

THE GOLEM OF LA JOLLA

libretto - Allan Havis
music - Michael Roth

*this pdf contains the libretto in progress for THE GOLEM OF LA JOLLA -
principally for now this consists of the three scenes as workshopped, seen in the in-progress video -
Plus some additional notes about the text for opera's conclusion -
for more information, please see the score, also attached to the webpage*

SCENE ONE –

*A cafe in La Jolla, California –
a Rabbi from Prague meets with a congregant from Temple Beth Judah, a local synagogue*

PRAGUE RABBI

This is very good coffee.
Yes. Strong and bitter.
Cream changes
Everything dark.
What did you get?

CONGREGANT

Decaf.

PRAGUE RABBI

And no cream?

CONGREGANT

Lactose intolerant.
You're a rabbi?

PRAGUE RABBI

I'm a rabbi.

CONGREGANT

From Europe?

PRAGUE RABBI

Yes Europe-
From the city of Prague.

CONGREGANT

Prague - The city of Kafka?

PRAGUE RABBI

Yes, the city of Kafka.

CONGREGANT
You have family here?

PRAGUE RABBI
No No - No family here.
No family.

CONGREGANT
No family?

PRAGUE RABBI
This is not a problem
***Mishpucha* is family**
***Mishpucha* is bigger**
See this spoon, my friend,
Please now, watch it bend.

(Prague Rabbi holds up the spoon, suddenly it bends)

CONGREGANT
Gey shray gevalt!
Is that a trick spoon?

PRAGUE RABBI
No... no ... no
There is no trick spoon –
Listen with both ears
Think of your worst fears
For you know
Overnight
Is blood fight
Soon it will happen – happen here –

(contorting the spoon back to normal)

There's a mob marching closer and closer - a band
of White hate – aimed late –
Exalting a Christian land
Think of our worst fears -
Listen with both ears -

Do you know the Kabbalah?
Jewish mystics avatar
Coercive incantations
Summoning demons
Sane men in their elation
Old Kabbalists saw creation
Of a giant from deep red clay

CONGREGANT
Of a giant from deep red clay

RABBI
Yes! - The purest alchemy of the day

Proving Jewish mystics right
Daylight wrong, truth is the night.

CONGREGANT
Daylight wrong, truth is the night

PRAGUE RABBI
Yes, my friend
The Hebrew language
The Yiddish language
All relied on common words
But the forbidden words
Ignite the skies like evil birds.
Tales of mystic rabbis
Sparking life from dust
Making Golem

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint*)
Golem

PRAGUE RABBI
Our Golem

CONGREGANT
Our Golem

PRAGUE RABBI
Yes! Making Golem a folk hero
Saving Jews from pogroms
But know too the life force
Can go astray - so we say
Fear the Golem - Love the Golem
Inspect the Golem
Respect the Golem

CONGREGANT (*with Rabbi, counterpoint*)
Best Thoughts -
Nothing--quite as good--as safe

Of all the mad thoughts
Stick with the best thoughts
Nothing is quite as good
Nothing is quite as safe

PRAGUE RABBI:
Yes - When Jew haters attack
Not one hundred cops
Nor one thousand marines
Not a million machines
Can stop the Tiki Torchers

CONGREGANT
Tiki Torchers

PRAGUE RABBI
They mock Vatican Two

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint*)
Vatican Two

PRAGUE RABBI
Popes in the past
Said Jews killed Jesus
And with that lie
A millennium or two
Of persecution -

CONGREGANT
(spoken – stopping the music)
We're always at risk.

PRAGUE RABBI
Yes! We're always at risk.
I wish your modern rabbi would see this truth.

CONGREGANT
Our rabbi is young.
Our rabbi is new.
Too much faith.

PRAGUE RABBI
Does your Rabbi see this truth?
Coming from Utah
Coming from Idaho
From Arizona
Coming from Pittsburgh

See the white nationalists' caravan
In just a day or two
A bloodbath – a bloodbath

CONGREGANT
And this Golem?

PRAGUE RABBI
I don't own him.
He doesn't own me.
We have – shall I say?
a casual, open relationship

CONGREGANT -
But - do you control the Golem?

PRAGUE RABBI
No. No. No.
The Golem can have life
Because he is given life
From you -
From your community

But you need more than a minyan of ten
 More than a minyan — ten Jewish men
 To give this Golem strength
 To give this Golem life

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint with above*)
 To give this Golem strength
 To give this Golem life

PRAGUE RABBI
 The sacred Zohar says
 The Zohar is the ark
 The Zohar is the light
 For those connected to the Light
 For those on The path of True Lineage
 Of Kabbalists in exile in flight
 Hoping for redemption
 Through God's mercy
 God's mercy - mercy
 The Golem can have life
 Because he is given life from you -
 From your community

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint*)
 To give this Golem strength
 To give this Golem life

 Connected to the light

 Hoping for redemption
 Through God's mercy, God's mercy
 God's mercy, God's mercy ...

