

## LA JUIVE

Jacques-François Fromental Halévy

Libretto by Eugène Scribe

First Performance: Opéra [Académie royale], Paris, February 23, 1835

In Scribe's original story, Brogni as chief magistrate has banished Eleazar from Rome, thus saving his life after he has been condemned to death as a usurer. In a siege by Neapolitans, Brogni's house was burnt; his wife was killed and his daughter disappeared. Deeply affected, Brogni joined the Church, rising to the office of Cardinal, president of the Council. As the opera opens, the church choir chants a Te Deum in honor of the Emperor's forthcoming visit. Leopold, Prince of the Empire, who has just scored a victory over the Hussites, has previously fallen in love with Eleazar's daughter Rachel, and has been accepted by Eleazar as a workman under the name of Samuel. Ruggiero, provost of Constance, discovers Eleazar working, although it is a Christian holiday. Eleazar is saved by the entrance of Brogni, who recognizes him. Leopold serenades Rachel, who invites him to the Passover celebration that evening. A crowd gathers; Eleazar and Rachel are rescued once more by the intervention of Leopold, who has been recognized by the sergeant Albert. Rachel wonders at his power over the Christians.

In Act II, she worries still more at his refusal of unleavened bread. The Princess Eudoxie, Leopold's wife, calls on Eleazar to buy a chain for her husband. Leopold, overhearing, is conscience-stricken. Still, he loves Rachel, and, even though he confesses his Christianity, she almost yields. Eleazar, mollified at last by his daughter's pleas, consents to her marriage, but his fury returns when Leopold admits that he is unable to marry.

In the scene often omitted, Rachel has followed Leopold to the palace, although she still does not guess his identity. She begs Eudoxie to be allowed to serve as a slave for one day only; the Princess agrees. The festival for the Emperor begins. After a ballet, Eleazar and Rachel bring the chain to Eudoxie, who is about to place it around Leopold's neck when Rachel denounces him. Brogni condemns the two Jews and Leopold to death. Eudoxie begs Rachel to withdraw her charge against Leopold to save him. After agonized reflection, Rachel agrees. The Cardinal then implores Rachel to renounce Judaism in order to save herself. She refuses, Eleazar also refuses a similar plea and reveals at last that a Jew had saved Brogni's daughter. In spite of Brogni's anguish, Eleazar will not tell him where the girl is (she is of course, Rachel), though he is torn by his knowledge that he is allowing torture, crowds howling for the execution of the Jews determine him to sacrifice Rachel. Leopold's sentence has been commuted to banishment, but Eleazar and Rachel are led to the scaffold.

Eleazar's Aria:

Eleazar gives Rachel one last chance to abjure her faith, but when she disdains the idea, she is thrown into the cauldron. At the very moment she is consumed by flames, Eleazar turns to Brogni and cries: "There is your daughter!" then proceeds inflexibly to his own death.