, who weeps. The Golem comforts him.*)

THE CHRISTIANS

Hail, Holy Queen, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,  
our life, our sweetness, our hope, all hail.  
(*During the singing of the Latin hymns, the choruses gradually file out.*)

THE GOLEM

Rabbi, Master, why do you weep?  
The word of God is not consumed by fire.  
Look at me, whom you raised from the elements.  
By the word alone I have become a man.  
Language cradled me, language has formed me,  
through language I know pain and love,  
I have learned to cry to God with my voice.  
The divine word is the soul of the world,  
no fire can burn it or bring it to silence.  
If all that is written were utterly destroyed,  
the great and Holy Name would shine on our lips.  
If we ourselves are cast into the fire  
and keep that name on our tongue in our last ordeal,  
we will not feel the burning flames.  
Rabbi, master, let the books burn. When the last ash has blown away,  
the word will sound in elemental brightness.

Scene 2 – The Rabbi's study

RABBI LOEW

2 Our holy books are destroyed, gone like ashes in the black wind.

MORDECAI MEISEL

I have taken gifts to the King, in the name of the Jews of Prague, in thanksgiving that we have been spared from vengeance. Rejoice they that burned only books, not men. I have bought more books for the House of Study. The King is deeply in debt to me. All that we lost will be restored.

RABBI LOEW

The King will never repay you what he owes.

MORDECAI MEISEL

True. That is the privilege of kings. He has given me power to dispose of my own estate: houses, land, gold and silver. I am old, my time draws to an end.

RABBI LOEW

If we had sons, they would take up our burdens.

MORDECAI MEISEL

Our children would not spare us death. That arrow is already in flight. Help me to prepare my will.  
*(The Rabbi lights a candle. Meisel writes on a parchment.)*

THE GOLEM *(from along way away, crying out in falsetto)*

Ah! Ah!

*(The Rabbi and Meisel stop writing. They listen intently.)*

RABBI LOEW

Did you hear nothing?

MORDECAI MEISEL

I heard nothing. *(Spoken)* To my two nephews I leave ...

THE GOLEM

Ah! Ah!

*(The light goes out amid scuffles and noises. The scuffling in the dark becomes louder and louder, gradually overwhelming the music. There is heard the sound of scuffling and rattling chains until the next scene.)*

### Scene 3 – A lonely place

*(The bound Golem is mocked by henchmen. Florea is with them.)*

FIRST HENCHMAN

Is this the strong man of Israel?

SECOND HENCHMAN

Look how still he is sitting.

THIRD HENCHMAN

This is the one who broke Christian bones.

FLOREA

Let us shave off his locks of hair. He is like Samson among the Philistines. Shall we put out his eyes?  
*(The Golem roars with rage and pain.)*

FIRST HENCHMAN

So did our Christian friends cry out when he broke their bones.

SECOND HENCHMAN

The Rabbi's servant is not about his business.

THIRD HENCHMAN

A lazy servant. We must beat him again.

FLOREA

That wine you drank in the tavern, did it make you sleepy, Jew?

FIRST HENCHMAN

You will say your Christian prayers. Hail Mary, full of grace ...

THE GOLEM

O hear, Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one.

SECOND HENCHMAN

When he walked in the streets, who dared to fight him?

THIRD HENCHMAN

Look at him now, he could not fight a child.

THE GOLEM

O Lord God remember me only this once, O God, so that I may avenge myself. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth. Remember me, give me my strength.

*(The men start choking the Golem. As the Golem is choking, Jacob, Isaac, the Rabbi and some armed Jews appear and release him. They drive off the henchmen.)*

FLOREA

Rabbi, they say you are a sorcerer. I say your servant Yosele is a sorcerer. He has bewitched your virgin daughter.

### THE GOLEM

Harlot! Whore!

*(The Golem threatens Florea, who runs off mockingly.)*

### RABBI LOEW

Once again we stand together at night, as we did when by the power of the most Holy One we lifted you up from the clay.