CONGREGANT
 But Tell me honestly
 Why are you here?

PRAGUE RABBI
 To be the broker of prayer.
 Between you and the Golem.
 To be the broker of prayer.
 Between your rabbi and Kabbalah
 This Golem is a thunderbolt
 Killing every Jew hater.
 We can't simply light candles
 Parade with an open Torah
 Give alms to the poor

CONGREGANT
 And your eye patch?

PRAGUE RABBI
 YES! - My eye patch - –
 I tried to embrace this Golem.
 He took my soft blue eye
 And fed it to wolves -
 Such a monster
 Hardened me, changed me to an army general
 Here I am before you

(*Lifting his eye patch to the Congregant*)

A spindly cyclops -
 A fearless warrior -
 Like Moshe Dayan -
 No hero more glorious -
 Saddened by blindness
 My sacrifice was great
 An eye for an eye
 I would give much more
 For my people
 For you – and your community -

We live in supernatural times
 And so your young Rabbi
 Must meet with me
 And tell all the good members
 Of Temple Beth Judah –
 Who love the Torah
 To love the Torah -
 Dawn to dusk
 To assemble this Shabbat
 Prepared for a
 Great reckoning

CONGREGANT

Yes my friend -
 You must meet with our new rabbi - Now - !

(The Congregant and Prague Rabbi walk to the synagogue)

***SCENE 1A - the current plan is there will be a short new scene here, still to be finished:*

As the congregant is about to meet with Joan, she is in the middle of a meeting with a young woman/student who is fearful that some of the anti-Israel protests on her nearby campus (across the street), including the presence of settlements, have also encouraged some antisemitic moments on campus, perhaps by people who in fact seem not to be students and have no official relationship with the school. She feels at risk, and fears this might spread to the synagogue as well, in tandem with the upcoming Neo-Nazi march. Rabbi Joan comforts her and promises to do what she can for protection - at the same time she is more and more concerned about the confluence of events potentially tragic that surround her and her congregation

SCENE 2

The Congregant meets with Rabbi Joan, the Prague Rabbi waits nearby patiently -

CONGREGANT

You are very brave
 So brave Rabbi.

RABBI JOAN

No, no, no – No bravery here -
 Thank you but I am just like you.
 That is to say,
 If I am brave - you are very brave too.

CONGREGANT

Far from brave. Thank you but
I'm afraid – I'm afraid -
We need more security-
Security guards at the gate -
before it's too late -

RABBI JOAN

You look troubled -

CONGREGANT

I cannot sleep.
There's a strange Rabbi waiting outside
A strange Rabbi from Prague...
A strange Rabbi
Complete with a black eye patch
Yes but Rabbi, but Rabbi – Rabbi Joan -

JOAN (*counterpoint*)

A strange Rabbi...

From Prague complete with an eye patch

RABBI JOAN

Yes -

CONGREGANT

He says he can conjure a Golem, a Golem
A Golem, a ten-foot Golem
Wide like an army tank
Capable of scaring off
10,000 Tiki torch cadets

JOAN (*counterpoint*)

A Golem? A Golem?

A Golem, a ten-foot Golem?

RABBI JOAN

A Golem?

This rabbi is outside
Our shul, waiting – waiting – for what?

CONGREGANT

Yes, he's waiting - pacing
He acts like a prophet –
Predicting violence
Worse than before
Predicting violence
Worse than before - - -

JOAN (*counterpoint*)

Pacing outside?

RABBI JOAN

Do you really think
This is a prophet - a Jewish prophet?

CONGREGANT

Rabbi, Rabbi - He carries photos
of this monster - This ten-foot Golem

RABBI JOAN

No no no - There are no Golems they don't exist
 Don't waste my time
 lies and myths and -

CONGREGANT (*trying to interrupt*)

Rabbi - Rabbi -

JOAN (*interrupting*)

NO - !

I understand your concerns,
 They're my concerns too
 Everyday I'm working on this problem-
 Now, not tomorrow, for you
 And all of us -
 We're keeping track of the money

CONGREGANT

Track of all the money -

JOAN

Yes, yes
 we track down the funders
 Who "donate to hate"

CONGREGANT

Donate to hate ... ?

