

# **SAMSON An opera by Voltaire**

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2002



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Etext by Dagny

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**CHARACTERS IN THE PROLOGUE**  
**THE SENSUALIST**  
**LOVES\* AND PLEASURES**  
**BACCHUS**  
**HERCULES**  
**VIRTUE**  
**FOLLOWERS OF VIRTUE**

\* The French think of Amours or Loves as the pudgy little winged cupids seen in Baroque Pictures. There being no exact English equivalent, I've chosen to leave them as Amours, which sounds a little odd but still beautiful. FJM

## PROLOGUE

The stage represents the room of the opera.

THE SENSUALIST is seated on his throne surrounded by PLEASURES and LOVES.

**SENSUALIST:** On the fortunate shores embellished by the Seine

I've reigned long since.

I preside over charming concerts  
that the Muse Melpomene gives.

Let leisure be born from the breast of indolence,

Spread your sweet errors

Pour into all our hearts

Your charming intoxication

Reign, spread my favors.

**CHORUS:** (mimicking) Let's spread, etc.—

**SENSUALIST:** Come, mortals, run before my eyes.

See, imitate the children of glory.

They've ceded to me Victory

Mars makes them cruel, and I make them happy

(Enter heroes armed and holding garlands of flowers in their hands.)

**BACCHUS:** (to Hercules) We are children of the Master of Thunder,

Our name already renowned

Will never perish from the earth:

But let's speak freely.

Among so many laurels which gird your head,

Tell me that the conquest

Of Alcidas' great heart was the most flattering.

**HERCULES:** Ah, don't speak to me further of my troublesome labors,

Nor of the heavens I supported.

In those parts I didn't know any except

Charming Iole and peaceable Pleasures.

But you, Bacchus, whose valor

Makes human blood redden the earth and the seas,

What pleasure, what barbarous honor

Do you find in troubling the world?

**BACCHUS:** Ariane was never able to take from me

The memory of my brilliant crimes,

And with my helpful gifts

I ravish reason from wretched mortals

To make them forget all the evils I've committed.

(TOGETHER)

Sensualist, receive our homage,

Enchant in these parts

Heroes, gods and sages.

Without your pleasures, without your sweet advantages

Would they be sages and gods?

**A LOVE (CHILD CUPID):** Jupiter isn't happy

From the crash of his thunder:

To your flames, Love,

He owes those precious moments

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That make him so relish the earth.

The god who presides over the dawn  
And who revives the world,  
Would he make his vast tour  
If he weren't going to find Love  
Awaiting him on the crest of the waves?  
Here all the conquerors restrict their grandeur to please;  
Sages are lovers;  
They hide their grey hair  
Under the myrtles of Cythera.

Mortals follow the little Cupids  
All wisdom is folly  
Profit from your good days  
The gods will always be loving.  
Be gods in your own lives.

**SENSUALIST:** Ah, what dazzling light that pales the  
Brilliance of the fine day that shines on us?  
Who is this strict nymph that wisdom escorts?

**CHORUS:** Let's flee cruel Virtue,  
She banishes the Pleasures.

**VIRTUE:** Mother of pleasures and of games  
Necessary and often too fatal to mortals,  
No, I am not your rival;  
I come to join myself to you to better reign over them.  
Without me, from your pleasures error is short lived.  
Without you, nobody listens to me.  
My torch must light you  
But I need your allure.  
I intend to instruct and I must please.  
Come, with your charming hand adorn Truth  
Vanish, warriors consecrated by fables.  
A true Alcidas  
Shall appear in this place, enchanted like you.  
Sing her glory and her weakness,  
And let's see this hero vanquished by love  
Once more adore Virtue  
In the arms of tenderness.

**CHORUS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF VIRTUE:** Let's sing,  
Let's celebrate this day  
The cruel dangers of love.

END OF PROLOGUE

CURTAIN

+++++ CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

SAMSON  
DALILA  
THE KING OF THE PHILISTINES  
THE HIGH PRIEST  
CHORUS

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**ACT I.**

The stage represents a countryside. The Israelites are sleeping by the Banks of the river Adonis deploring their captivity.

**TWO CORYPHANTS:** Captive tribes

Who by these banks  
Drag your chains;  
Captive tribes  
Whose plaintive voices  
Reverberate in the air,  
Adore in your sins the God of the Universe.

