

THE MACCABEE QUEEN

Written and directed by Lauri Donahue

April 20-21, 2011, Beit Avi Chai, Jerusalem, Israel

www.themaccabeequeen.com

Cast:

Chorus

JosephusNachman Rosenberg
Serakh bat AsherAndrea Katz

Hasmoneans

Johanán HyrcanusNachman Rosenberg
MariamneRuth Sager
AristobulusDavid Golinkin
Salome AlexandraDanit Stemmer
AntigonusAnn B Young
MattathiasMordy Hurwich-Kehat
Absalom.....Ezra Abbey
Alexander JannaiYedidya Fraiman

Others in Judea

EleazarNeil Kummer
SimeonBarry Leff
LutetiusNeil Turetsky
LaviniaKatherine Leff

Egyptians

Cleopatra IIIRuth Sager
Ananias.....Mordy Hurwich-Kehat
Second General.....Ann B Young

Staff/Crew

Writer, Director.....Lauri Donahue
Assistant Director.....Danit Stemmer
Stage Manager.....Leah Liora Cohen
Asst. Stage Manager.....Yisrael Edward Cohen
Makeup.....Ariella Lieba
Sound.....Michael Kleinman

Acknowledgements and special thanks:

Produced by arrangement with Baker's Plays; www.Bakersplays.com.
Special thanks to Mary Norris at the International Christian Embassy for costumes, Brian Negin for photos, the staff at Beit Avi Chai, and Rafi Poch.

ACT I (104 B.C.E.)

Prologue; Scene 1 The palace in Jerusalem. Johanan's bedchamber

Scene 2 Elsewhere in the palace

Scene 3 The throne room of the palace

Scene 4 Alexandra's chamber.

Scene 5 A cell in Baris Fortress

Scene 6 Aristobulus's bedchamber

Scene 7 Near the Great Temple

Scene 8 Aristobulus's bedchamber

ACT II

Scene 1 The family tomb of the Hasmoneans

Scene 2 The palace

Scene 3 The throne room

Scene 4 Alexandra's chamber

Scene 5 Outside Alexandra's chamber

Scene 6 The throne room

Scene 7 Elsewhere in the palace

Scene 8 A street in Jerusalem

Scene 9 The palace banquet hall

Intermission

ACT III

Prologue; Scene 1 Alexander's camp near the Jordan River

Scene 2 A cave, and Alexandra's chamber

Scene 3 Near Ptolemais

Scene 4 The city of Scythopolis

Scene 5 The Great Temple

Scene 6 Alexandra's chamber

Scene 7 Outside the walls of Jerusalem

Scene 8 A battlefield near Sichem

Scene 9 The palace. A large balcony overlooking a courtyard

Scene 10 The same balcony, hours later

Scene 11 Alexandra's chamber

Scene 12 Alexander's camp below the walls of Ragaba

Scene 13 The palace; Epilogue

Author's Note:

When the play opens in 104 B.C.E., Simon Maccabee's son Johanan Hyrcanus has been the "ethnarch" of Judea for over thirty years. Ethnarch means "head of the people"; he is not king, as this role was traditionally reserved for the royal house of David. He is also the high priest, although some say that he is not entitled to this position.¹

Two religious/political parties vie for influence. The Sadducees are aristocrats associated with the priesthood of the Great Temple at Jerusalem. They reject the notion of oral Torah (law) and do not believe in fate, angels, demons, or resurrection. The Pharisees believe in both the written and oral Torah and in divine reward and punishment, and are known to have a zeal for debate.

Cleopatra III in the play is the great-grandmother of the more famous Cleopatra VII. During her reign Jews make up about a third of the population of the Egyptian capital, Alexandria, and there is a large Jewish contingent in the Egyptian army, including General Ananias.

The chief source for the play, and one of its narrators, is the historian Flavius Josephus, a Judean general at the time of the revolt against Rome around 67 C.E. After he was captured, he went over to the Roman side, ingratiated himself with generals – and later emperors – Vespasian and Titus, was present at the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, and also wrote a vivid description of the fall of Masada.

The other narrator is Serakh bat Asher, listed in the Bible among those who went from Canaan into Egypt with the family of Jacob, and also among those who escaped from Egypt and returned to Canaan – *hundreds of years later*. According to midrash (legend), she was the one who told Moses where the bones of Joseph were buried, so that they could be bought back for re-burial in the Holy Land. Since there is no record of her death, she may be among us still....

For sources and additional information, see www.TheMaccabeeQueen.com

¹ The Maccabees were Kohanim – members of the priestly line of Aaron. But they were not descended from Zadok, who had been high priest in David's time and whose line had supplied all of the high priests down to the Hasmonean era. The word "Sadducee" derives from "Zadok."

Cast and Staff Bios

Lauri Donahue (author, director) studied theater and dramatic writing at Harvard, UCLA, the Vancouver Film School, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. “The Maccabee Queen” (originally entitled “Alexandra of Judea”) won the Dorothy Silver Competition for plays on Jewish themes and is published by Baker’s Plays. Her screenplays have won the More Magazine-Women in Film screenplay competition and the Silver Prize in the Page screenplay competition.

Ezra Abbey (Absalom, Boy) is 12 years old and a student at the Democratic School in Jerusalem. He previously performed in “Fiddler on the Roof” and “Oliver.” He wishes to thank his family for encouraging him to audition.