JOAN

Yes - Our Holy estates
 Protected by armed
 police at our gates.

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint*)

Police at our gates...

Piercing infrared light
 Unmasks-bitter night
 Steel doors that bolt tight
 It's only right
 For us to learn self-defense
 Not to make light
 Not to take flight
 But to

CONGREGANT

Rabbi -

Rabbi -

CONGREGANT (*interrupting*)

This Golem, this monster, this thing.
 Paralyzes all Jew haters
 Scares the race baiters
 Yes, yes, honest to God –
 But Rabbi, Rabbi

This Golem from Prague.
 We can train him.
 He can shield us.
 It's the not the single shooter
 We have to fear,
 There is a marching mob --

It's the mob -- marching -- closer and closer -- on fire
 Worse than any crazed looter
 They chant like a church choir
 "Jews - will not - replace us."
 "Jews - will not - replace us."

Every morning my family prays for calm
 To please keep the terror away
 But rabbi there's only darkness and fear
 It can happen here
 darkness and -

(they sing the Hashkiveinu, the Hebrew prayer for peace...)

Hashkeveinu Hashem Eloheinu l'shalom
 Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace,
V'ha hamideinu malkeinu l'chaim
 and raise us up to life renewed.

Congregant sings
Joan sings counterpoint

Shield us beneath the shadow of Your wings.
 And Defend us against enemies and famine and sorrow and war
 Guide us with your love to peace evermore.

CONGREGANT
 But Rabbi, there's only
 darkness and fear
 it can happen here -
 It is worse than Charlottesville --
 Worse than Pittsburgh - or Texas-
 We could be worse than Poway --

RABBI JOAN
 Poway

CONGREGANT
 San Diego's Poway

When Jew haters attack not one hundred cops
 Nor a thousand Marines, not a Million machines -
 It's the Madness --
 It's the mob -- marching -- closer
 Please wake up, Rabbi Joan

Talk to this man, this learned man
This man of God -

RABBI JOAN

You must believe in your heart –
There is no such thing as Golems –
But I will talk to your Rabbi,
This Rabbi from Prague
We will always open the door for a stranger
A distant Rabbi -

CONGREGANT (*counterpoint*)
A stranger

CONGREGANT

(*spoken*) Thank you, Rabbi Joan.

(*The congregant steps aside, motioning for the Prague Rabbi to enter. Lights shift, the congregant steps aside, Prague Rabbi enters*)

SCENE 3

RABBI JOAN

Rabbi -

PRAGUE RABBI

Rabbi -

RABBI JOAN

Shabbat Shalom.

PRAGUE RABBI

Shabbat Shalom.

RABBI JOAN

How can I help

PRAGUE RABBI (*interrupting*)

Your *shul* is beautiful.

Inside and out.

Your *shul* is ...

RABBI JOAN (*interrupting*)

Thank you.

PRAGUE RABBI

I had a *shul* in Prague.

Twenty-three years.

Best *shul* in Europe

RABBI JOAN

in Europe ...

PRAGUE RABBI

One rabbi's opinion -
 The congregation failed.
 We lost all the young ones.
 Can you imagine such a thing?
 And then there was arson –
 Such arson - !
 Can you imagine such a thing?
 We had priceless Torahs.
 Insurance doesn't care, Rabbi.

RABBI JOAN

I am so sorry for your loss, Rabbi.

PRAGUE RABBI

I was in the building.
 During the fire.
 Surrounded by fire – I was

RABBI JOAN (*interrupting*)

Why are you here, Rabbi?,

PRAGUE RABBI

Why are you here, Rabbi?

RABBI JOAN

It's my job, Rabbi
 And I have work to do
 This is my synagogue.

PRAGUE RABBI

So it is. So it is
 This is your *shul*
 And yet you see me, you eye me
 Like a circus fool, Rabbi

RABBI JOAN

No No NO - Not like a fool, Rabbi- -
 But get to the point - -

PRAGUE RABBI -

I fear for you.

RABBI JOAN

Fear for me, Thanks but why?
Po-say-ach -
 God hovers over us
 God is watching.

PRAGUE RABBI
And so are the police.

RABBI JOAN
Yes

PRAGUE RABBI
Yes, The police can come
The army, the marines
The National Guard can come
But nothing stops hatred.

RABBI JOAN
I know that Rabbi -
We all know that Rabbi
That's why I'm doing what I must do to
Protect this congregation – and -

PRAGUE RABBI (*interrupting*) - -
NO – NO!!
Look at me, Joan

I study Kabbala, Rabbi.
We see time differently.
Different - persistent
And future is always present.
Resentment -
Past sears a living memory.
Your synagogue is next.