**CHORUS:** Let us adore in our sins the God of the Universe.

**A CORYPHANT:** Thus for the last forty winters

The indomitable power of the Philistines  
Overwhelms us.  
Their furor is implacable,  
It insults the tortures we have endured.

**CHORUS:** Let's adore in our sins the God of the Universe.

**A CORYPHANT:** Unhappy and divine race,

Sorrowing Hebrews, shiver all of you.  
Behold the frightful day that a mighty king destines  
To place his gods amongst us.  
Lying priests full of zeal and rage  
Are going to force us to bend our knees  
Before the gods of this savage region?  
Children of heaven, what will you do?

**CHORUS:** We will brave their wrath.

The Lord alone has our homage.

**CORYPHANT:** So much fidelity will be dear to his eyes.

Sweet hope,  
Daughter of Clemency  
Descend from the throne of Heaven,  
Treasure of the wretched;  
Come beguile our troubles, come fulfill our wishes.  
Descend, sweet Hope.

**SECOND CORYPHANT:** (entering) Ah, already I see these cruel pontiffs

Who surround the altars of a horrible idol.

(The idol's priests in the cavity around an altar are revealed concealed by their gods.)

**SECOND CORYPHANT:** Don't soil our eyes with these vain sacrifices

Let's flee these worshipped monsters.  
We won't be accomplices of their bloody priests.

**CHORUS:** Let's flee, let's stand aloof.

**THE HIGH PRIEST OF THE IDOLS:** Remain, slaves,

Remain: your king in my voice orders you to.  
Cowardly worshippers of a strange power,  
Forget him forever, since he abandons you.  
Adore the gods of his conquerors.  
You will cringe in our chains, as your ancestors did,  
Mutinous though conquered and always insolent:

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Obey while there is time,  
Learn the gods of your masters.

**CHORUS:** Rather let the vengeance of heaven fall on us  
Rather Hell engulf us!  
Perish, perish  
This temple and this altar!

**THE HIGH PRIEST:** Refuse of nations, are you declaring war  
On gods, pontiffs and kings?

**CHORUS:** We scorn your gods and fear the laws  
Of earth's master.

(SAMSON enters covered in a lion's skin.)

**SAMSON:** What a sight of horror!  
What, these proud children of error  
Have brought these monsters they adore amongst you?  
God of battles, look in your furor,  
The unworthy rivals that our tyrants implore.  
Support my zeal, inspire me  
Avenge your cause, avenge yourself.

**HIGH PRIEST:** Profane, impious one, halt!

**SAMSON:** Cowards! Conceal your head  
From my just wrath:  
Weep for your gods; fear for yourselves.  
Fall, enemy gods! Be reduced to ashes.  
You don't deserve for the god of battles  
To arm the heavenly avenger, and thrust his lightning here.  
My arm will suffice,  
Fall, enemy gods! Be reduced to ashes. (he overturns the altars)

**HIGH PRIEST:** Won't heaven punish this sacrilegious action?  
Heaven is silent, let's avenge her quarrel,  
Let's serve heaven by giving death  
To this rebellious people.

**CHORUS OF PRIESTS:** Let's serve heaven by giving death  
To this rebellious people.

**SAMSON:** Your astonished wits are still uncertain?  
Do you still fear these gods overthrown by my hands?

**CHORUS OF ISRAELITE WOMEN:** But who will defend us  
Against the horrifying wrath  
Of a king, the tyrant of the Hebrews?

**SAMSON:** The God whose favorable hand  
Has led this warlike arm  
Has no fear of these kings of perishable grandeur.  
Weak tribes, request his support  
He will arm you with thunder:  
You will be feared by the rest of the earth  
If you only fear him.

**CHORUS:** But alas, we are without arms, without defense.

**SAMSON:** You've got me, that's enough; your misfortunes are over.  
God has loaned me his strength, his power:  
Steel is useless against the arm he intends to choose;  
By taming lions I learned to serve you.  
Their bloody hide is the noble forerunner

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Of blows by which I will cause to perish  
Tyrants whose image they are.

(air)

People, wake up, break your chains

Return to your first grandeur

As one day God on high

Will recall the dead to light

From the breast of ashes

And revive the universe,

People break your chains.