Light of inexhaustible light,

*(Jacob, Isaac and the Golem kneel down)*

shine into all the elements, preserve us in the darkness to come.

*(The Rabbi alone is in the light.)*

Lord God, what have I made? Was it magic, or miracle?

Is it my own ghost who walks there?

Is it my unredeemed self who strikes the enemy down?

Is it my own violence that rages there, my double,

my phantom who does what I dare not do?

Divine Unity, redeem the worlds of separation,

lead us out of exile of the flesh.

### ISAAC AND JACOB

Boruch Ato Adonai

Eloheinu velohe Avoseinu

Elohe Avrohom.

Elohe Velohe Yaalov

Melech ozer U Moshia

Umogen

Boruch Ato Adonai

Mogen Avrohom

Boruch Ato Adonai

### RABBI LOEW

It is said that no magician may enter Heaven.

Lord, who put Adam down as a Golem and cast a soul into him,

Teach me what I have made.

What have I made?

### HOKHMAH: WISDOM

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE

[4] Gnosis ... Olam ha Aziluth ... Icao Ao Y' Yah leao O ...

#### Scene 4 – A street by the Ghetto gate

*(The Christians are approaching in an Easter procession, led by Thaddeus. Jacob and the Golem are talking.)*

#### JACOB

[5] Mordecai Meisel is dead. The King has robbed him of his fortune.

#### THE GOLEM

He was a good man.

#### JACOB

What did that avail him? His nephews were tortured.

#### THE CHRISTIANS

Christians to the Paschal Victim

Offer your praises.

A lamb the sheep redeemeth,

Christ, who is sinless.

*(Jacob and the Golem sing as through clenched teeth, with a suppressed fury; at the same time only partly aware of each other, listening to the approaching procession in the background.)*

#### JACOB

The torturer leads his flock. He watched while his Christian dogs broke the bones of Meisel's nephews one by one.

#### THE CHRISTIANS

The prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.

Hodie Christus natus ex Maria Virgine.

#### THE GOLEM

Evil is the bitter side of mercy. Evil is the Justice of God. All will be broken down, all will end in the cesspool of the world, in the place furthest from God.

#### JACOB

The Christians are rejoicing because a Jew has been robbed on his deathbed. They are coming to murder us in their thousands.

THE CHRISTIANS

Gaudete. Gaudeamus et psalamus Itaque.

THE GOLEM

Evil began with creation. Evil is with us to the end of days.

JACOB

Their Jesus is risen, but the sun will rise on our spilt blood.

THE CHRISTIANS

Omnis mundus Jocundetur nato salvatore casta mater quem concepit.

THE GOLEM

Where is Isaac?

JACOB (*With scorn*)

He is praying.

THADDEUS (*Holding up a wafer stained with red*)

Christ's holy body is bleeding. The Jews have desecrated the Host!

THE CHRISTIANS

Kill the Jews!

Gabrielis nunciore. Sonoris. Vocibus sinceris candentibus.

JACOB

Let Israel gather to me, let our swords be fat with blood.

(*The Golem tries to hold the gates, but the Christians batter at them.*)

Scene 5 – The Rabbi's street

THADDEUS

[6] Kill, kill, until the last Jew is dead. Kill in the name of Christ. If you die you will surely be with Christ and all his saints in Paradise.

THE CHRISTIANS

Kill! Kill!

JACOB

And you will be with them.

(*Jacob and Thaddeus fight. Thaddeus is killed. Christians close in on Jacob, who fights for his life. The Golem is fighting his way to the Rabbi's door. Rachel calls from her window, an arm around her throat pulls her back.*)

RACHEL

Joseph, Joseph!

(*The Golem bursts into the Rabbi's house. Isaac appears at the door weeping. Soldiers march in to restore order. The Golem appears with Rachel's body. Jacob drives off the Christians. The Jews are centre stage, soldiers keeping Christians apart at the sides. The Rabbi, Perele and wounded Jews come out from the house. Perele sinks down. The Golem puts Rachel's body down beside her mother.*)

PERELE

Let the day perish wherein I was born.

Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it.

I will not be comforted.

My pain is perpetual, my wound incurable.

The sun has gone down while it is still day.

THE JEWS (*Sung*)

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood.

(*Recited*)

Let tears run down like a river day and night.

The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets.

THE GOLEM (*Picking up a sword*)

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood.

I am against you, violence is risen up.

I will slay old and young and little children.

You shall fall by the sword, I will judge you.

Weep for the living. All shall die, all.

My sword is sharpened for the slaughter.

Cry and howl. It is the day of my vengeance.

The stink will come up out of your carcasses,



the mountains will be melted with your blood.

*(The Golem goes crazy and kills Jews and Christians alike. The soldiers drive him back towards the Rabbi, who lifts his hands as the Golem raises his sword.)*

RABBI LOEW

Jahve, Zevaot, Elohim Zevaot, El Hai Shaddai, Adonai!

*(The Golem drops his sword and carries Rachel's body off.)*

#### Scene 6 – The Jewish Cemetery in Prague

*(The Golem sits on a grave with Rachel's body.)*

THE GOLEM

7

Now you are what I have always been.

You are death, silence, the solitude of earth.

You will not waken, you will not be raised from sleep.

Angels howl in the hollows between the stars,  
monsters weep in the ruined courtyards, among the stones of emptiness.

Flies grow fat with your blood, the worms rejoice.

Your mother's tears fall in the dust.

I will make an end of words, I will be the first-born of death.

You will rot away to what I have always been.

Earth, earth, earth, I will enter you forever and ever,

I will lie with you in the place of sapphires, in the seams of gold. In the  
nakedness of hell, in the tabernacle of death.

*(The Golem attempts to violate Rachel's body. The Rabbi, Isaac and Jacob appear.)*

THE GOLEM

Rabbi, master, magician, sorcerer, miracle-worker, you made me to be the saviour of Israel. I  
give you this graveyard, these broken tombstones, the body of your virgin daughter. I give you  
the smoke that shall not be quenched night or day, from generation to generation. I give you  
ashes, sorrow, death.

RABBI LOEW

All this I take. God's place is the world, but the world is not God's place. Here is my place, in  
the graveyard where the righteous sleep in peace. Joseph, my servant, tonight you are to sleep in  
the attic of the Synagogue.

THE CHORUS

O hear, Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is One.

KETHER ELYON: SUPREME CROWN

CHORAL INTERLUDE

8

Elieh, elhai ... Kether Elyon ... Ain soph Aur.

#### Scene 7 – The attic of the Old Synagogue in Prague

*(The Golem lies on a bench. The Rabbi, Isaac and Jacob stand at his head and gaze into his face.  
They circle round him left to right, seven times.)*

ISAAC AND JACOB

9

Olam ha Yezirah. Shaddai.

RABBI LOEW

Stone of gold from the bowels of earth, phoenix from the heart of fire, stream of water from the  
rock, whirlwind, you ardours and sanctities, authorities and regents, voices and acclamations.

RABBI LOEW

Adonai, Tetragrammaton, Zabaoth, Elohim, Ain Soph Aur. Return to earth. From your mouth I  
take the Name of God. I take the seal of the Most Holy One from your forehead.

*(The Golem dies, after convulsing. The Rabbi puts out the lights of the room. The watchman with his  
lantern makes the rounds of the Ghetto, and finally exits.)*

NIGHT WATCHMAN *(offstage)*

10

Adoshem. Molach Geus lo vesh his a sor. Af ti kon te vel Te vel Bal ti sot no chon. Kisacha me  
oz meo lom meolom meaulom oto nho ros adoshem Yi su nho ros Yi su nho ros nho ros Doch  
Yom. O hear, Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one.

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