

J O S E F T A L : "B'khol nafshekha" - Hanukkah cantata (1978)

This cantata draws its inspiration from the story of the "Mother of the Sons" as it is told in the Book of Maccabees and in the Aggadah, and extracts from this cruel story three elements which are as actual today as they were in those days: the unfettered power concentrated in the hands of the few, the faith and innocence which the tyrant can cut down but never defeat, and the ultimate sacrifice which is that of the bereaved mother, today as it was then. The element of arbitrary, unrestrained power is represented by the King (baritone solo); the element of faith - by the Sons (boys' choir), and the element of sacrifice - by the Mother who, being personified by three soprano voices, is thereby transformed from a private individual into a symbol of universal significance. The "Halleluja" and the end of the cantata is not a hymn of triumph, but rather an expression of lament overcome in recognition of the fact that this people will live only if, at the deepest levels of its consciousness, it acknowledges the necessity of the sacrifice.

The cantata is written for four soloists, mixed choir, boys' choir and an orchestra comprising 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 8 celli and 4 double basses.