Liberty is calling you,

You were born for it.

Resume your allegiance

People, wake up, break your chains.

(another air)

Winter destroys flowers and greenery

But the torch of fecund days enlightens,

Revives nature

And renders it its beauty:

Terrible slavery withers courage

But liberty exalts its courage and nourishes its pride.

Liberty! Liberty!

CURTAIN

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**ACT II.**

The stage represents the peristyle of the King's palace; forests and hills can be seen through the columns in the back. The King is seen on his throne, surrounded by his court, dressed in the oriental manner.

**KING:** So, this slavish people, forgetting its duty  
Raises its unruly face against its king.  
From the breast of ashes it braves my power.  
On what fragile reed  
Has it placed its hope?

**A PHILISTINE:** An impostor, a vile slave,  
Samson, has seduced them and braves you:  
No question he is armed with the aid of hell.

**KING:** The insolent one is still alive? Go, let him be seized:  
Prepare everything for his execution:  
Run, soldiers, load chains  
On guilty Hebrews' vagabond troupe.  
They are the enemy and the scum of the world  
And detested everywhere, detest the universe.

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** (at the back of the stage)  
Flee death, escape carnage,  
Hell seconds his rage.

**KING:** Again, I hear the screams of this mutinous people.  
Are you going to punish the audacity of their odious leader?

**A PHILISTINE:** (entering from the side) He is the conqueror,  
He threatens us;  
He commands destiny.  
He resembles the god of war  
Death is in his hands  
Your overthrown soldiers embloody the earth  
The people flee at his approach.

**KING:** What are you saying? A single man, a barbarian  
Makes my unworthy soldiers flee?  
What demon declares himself for him?

(SAMSON, followed by Hebrews, brings in one hand a club, in the other an olive branch.)

**SAMSON:** King, enemy priests, that my God makes tremble,  
See this happy sign of charitable peace,  
In this bloodstained hand  
Which can immolate you.

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** What proud mortal can maintain this language?  
Against a king so powerful, what arm can raise itself?

**KING:** If you are a god I owe you homage,  
If you are a man dare you brave me?

**SAMSON:** I am only a mortal, but the God of the earth,  
Who commands kings,  
Who huffs at will  
Either death or war,  
Who holds you under his laws,  
Who hurls the thunder,  
Speaks to you through my voice.

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**KING:** Well! Who is this god? What is the testimony that  
That he deigns to announce to me through you?

**SAMSON:** Your soldiers are dying under my blows  
The fear in which I see you, my exploits, my courage.  
In the name of my country, in the name of the Eternal.  
Respect, henceforth, the children of Israel  
And end their slavery.

**KING:** I, I should do such an outrage to the blood of the Philistines  
I, set free these odious people!

Your god must be more powerful than my gods?

**SAMSON:** You are going to experience it: see if nature  
Recognizes his commands.

Stones obey: let the purest waves

Pass through these rocks and fall back in torrents.

(Fountains can be seen pushing up.)

**CHORUS:** Heavens! O heavens! at his voice, see spring up this ocean  
Through softened stones!

The elements submit to him.

Is he the sovereign of the world?

**KING:** Never mind what he may be; I cannot degrade myself  
To receive laws from those who must serve me.

**SAMSON:** Well, you've seen what his power is.

Learn what his vengeance is.

Fall, fire from heaven, ravage these regions,

Let thunder fall in bursts

On these fertile fields: destroy expectations.

(the whole stage seems to be inflamed)

Burn, harvests, dry out, fields,

Blaze up, vast forests.

(to the King) Know what his vengeance is.

**CHORUS:** All is ablaze, all is destroyed,

A terrible god pursues us.

Burning flame, horrifying thunder,

Terrible blows,

Heavens, O heavens! are we

At the day the earth must perish?

**KING:** Suspend, suspend this harshness

Imperious minister of a god full of fury!

I begin to recognize

The dangerous power of your proud master;

My gods, long-time conquerors begin to give in,

It's their voices that decide me.

**SAMSON:** It's his to command.

He had punished us, he is arming me with his lightning

To your infernal gods go bring your terror,

For the last time, perhaps, you are contemplating

Your throne and their temples.

