

Psalmba

A Musical Story of David

Book, Music and Lyrics by
Jeff Combe

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Dedication

*To my father, who read to me when I was young; and to my
wife, who listens to me now that I'm old.*

Cast of Characters

*Approx. 7 male, 2 female, 11 flexible, and ensemble.
Much doubling possible.*

SAMUEL: Serves as a narrator.
DAVID: His story, from a boy to a king.
SAUL: The king, a tough, craggy old soldier.
1ST CRONEY: *(M or F)* Saul's henchman.
2ND CRONEY: *(M or F)* Another.
LACKEY: *(M or F)* Delivers bad news to Saul.
JESSE'S NEIGHBOR: *(M or F)* Announces invasion.
JESSE: A sheep rancher, David's father.
JESSE'S SONS: *(2-7, M and/or F)* David's brothers.
GOLIATH: Slain by David with a rock.
JONATHON: Saul's son, the crown prince.
MICHAL: Saul's daughter.
1ST HIT MAN: *(M or F)* A murderer.
2ND HIT MAN: *(M or F)* A murderer.
WITCH OF ENDOR: *(F)* Big, mean and ugly.
GHOST OF SAMUEL: *(M or F)*
JOAB: Captain of David's guard.
SERVANT: *(M or F)* A courtier.

Other roles:

Sheep

Lion

Bear

Philistine soldiers

Israelite soldiers

Israelites

Members of Royal Court

SETTING

This play is meant to be more or less in the spirit of the old English mystery and morality plays. Its set, therefore, is not realistic, but may be a wagon or simply a series of platforms that may become any location suggested by the libretto. There is a large rack of eclectic, often anachronistic, costumes in plain view of the audience.

MUSIC

1. Overture
2. "Ballad of the Little Shepherd"
- 2a. "All Day Long"
3. David's Anointing
- 4a. Entrance of the Philistines
- 4b. Entrance of the Israelites
5. Scene One Finaletto: "David and Goliath"
- 5a. Scene change/underscoring (Opening, Scene 2)
- 5b. Jonathon's entrance /Israelite exit
- 5c. Introduction to Michal
6. "Heaven"
7. "Pagan Kings Get All o' the Fun"
8. "David's Hymn"
- 8a. Scene change/underscoring (Opening, Scene 4)
9. "Can This Be Love?"
- 9a. Scene Change (End of Scene 4)
10. "Samuel's Death"
- 10a. Scene change (Opening of Scene 6)
11. "The Witch of Endor"
- 11a. Scene Change/underscoring (Opening, Scene 7)
12. The Fight underscoring
13. "Psalmba"
14. Bows
15. Exit Music

MUSIC - Overture

SCENE 1 -- A FIELD NEAR BETHLEHEM

(AT RISE: SAMUEL, who may be dressed in any modern representation of religious authority, watches the audience as they enter. He quietly approaches various members of the "audience" and invites them to join in the play. These, of course, are the cast members. EACH CAST MEMBER, after being chosen by Samuel, goes to the costume rack—with more or less alacrity and much ad libbing—and chooses costume pieces that may appropriately suggest the character each one has been asked to "play." The CRONIES, for instance, may wear Napoleon hats and costume jewelry. SAUL may be dressed in military fatigues. JESSE may look like an old Idaho rancher. Discretion is left to the director and the costumer. After the performers are ready, SAMUEL begins.)

SAMUEL: *(Addressing audience.)* In this play, I represent many things. For now, let's pretend that my name is Samuel, and that I wrote a book called "The Book of Samuel." It was a book about a king who became the father of many kings, and a shepherd who was the son of a shepherd. *(As HE sings, DANCERS, who are dressed as SHEEP, and DAVID enter and act out the song.)*

#2 - "Ballad of the Little Shepherd"/ #2a - "All Day Long"

SAMUEL:

A LITTLE SHEPHERD SAT ALONE ON A HILL,
IN ONE HAND A HARP, IN THE OTHER A QUILL.
WHILE HIS SHEEP SAFELY GRAZED,
THE CLOUDS SLOWLY RAISED,
AND HE STARED AT THE SKY UNTIL
HE SANG ...

DAVID:

GOD IS MY SHEPHERD, GOD IS MY LIGHT,
WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE, GOD FIGHTS MY FIGHT.

SAMUEL:

A LITTLE SHEPHERD SAT ALONE IN THE NIGHT,
IN ONE HAND A LUTE, IN THE OTHER A LIGHT.
AS THE SHEEP SAFELY SLEPT,
THE NIGHT BREEZES SWEEP
THE CLOUDS FROM THE HILLS; AND THEIR FLIGHT
MADE HIM SING ...

