

PSALM-DRAMA:
a one-act drama of the Voices of the Psalms
by
Carole Fontaine

THE PLAYERS

Book: all voices
Hymns: at least four voices
Laments: at least four voices
Leader: may be one of the above
Women's Voices: drawn from the company of Hymns and Laments

The Voices enter, and stand in a semi-circle, allowing individuals to step forward into groups or center as they speak, and back again. As they come in, they play cymbals, timbrels, pipes and harps (dulcimer or autoharps), and other appropriate instruments.

A Leader thumps the ground smartly three times with a staff.

Book: We are the Psalms.
We are the voices of Israel's Joy,
Home of Yahweh, who dwells in our praises,
Haven of humankind, who weeps our complaints.

Hymns: We are the songs of Israel's Praise:
We are the hymns. Of history, creation
we sing what we know:
Yahweh has made us. Yahweh has saved us.
Yahweh is coming. Yahweh will act.

Hymn Voice 1: We are Songs of Zion,
mountain and king!

Hymn Voice 2: We are Meditations
of Torah and Wisdom!

Hymn Voice 3: We are Enthronement!
we are Thanksgiving!

Hymn Voice 1: We say,
I will lift up mine eyes
unto the hills,
from whence cometh my strength!

Hymn Voice 2: We say,
Happy are those who walk in my Way!
Happy are those who sing my praise,
Praise of the Torah, Way of the Most High!

Hymn Voice 3: We say,

YHWH yimlok! The Lord ever reigns!
Let oppressors beware!
Let nature tremble!

Hymns:

We are the voices of harp and timbrel,
sacrifice of sweet smells, grain,
first fruits, and oil,
blood of the innocents spilled on the ground.
We are the songs of Israel's Praise:
We are the hymns. Of history, creation
we sing what we know:
Yahweh has made us. Yahweh has saved us.
Yahweh is coming. Yahweh will act.

Hymn voice 1 & 4: We sing of creation; we sing every day.
We tell of God's essence, God's everyday acts.
We say,

God made the earth, and the fullness thereof!
Springs gush forth, and all life is watered.
How great are Thy works, O Maker of Life!

Hymn voice 2 & 3: We sing for the gathered!

We praise special days
in Salvation's history:
the times of the covenant,
the community's life, the glory of kings--
we tell how God made them!
let God ever reign!

Laments: We are laments, the soul's lamentations.
We are the ones who look on the Pit,
and come forth rejoicing.

Lament Voice 1: The cries of the lone one,

Laments: The calls of the gathered,
speak in our outcry: Let Yahweh act!
Invoking Redeemer, describing our plight,
we petition the Holy,
by piteous outcry.
We say,

Lament #1: The waters surround me,
they cover my neck!
In death no one praises--
Let Yahweh act!

Lament #2: We say,
life is too brief
to languish this way,
weeping by night,
gasping by day.
Let Yahweh act!

Lament #3: We say,
 This is none of my doing,
 but cruel enemy!
 Let all evil loosened
 be lifted from me,
 turned back to the sorcerer!
 God, deliver me!

Laments: We cry for the gathered,
 the communal complaint,
 to soothe Yahweh's faces,...

Leader (an aside to the audience):
 (Yahweh has many faces!)

Laments (continuing):
 to soothe, motivate,
 we say,

Laments #3 & 4: We are your people!
 This is your king!
 Did you not swear to David
 by covenant of old?
 Why don't you support us?
 Evildoers be cursed!
 Have we forgotten? Have we betrayed?
 If we sinned, forgive us!
 What else can we say?
 What You did for our forebears
 Do once more today!

Hymns (to the Laments):
 You are nothing without us!
 We soothe your cries,
 encircling with praise.
 From us you come, returning again
 an endless spiral,
 singing of change.

Laments (to the Hymns):
 We are the greater. We do not deny
 that praise shapes the outcry,
 but we see the farther into the dark.
 You play the poet; we wield the knife
 as soul's physician. We speak of all life,
 and not just the bright.
 We know reversal from grieving to joy;
 We end by thanksgiving: our God is so great!

Lament #1: I don't. I'm Psalm 88.

Laments (to Lament #1):

You are the exception
that tests the great rule
of God's people suffering:
Both ways are true.

Book: We are the Psalms.

We are the voices of Israel's Joy,
Home of Yahweh, who dwells in our praises,
Haven of humankind, who weeps ...

Women's Voices (breaking in and interrupting the Book chorus):

No, wait--there's more:
Not everyone speaks!
We are the Psalter that isn't there:
Praise of the God/dess
whose Body is Earth,
grief for the stillborn,
joy for the live birth,
curse for the rapist,
cure for the abused.
We are the Psalms that men never used,
our community silenced,
our singers made mute.
Until we have voices,
Psalms are not complete.
The unheard lament,
the unformed praise--
the Psalter must bear this all of its days.

Laments (to the Women):

Our Saving Reversal says,
"Sing a new song!"
What men said God accepted
cannot linger long,
if singers repent
and sound a full Psalter,
found, formed, filled and strong!

Book:

Hallelu-Yah! Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise her in her mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise her according to her exceeding greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise her with lute and harp!
Praise him with timbrel and dance;
praise her with strings and pipe!
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise her with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord! Hallelu-Yah!

This work is lovingly dedicated to Claus Westermann.