Tremble for them and for yourself!

(Exit King and Philistines.)

**SAMSON:** You, that heaven consoles after such great wrongs,  
People, dare appear in the palace of tyrants.

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Let the trumpet sound, organ of glory:

Blow, announce my victory.

**THE HEBREWS:** Let's sing all about this hero, the judge of battles:

He is the only one whose courage

Never shares his victory with soldiers.

He's going to end our slavery.

Advantage is ours,

Glory's in his arm;

He makes tremble on their thrones,

The kings, masters of the universe,

Warriors on the field of Bellona

The false gods in the depths of hell.

**CHORUS:** Blow trumpet, organ of his glory,

Blow, announce his victory.

**THE HEBREWS:** The intrepid defender

Of a weak and timid troupe,

Guard their peaceful lives

Against the homicidal people

Who roar in deaf caverns.

The shepherd is resting and his flute sighs

Under his fingers to stretch its frenzy

With his innocent lovemaking.

**CHORUS:** Blow, trumpet, organ of his glory,

Blow, announce his victory.

CURTAIN

**ACT III.**

The stage represents a grove and an altar wherein are Mars, Venus and the Syrian gods.

**KING:** Gods of Syria,

Immortal gods,  
Harken, protect a people who shriek  
At the foot of your altars.  
Awaken, punish the fury  
of your criminal slaves.  
Your people beg you  
Deliver the most proud of humans  
Into our hands.

**CHORUS:** Deliver into our hands

The most proud of humans.

**HIGH PRIEST:** Terrible Mars,

Invincible Mars,  
Protect our territories.  
Prepare  
For this barbarian  
Chains and death.

**DALILA:** O Venus! charming goddess

Don't allow these beautiful days  
Destined for love  
Be profaned by bloody war.

**CHORUS:** Deliver into our hands

The most proud of humans.

**ORACLE OF THE SYRIAN GODS:** Samson has subdued us: this glorious empire

Is drawing to its end;  
Appease this hero: let him love, let him sigh,  
Your only hope is in Love

**DALILA:** God of pleasures, deign to instruct us here

In the charming art of pleasing and seducing.  
Lend to our eyes your ever-conquering features,  
Teach us to strew with flowers  
The loving snare in which you wish to attract him.

**CHORUS:** God of pleasures, deign to instruct us

in the charming art of pleasing and seducing.

**DALILA:** Today is the feast of Adonis.

The youth are preparing for his games.  
Love, now's the lucky moment  
To inspire and to experience your flames.

**CHORUS OF GIRLS:** Love, here is the time, etc.

God of pleasures, etc.

**DALILA:** He comes full of wrath, and terror follows him.

Let's retire under this heavy foliage.  
(she withdraws with the girls from Gaza and the priestesses)  
Let's implore god who seduces  
The most steadfast courage.

**SAMSON:** (entering) The god of battles has led me,

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In the midst of carnage,  
Before him all tremble and all flee.  
Thunder, the horrifying storm  
Do less to ravage the fields  
Than his name alone has produced  
Amongst the Philistine full of rage.  
All those who wish to halt  
This proud torrent in its passage  
Have only irritated him.  
They have fallen; death is their share.  
(a sweet harmony is heard)  
These harmonious sounds, these murmurs of waters,  
Seem to soften my courage  
Asylum of peace, charming places, sweet shadows,  
You invite me to rest.  
(he dozes off on a bed of lawn)

**CHORUS OF PRIESTESSES OF VENUS:** (returning to the stage)

Flattering pleasures soften up his soul,  
Charming thoughts, enchant his sleep.

**GIRLS FROM GAZA:** Tender Love, enlighten his awakening.

Put in our eyes your power and your flame.

**DALILA:** Venus, inspire us, preside over this gorgeous day.

Is this one here, this cruel, this homicidal conqueror?  
Venus, he seems born to embellish your court.  
Armed, he's the God, Mars; unarmed, he's Love itself.  
My heart, my weak heart, is timid before him,  
Let's enchain with flowers  
This terrible warrior;  
May his wild invincible heart  
Surrender to your sweetness.

**CHORUS:** Let's enchain with flowers

This terrible hero.