In the great global Satanic war
Not against the multitudes
We are never multitudes
But against the righteous few
in the global Satanic war
Against the lonely Jew.

RABBI JOAN
Lonely Jew, Rabbi?
We may never be multitudes -
But for me the glass is always half full
There is no lonely Jew.

PRAGUE RABBI
Israel's a lonely Jew.
I am a lonely Jew.
Your father too I know -

RABBI JOAN

(spoken) What do you want, Rabbi?

PRAGUE RABBI

I don't have a twin
 Nor a doppelganger
 But just beyond my shadow
 You can see - -
 You see the Golem – a Golem -
 I am here for one thing
 to save your congregation – devastation!
 To be the broker of prayer.
 Between you and the Golem.
 We can't simply light candles
 Parade with an open Torah
 Give alms to the poor

RABBI JOAN

No offense Rabbi.
 This is America – America - !
 Not the Czech Republic

PRAGUE RABBI

You don't believe?

RABBI JOAN

In what, Rabbi? In Golems?? Golems?

PRAGUE RABBI

In a protector
 The power of a giant - in Miracles -

RABBI JOAN

I believe that miracles
 Can be found imbedded in the Bible
 But - Never – never – in Heresy

PRAGUE RABBI

No offense Rabbi
 But Miracles are not fiction -

RABBI JOAN

Literature is a miracle. -

PRAGUE RABBI

Yes but - - Literature turns to ash
 listen to me – take heed
 In three days or less.
 You'll see this insane wondrous thing

Born from a magic ring
 Rising as we pray
 This orange Golem of clay.
 And Rabbi, you must calm -
 Calmly prepare -
 Your modern congregation.
 Or with one last breath they will perish -
 An ancient death.
 Rabbi -

JOAN

Calm what?
 Prepare for what?

 Perish?
 Ancient death from what?

RABBI JOAN

NO – NO! What ancient death ..? Death?
 How do I know -
 Know - that you're not some ...
 Domestic, Militant ...
 Terrorist - Terrorist
 Surrounding,
 Pounding, pounding at our gate?

PRAGUE RABBI (*spoken, stopping the music*)
 A terrorist – Rabbi - – really ...?

Rabbi, Come closer, please
 Lest you think I tease.
 As it is written, so you will see -
 That in Kabbala philosophy
 The empty space is a grand treasure - treasure
 Our God – ever so tall
 Contracts – ever so small
 So - we can find Earth like a ball.
 And we will always open
 The door for a stranger -
 A welcome stranger - - (*we hear the Shema as the congregation enters etc- -*)

CONGREGATION -
Shema Yisrael
Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai Echad

(by the end we hear only Joan - the congregation enters the synagogue as does - eventually - the Prague Rabbi) –



*What follows are text and libretto notes and sketches
towards the conclusion of the opera - still in progress -
Some of this is composed, some sections are sketched out
- it would be our hope
to compose and complete/finalize much of this section
within the context of developing it further during workshops as possible*

CONGREGATION - *continuing the Shema prayer*
Baruch shem kavod malchuto l'olam va-ed

*Elements from below, translation of the complete Shema prayer
are sung by member of the congregation and all in counterpoint -
it's likely that the Congregant from scenes one and two is a soloist as needed, with others tbd -*

**Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them.
For the LORD's anger will flare up against you,
and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain
and the ground will not yield its produce;
and you will soon perish from the good land that the LORD is assigning to you.
Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart:
bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead,
and teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you get up; and inscribe them on the doorposts of your house
and on your gates— to the end that you and your children may endure,
in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to assign to them,
as long as there is a heaven over the earth.**

Prague Rabbi steps toward Rabbi Joan, he lifts his eye patch and leans into her gaze.

RABBI JOAN & CONGREGATION
Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

*(The Shema prayer and the rest is underscored via sound design by elements of anti-Semitic chanting
e.g. Charlottesville's marchers' "Jews will not replace us")*

RABBI JOAN
Your voice is distinct.
into this sanctuary
A sharp arctic chill
I respect the fact
That in old Prague
You're an honored rabbi
But you've stirred
The pot of anxiety

PRAGUE RABBI
Listen . . .
Can you not hear the chanting?