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DAVID:

GOD GRANTS ME PASTURE, GOD GIVES ME FEED.
WHEN I PLANT MY VINEYARD, GOD GIVES ME SEED.

(TWO DANCERS dressed as a LION AND A BEAR come on and threaten the SHEEP.)

SAMUEL:

A LITTLE SHEPHERD HAD TO FIGHT FOR HIS LAMBS.
HE HAD NO WEAPON BUT HIS HARD SHEPHERD'S HANDS.
AND WHEN THE BEAR CAME, WHEN THE LION CAME,
HE FOUGHT THEM BOTH ALONE.

(In a dance/pantomime, DAVID fights with and kills the LION and the BEAR. The SHEEP celebrate.)

DAVID:

YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY
OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH,
I WILL NOT FEAR A THING, FOR THE LORD
GIVES ME BREATH.

SAMUEL:

A LITTLE SHEPHERD SAT ALONE ALL NIGHT LONG,
IN ONE HAND A FLUTE, IN THE OTHER A GONG.
AS THE LAMBS SAFELY LAY,
THE SEA BREEZES PLAYED
THE HARMONY OF HIS SONG.

SAMUEL: *(Spoken.)* The shepherd's name was David. He was the youngest of eight sons of a shepherd named Jesse. David wrote songs, psalms, poems, and music.

DAVID: *(Sings.)*

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO WRITE A HAPPY SONG,
A SONG THAT FLOATS ON A SUMMER BREEZE,
LIKE A THOUSAND BIRDS
FELT SO GOOD THEY COULDN'T SAY IT IN WORDS,
JUST WHISTLE AND "LA-DE-DAH'ED,"
WHISTLE AND "LA-DE-DAH'ED" ALL DAY LONG.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SING A HAPPY SONG.
A SONG THAT MAKES YOU TINGLE INSIDE
LIKE YOU'RE EIGHTY FEET TALL,
AND, LOOKING DOWN TO THE WORLD,
YOU WHISTLE AND LIFT IT UP.
WHISTLE AND LIFT IT UP ALL DAY LONG

(As the song ends, SAUL comes storming out, followed by his two CRONIES. SAUL, the king, is a craggy old soldier, tough and vulgar. The CRONIES are the sort of people that give diplomacy a bad name.)

SAUL: (*Angry.*) Don't tell me what Samuel says! I don't care what Samuel says! *I'm* the king—I'll do what I want. Samuel can just go --

(*A LACKEY runs on and grovels his way to SAUL'S heels.*)

LACKEY: (*Obviously frightened.*) Your Majesty. (*SAUL ignores him.*) Your greatness. Deem to look on this dog, your servant. (*SAUL continues ignoring him.*) Your Holiness ... (*SAUL smiles broadly on the LACKEY.*)

SAUL: Speak, worm.

SAMUEL: (*To the ACTORS.*) Wait a moment, please. (*EVERYONE but SAUL relaxes. SAUL is not pleased with the interruption. To the audience, indicating Saul.*) This man is Saul, the present king of Israel. You'll hear more about him later. But first I want to tell you what I told Israel about having a king. I said this: (*HE assumes a public speaking pose.*) "Mark what I say, Israel. The last time you had a king, you were in Egypt, and you know how *that* worked out. (*HE raises his hands as though to quiet objections.*) Now, look. I know the Philistines and the Ammonites and all those others all have kings. And I know that they mock you because you *don't* have a king. If you really want a king, the Lord will let you have one. But let me warn you: too much power can do awful things to a human being. If you have a king, you will regret it." (*Normal voice.*) But they wanted a king, so I went and found the best man in the country. (*Indicating SAUL.*) And *this* is what he turned into.

SAUL: (*Sarcastically.*) Are you finished?

SAMUEL: Yes. Go ahead with what you were doing.

SAUL: (*To LACKEY, in former tone.*) What is it, worm? Speak!

SAMUEL: (*To audience.*) You get the idea.

LACKEY: Your Majes ... er, Holiness... a message from Samuel the Prophet. (*Pause. The CRONIES look worried.*)

SAUL: (*To CRONIES.*) Relax. What difference does a message from that two-bit fortuneteller mean to me? (*SAMUEL rolls his eyes.*) (*To LACKEY.*) Give me your message, worm. (*The LACKEY is too scared to speak.*) Talk!

LACKEY: (*Scared beyond reason.*) This is the message: "God has rejected Saul because of his repeated disobedience."

(*CRONIES gasp. LACKEY grins sheepishly and begins to crawl away, backwards.*)

End of Freeview

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