**SAMSON:** (awakening, surrounded by the girls from Gaza)

What sweet concerts are making themselves heard?  
Where am I? Into what regions do I see myself transported?  
What ravishing objects are coming to surprise me!  
Is this the abode of bliss?

**DALILA** (to Samson) We are celebrating the feast of charming Adonis.

Love ordered games for it:  
It's love who's preparing them,  
May they deserve a glance from your eyes!

**SAMSON:** Who's this Adonis that your lovable voice

Causes to resound throughout this beautiful abode?

**DALILA:** He was an indomitable hero

Who made love to the mother of Love.  
Every year we sing of this pleasant adventure.

**SAMSON:** Speak, you're going to enchant me:

The winds have just stopped,  
These forests, these birds, and the whole of nature  
Become silent to listen to you.

(DALILA places herself at Samson's side. The Chorus forms around them. DALILA sings this cantatilla

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accompanied by small instruments which are on the stage.)

**DALILA:** In our regions, Venus often deigns to yield.

It's in our forests that one comes to learn  
From her charming cult all the divine secrets.  
It was near this sea, in these laughing gardens,  
That Venus enchanted the most handsome of mankind.  
Then everything was happy in profound peace.  
The whole universe loved in the breast of leisure,  
Venus gave the world  
The example of pleasure.

**SAMSON:** How alluring are her features! How her voice interests me!

How astonished I am to feel her tenderness!  
With what a charming poison I feel myself penetrated!

**DALILA:** Without Venus, without Love,

What would he have been able to pretend?  
In our woods he is adored.  
When he was formidable, he was unknown;  
He became a god after he became tender.  
Since that happy day  
This place, this ocean, this shade,  
Inspire the most tender love  
In the most savage heart.

**SAMSON:** O heaven, o unknown troubles!

I was that savage heart, and I no longer am.  
I am changed, I am experiencing a burgeoning flame.  
(to Dalila)

Ah, if there was a Venus,  
If the loves of this charming queen  
Could indeed present themselves to mortals,  
I would take you for her, and think to flatter her.

**DALILA:** I could imitate Venus' tenderness.

Happy is he who can burn with the fires she has experienced,  
But I would have loved another than Adonis  
If I had been the goddess.

**THE HEBREWS:** (entering) Don't dally any longer, come:

A whole faithful people  
Is ready to march under your orders,  
Be the first of our kings;  
Battle and rule: glory calls you.

**SAMSON:** I am with you:, I must do it, I accept your presents.

Ah, what powerful charm is stopping me!  
Ah! at least defer, defer for a while,  
These brilliant honors that you are offering me.

**CHORUS OF GIRLS FROM GAZA:** Remain, preside at our festivals;

Let our hearts be here your conquests.

**DALILA:** Forget battles,

Let peace attract you.  
Venus is coming to smile on you,  
Love extends her arms to you.

**THE HEBREWS:** Beware the deceiving pleasure

In which your great heart is abandoning itself:

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Love often steals from us  
The treasures glory gives us.

**CHORUS OF GIRLS:** Remain, preside at our festivals,  
Let our hearts be your tender conquests.

**TWO HEBREWS:** Come, come, don't dally.  
Our cruel enemies are ready to surprise us;  
Nothing can protect us  
Except your invincible arm.

**CHORUS OF GIRLS:** Remain, preside at our festivals,  
Let our hearts be your tender conquests.

**SAMSON:** I'm tearing myself away from these parts.  
Let's go, I follow your steps.  
Priestess of Venus, you, her brilliant image,  
I'm not leaving your attractions  
For the throne of kings, for that great slavery;  
I'm leaving them for battles.

**DALILA:** Must I long bewail your absence?

**SAMSON:** Let your eyes trust my impatience,  
Is there a greater good than that of seeing you?  
The Hebrews have only me for their unique expectation,  
And you are my only hope.

(Samson leaves with the Hebrews.)

**DALILA:** He's moving away, he's leaving me, he's carrying off my soul;  
Everywhere he's conqueror:  
The fire that I lit enflames me;  
I wanted to enchain him, he's enchaining my heart.  
O mother of pleasures, the heart of your priestess  
Must be full of you, must always self enflame!  
O Venus, my sole goddess,  
Tenderness is my law, my duty is to love.  
Echo, wandering voice,  
Flighty inhabitant  
Of this beautiful abode,  
Echo, monument of love,  
Tell of my weakness to heroes who enchant me.  
Favorite of spring, of love, of breezes,  
Birds whose concerts I hear,  
Dear confidants of my extreme tenderness,  
Sweet warbling of birds,  
Faithful voices of echoes,  
Repeat forever: I love him, I love him.