Leah Liora Cohen (Stage Manager) studied theatre and creative writing in university in Dallas, Texas before moving to Israel this August. “The Maccabee Queen” is her first foray into Israeli English Theatre and she is looking forward to working in many more productions in local theatre in the future.

Yisrael Edward Cohen (Asst. Stage Manager) is best known for roles in Jerusalem's musical theatre scene playing Joseph in “Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat,” and Danny in “Grease.” He appears in Encore Educational Theatre's upcoming musical “Carousel,” in June.

Yedidya Fraiman (Alexander), a high school teacher accustomed to hurled objects, was well-suited for this role - his stage debut. Besides teaching, he plays music with Kol Hakavod and guides for Koshertreks. He thanks his wife Susan for her good-humored support, and to her and their children says: “...bigger than the sky.”

Rabbi David Golinkin (Aristobulus) is President of the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem. In the 1970s, he had leading roles in “Fiddler on the Roof,” “The Pajama Game” and “Zoo Story.” More recently, he appeared as Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in “The Accomplices” and as Reb Saunders in “The Chosen.”

Mordy Hurwich-Kehat (Mattathias, Ananais) is an educator in Himmelfarb HS. His family made aliya from NYC in 1968. Moshe Shamir's novel about the era and characters of the play, *King of Flesh and Blood*, is one of Mordy's favorites. Mordy thanks Abby and Ronni, Benji, Avri and Shai for for giving him the time to rehearse and perform in “The Maccabee Queen.”

Andrea Katz (Serakh, Rachel) has been seen on Broadway, off-Broadway, London's West End, and the annual Canadian Shaw Festival...when she went to see plays at all those places. Her performing experience is limited to amateur theater during her high school years before making aliya in 1974. Andy is the translator/director of Kehillat Yedidya's "Parsha Players" troupe who present short humorous playlets on the weekly Torah portion; she takes great pride in being the butt of many jokes about her singing abilities as a "Purimshpieler" at Yedidya. Her husband and two daughters consider her a "drama queen."

Michael Kleinman (sound) was born in Augusta, Georgia, home of the Master's golf tournament. He found himself pursuing a degree in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, and it was there that he discovered a love and talent for electronic music composition. Michael is currently a year student at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. He is so impressed by this play and is happy to help enhance your sonic experience.

Neil Kummer (Eleazar) is happy to be in such good company. This is his first time in conventional theatre. He wonders if it will still be as much fun if he ever gets a chance to play someone who is not evil.

Rabbi Barry Leff (Simeon) runs the Israeli subsidiary of a US-based outsourcing company and serves as (volunteer) Chairman of Rabbis for Human Rights. He played Lutetius the first time "The Maccabee Queen" had a staged reading here in Jerusalem ten years ago. Prior to that he was last seen on stage in the mid-1980s, playing the sheriff in "The Best Little Whorehouse in Mensa" in a production for San Francisco Regional Mensa. He is delighted to be in this premier full production of "The Maccabee Queen," and hopes to return to the stage more often than once a decade.

Katherine Leff (Lavinia) is in 9th grade at Hartman Girls. Katherine made aliya in 2007 and has performed in seven different shows since then, most recently as Gladys in "The Skin of our Teeth." When she is not on stage she enjoys taekwondo, hanging out with friends, and reading books about physics. She is somewhat perplexed that her mother cast her as a courtesan.

Ariella Lieba (makeup) is from Colorado Springs, Colorado, and has a degree in cosmetology from the Paul Mitchell cosmetology school. She is delighted to be part of "The Maccabee Queen" team.

Nachman Rosenberg (Josephus and Johanan) made aliyah in 1977 and is now retired. He has five children and three grandchildren. He has never appeared in theater before and is pleased and proud to be a member of the cast.

Ruth Sager (Mariamne, Cleopatra) Ruth Sager was born as a refugee on a cattle train in Russia so she appreciates moving into regal clothing. In her youth in Australia, theatre was a passion. For four decades there was a break and her time was taken with marriage, children, career and travel. PLAYBACK THEATRE and some original scripts staged at the Mercaz gave a renewal. She thanks her family and Jerusalem.

Danit Stemmer (assistant director, Alexandra) is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where she studied drama. She has been in Israel since September, and could most recently be seen in Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth" (Sabina), as well as in her own performance piece, both at Merkaz Hamagshimim.

Neil Turetsky (Lutetius) began his acting career in Brooklyn fifth grade class playing Benjamin Franklin, only to resume 50 years later. During the last four years, he has appeared in "The Action Against Sol Schuman," "Prairie Lights," "Korczak's Children," and "The Matchmaker" with JEST, in "The Accomplices" and "The Chosen" with Merkaz Ha Magshimim, and in "1776" and "Kismet" with Israel Musicals. He is delighted to have this unique opportunity to be a sword wielding Gaul mercenary guard/soldier. Neil occasionally finds time to be a psychologist and English teacher. Special thanks to his line coach and beautiful daughter Shira.

Ann B. Young (Antigonus, Second General) is happy to be part of "The Maccabee Queen." This past fall she performed in JEST's play "Passengers." Ann is grateful to her parents for introducing her to the world of theatre at a young age and to her chatan Hanoach for his support of her theatrical endeavors.