CURTAIN

**ACT IV.**

**THE HIGH PRIEST:** Yes, the king grants you this terrible hero,

But you understand at what price:  
Discover the secret of his invincible strength,  
That commands the astonished world;  
A tender marriage, a peaceful fate  
Depend on the secret you shall have learned.

**DALILA:** What can he hide from me? he loves me:

Only the indifferent are discreet:  
Samson will tell me; I judge it by myself  
Love has no secrets.

(Exit the High Priest.)

**DALILA:** Help me, tender Loves

Bring peace to the earth;  
Cease, drums and trumpets  
To announce funereal war:  
Shine, glorious day, the most beautiful of my life.  
Marriage, Love, let your torches light it:  
That ever I may please,  
Because I feel that I will always love!  
Second me, tender Loves  
Bring peace to the earth.

**SAMSON:** (entering) I've saved the Hebrews

Through the strength of my arm,  
And you save through your allure  
Your people and even your king:  
It's for you to earn the peace I grant.  
The king is offering me his diadem,  
And I want only you as the prize for my good deeds.

**DALILA:** All fear you in these parts; they rush to please you.

You reign over your enemies:  
But of all the subjects you've just made  
My heart is the most submissive to you.

**SAMSON AND DALILA:** (together) Let's no longer hear the noise of arms;

Amorous myrtle entwine with our laurels,  
Love is the prize of warriors  
And glory has more charms.

**SAMSON:** Marriage must unite us with eternal knots.

Why do you still delay?  
Come, let a pure love lead you to altars  
Of the god of battles I adore.

**DALILA:** Ah, let's tie these sweet knots in the temple of Venus.

**SAMSON:** No, her cult is impious, and my law condemns it;

No, I cannot enter this profane temple.

**DALILA:** If you love me it no longer is.

Stop, look at this pleasant abode,  
It's the temple of the universe;  
All mortals, at all ages, at all times,

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Come here to ask for chains.  
Stop, look at this pleasant abode,  
It's the temple of the universe.

(The temple of Venus appears in all its splendor.)

**DALILA:** (air) Love, sensual, pure,  
Soul of nature,  
Master of elements,  
The universe is not formed, not vivified, and doesn't endure  
Except through your beneficent glance.  
Tender Venus, the whole universe implores you,  
All is nothing without your fires!  
They fear the other gods, it's you they adore:  
They reign over the world, and you reign over them.

**WARRIORS:** Venus, our proud courage,  
In bloodshed, in carnage,  
Vainly hardens itself;  
You disarm us,  
We surrender our weapons,  
Horror softens at your voice.

**A PRIESTESS:** Sing, birds, sing: your tender warbling  
Is the voice of pleasures.  
Sing, Venus must hear you,  
Carry to her our sighs.  
The daughters of Flora  
Rush to blossom  
In this abode;  
The shining bloom  
Of the burgeoning flower  
Passes in a day:  
But one more beautiful  
Born near it  
Pleases in its turn;  
Sensitive image  
Of pleasures of the prime of life,  
Sensitive image  
Of charming Love!

**SAMSON:** I no longer resist: the charm which obsesses me  
Tyrannises my heart, intoxicates all my senses:  
Possess forever this heart which possesses you,  
And govern all my moments.  
Come: you are confused—

**DALILA:** Heaven! what am I going to tell him?

**SAMSON:** What causes your heart to sigh?

**DALILA:** I fear of displeasing you, and I must speak to you.

**SAMSON:** Ah! before you, it's for me to tremble.

Speak, what do you want?

**DALILA:** This love which engages me,  
Makes my glory and my happiness,  
But I require a new proof  
Which will assure me of your heart.

**SAMSON:** Say it, all is possible.

SAMSON An opera by Voltaire

To this amorous heart.

**DALILA:** Tell me by what lucky charm,  
By what secret power this invincible strength—?

**SAMSON:** What are you asking of me? That's a terrible secret  
Between heaven and me.

**DALILA:** So, you suspect my faith,  
You suspect, and you love me!

**SAMSON:** My heart is very sensitive;  
But don't impose on me this funereal power any further.

**DALILA:** A heart lacking trust is a heart lacking tenderness.

**SAMSON:** Don't abuse my weakness to such a degree.

**DALILA:** Cruel! what an unjust refusal!  
Our marriage depends on it; our knots will be broken.

**SAMSON:** What are you saying?

**DALILA:** Speak, it's love that's begging you.

**SAMSON:** Ah! cease to listen to this funereal craving.

**DALILA:** Cease to overwhelm me with outraging refusals.

**SAMSON:** Well, you wish it! love justifies me:  
My hair, was long ago consecrated to my God.  
They are the sacred guarantee of his bounties to me:  
He wanted to attach to my strength and my courage  
To such a weak decoration:  
They are his: my glory is his work.

**DALILA:** This hair, you say?

**SAMSON:** What have I said? Misfortune!  
My reason returns; I shiver  
At the abyss to which I've dragged the Hebrews and myself .

**THE TWO TOGETHER:** The earth roars, heaven thunders,  
The temple disappears, the day—star flees,  
Horror weighs on the night,  
That with its terrifying veil surrounds me.

**SAMSON:** I have betrayed my God's formidable secret.  
Love! fatal sensuality!  
It's you who precipitated me  
Into a frightful trap.  
And I feel that God has left me.

**THE HIGH PRIEST OF THE PHILISTINES:** (entering with Philistines)  
Come, this terrifying uproar, these screams of nature  
This thunder, all assures us,  
That he's been abandoned by the god of battles.

**DALILA:** What are you doing, perjured people?

**SAMSON:** What! by my enemies I'm surrounded!  
(he fights)  
Fall, tyrants.

**PHILISTINES:** Give up, slave.  
(together)  
Let's fight the enemy who braves us.

**DALILA:** Stop, cruel ones, stop;  
Turn your cruelties on me.

**SAMSON:** Fall, tyrants

**PHILISTINES:** (fighting) Give up, slave.

SAMSON An opera by Voltaire

**SAMSON:** Ah! what mortal languor!

My hand can no longer bear this fatal sword.

Ah, God! my valor is deceived,

God withdraws his conquering arm.

**PHILISTINES:** Let's strike the enemy who braves us:

He is vanquished. Give up, slave.

**SAMSON:** (in their hands) No, cowards, no.

This arm is not vanquished by you.

It's God who delivers me to your blows. (they drag him off)

**DALILA:** O despair! o tortures! o tenderness!

Cruel king! Inhumane people!

O Venus, deceitful deity!

You abused my weakness.

You prepared, through my fatal hands,

The horrible abyss into which I've dragged him.

You made me love the greatest of mankind

To hasten his death and mine.

Fall throne, burn altars.

Be reduced to ashes.

Horrifying tyrants, cruel gods,

May a more powerful god destroy with his lightning

You and your criminal race!

**CHORUS:** (at the back of the stage) Let him perish,

Let him fall in sacrifice

To our gods.

**DALILA:** Barbaric voices! odious screams!

Let's go share his torture.

CURTAIN

**ACT V.**

Samson in chains surrounded by guards.

**SAMSON:** Deep abysses of the earth,  
Hell, open wide!  
Strike, thunder,  
Destroy me!  
My arm refuses to serve my courage;  
I am vanquished, I am enslaved.  
I will never see you again, sacred torch of heavens:  
Light, you flee my eyes,  
Light, brilliant image  
Of your author, God,  
First work of the Creator  
Sweet light,  
Sweet light  
All of nature,  
With veils of night's impenetrable horror  
You hide from my sad eyelids.  
Deep abysses, etc.

**HEBREWS of THE CHORUS:**

Alas! we bring to you our enchained tribes  
Unlucky companions  
Of your horrible sorrow.

**SAMSON:** Holy people, unlucky race,  
My arm exalted your grandeur;  
My weakness has made your disgrace.  
What! Dalila flees me! Dear friends, pardon  
For such shameful unease.

**CHARACTERS OF THE CHORUS:** She ended her unfortunate life,  
Let's forget, forever, the cause of our tears.

**SAMSON:** What! I undergo a new misfortune!  
What I adore is in the tomb!  
Deep abysses of the earth,  
Hell, open wide!  
Strike, thunder,  
Destroy me!

**SAMSON and TWO CORYPHANTS (trio):**

Love, tyrant that I detest,  
You destroy Virtue, you drag behind your steps  
Error, crime, death!  
Much happier than those who do not know  
Your pleasant and funereal power!

**A CORYPHANT:** Your cruel enemies are advancing towards this place.

They are coming to insult the destiny which rushes on us.  
They dare to impute to the power of their gods  
The frightful ills in which God has left us.

(The King and The Philistines enter.)

**KING:** Raise your voices towards your favorable gods,

SAMSON An opera by Voltaire

Avenge their altars, avenge us.

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** Raise our voices, etc.

**CHORUS OF ISRAELITES:** Let's end our deplorable lives.

**SAMSON:** O God of vengeance! They are not guilty  
Turn your blows on me.

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** Let's raise our voices  
Towards our favorable gods,  
Let's avenge their altars, let's avenge ourselves.

**SAMSON:** O God! Forgive—

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** Let's avenge ourselves.

**KING:** Let's invent, if it can be done, a new punishment;  
Let the mark of death, suspended over his head,  
Threaten him still and stop;  
Let Samson in his rage hear our celebration,  
Let our pleasures be his torture.

(Priests and Priestesses enter.)

**A PRIESTESS:** All our gods stunned and hidden in the heavens  
Could not save our empire:  
Venus with a smile  
Rendered us victorious:  
Mars flew off, guided by her,  
In his all-bloody chariot.  
Immortal Victory  
Drew out her shimmering sword  
Against an entire faithless people  
And eternal night  
Is going to devour their speechless and trembling leader .

**AN OTHER:** It's Venus who forbids storms  
To growl on our heads.  
Our cruel enemy  
Still can hear our celebrations  
Trembling at our conquests  
And falling before her altar.

**KING:** Well, what's become of this so formidable god  
Who by your hands was going to slay us with lightning?  
A woman conquered this terrifying ghost  
And his languishing arm cannot be unfurled.  
He abandons you, he gives in to my power.  
And while in these parts I enchain destiny  
His thunder, stuffed in his feeble hands  
Reposes in silence.

**SAMSON:** Great God! I've borne this horrible language  
So long as he only offended a mortal:  
He insults your name, your cult, your altar.  
Arise and avenge this outrage.

**CHORUS OF PHILISTINES:** Your shouts, your screams are no longer heard.  
Wretch, your god is no more.

**SAMSON:** You can still arm this unfortunate hand,  
Grant me, at least, a glorious death.

**KING:** No, you must feel through long draughts  
The bitterness of your torture.

SAMSON An opera by Voltaire

So that with you, your god perishes,  
And that he will be, like you, scorned forever.

**SAMSON:** You inspire me at last: it's on you that I found  
My superb plans:  
You are inspiring me: your arm is seconding  
My languishing hands.

**KING:** Vile slave, what are you daring to say?  
Ready to die in torture,  
Can you indeed threaten this formidable empire  
In your last moments?  
Let him be immolated; it is time;  
Strike; he must expire.

**SAMSON:** Stop: I must instruct you  
In the secrets of my people and in the God that I serve:  
This moment must serve as an example to the universe.

**KING:** Speak, teach us all your crimes:  
Deliver to us all our victims.

**SAMSON:** King: order that the Hebrews  
Be taken from your presence and this horrifying temple.

**KING:** You will be satisfied.  
(The Hebrews are led off.)

**SAMSON:** The court which surrounds you  
Your priests and your warriors—are they around you?

**KING:** They are all here, explain yourself.

**SAMSON:** Am I near that column  
That sustains this abode so dear to the Philistines?

**KING:** Yes, you are touching it with your hands.

**SAMSON:** (shaking the columns) Odious temple!  
Let your walls be overthrown,  
Let your debris be dispersed

Over me, over this infuriated people!

**CHORUS:** All are falling, all are perishing.  
O Heaven! O God of Vengeance!

**SAMSON:** I mend my shame and I die conquering.

**CURTAIN**