(mounting collage of sound - underscoring chants intensifies)

They are a mile away
A song they sing
For children of sin
Blood and soil
Blut und Boden
Blood and soil
will stand a profound Golem
to ward off each hoodlum

Prague Rabbi spills the soil onto the synagogue floor - -

PRAGUE RABBI

Can you not hear the chanting?
Can you not see the sacred soil I bring? *(His fingers luxuriating over the soil)*
Let us pray for my people
With this earth, with my fingers
Om Hadma Hazen, Om Hazvan *Phonetics for עם האדמה הזו and for עם האצבעות*
With your prayers, cold truth lingers.
Say the word - Almighty
Sing the seven words for God
Doing less will mean
A universe of cavity. *(this could be repeated in Hebrew possibly)*

RABBI JOAN

(recites the Aleinu prayer in praise of God - as counterpoint - with support from some congregants)
It is our duty to praise the Master of All,
to ascribe greatness to the Author of Creation,
who has not made us like the nations in our world
nor placed us like the families of the earth;
who has not made our portion like theirs,
nor our destiny like all their multitudes.

Sustained eye contact between the two rabbis - as Joan prays, we hear some members of the congregation, led by the Prague Rabbi, singing counterpoint-simultaneously.

RABBI JOAN

Shema, shema
Hear o Israel, hear us o lord, hear me
We walk in the dark
Oh Hear me -
we walk in the dark
We cannot see -
how Oh how
How do I hold on tight
to my people now
Protect them when
We walk in the dark

hear o lord
 They cannot see
 they can't hear me

Oh Lord you said hold on to my people
 But how when they all move away -
 We hear their cries
 But - Ki tomar alai
 Moses Rabbeinu Said to the Lord
 Ki tomar alai
 This you told me
 Ki tomar alai
 This you told Moses
 Oh Lord, oh lord -
 This you told Moses
 This you told me -

(KEy tomar - A LIE)

Hold your people close to your heart
 Lead them lead them
 Hold my people
 Close to my heart - but how -
 How To carry my people close to my heart now
 Carry my people
 Hold them in my arms - but how

This is our shul
 This is our town
 This is our land
 This is our God
 God is one.
(repeat as necessary)

PRAGUE RABBI
 If we can compel
 the powers of darkness
 to reveal the magic word
 We bring the Golem to life!

CONGREGATION (with PRAGUE RABBI)
(chanting simultaneously)
 If we can compel
 the powers of darkness
 to reveal the magic word
 We bring the Golem to life!

God will protect us
 We need our Golem
 Please Golem protect us
 Please Golem stop this evil

PRAGUE RABBI

If we can compel
the powers of darkness
to reveal the magic word
We bring the Golem to life!

*The Prague Rabbi hands Joan a Star of David - encouraging her to hold it up - the Congregant
creates a circle with a torch, the congregation eventually sings led by the Prague Rabbi*

PRAGUE RABBI

Astaroth, Astaroth!
Appear, appear –
speak the word!
Emet, Emet, Emet! -
Truth, truth, truth!

PRAGUE RABBI & CHORUS

Emet, Emet, Emet! -
Truth, truth, truth!

*at the Prague Rabbi's urging as he prompts her, finally - reluctantly -
Rabbi Joan sings quietly with them as the atmosphere shifts accordingly -*

PRAGUE RABBI, CHORUS & RABBI JOAN

Emet, Emet, Emet! -
Truth, truth, truth!

*They bring the branding torch down, emblazing the word EMET into the ground. Out of the mass of
combined voices and prayer comes an enormous explosion - in the distance we see cars overturned
and smaller explosions as a mysterious yet beautiful creature approaches and enters the synagogue -
is this a Golem?*

MYSTERIOUS CREATURE

*(This text is still very much in process, and there will ultimately be more interaction between the
mysterious creature and the congregation....)*

Breath of bones

I am the breath of bones
To be the breath of bones
Rust water with clay!
... Filth and decay -
It would have been enough

It would have been enough
To be the breath of bones
To be the death of bones
It would have been enough

You have summoned me
I attend

You branded Truth upon my forehead
Emet, emet – Truth!
Truth, so foretold dead
And branded on my forehead
Emblazoned truth like led
Torn scroll unread -
As forewarned and
Lame upon my foreskin -
A mad thing – rising up

A demonic spark
I bear your mark
More Jew than not
It would have been enough
It is enough

From wretched soil
A hole so deep
Surpassing death
Pretending sleep

The hole you have before you is your own
I am but the breath of bones
It would have been enough
Dayenu!, Dayenu!
Est ist genug
It is enough

I cannot make a hole
I cannot see a hole
I do not know the hole
From whence I came

You cannot flee or climb
Cannot sing, talk or mime
And cannot favor crime
The expansive Pacific
The vast sea stops you in your tracks
And tells you, you can't resist
The Golem, this Golem
I should exist, I don't exist
I don't exist – I DON'T EXIST!

It would have been enough
I don't exist
It would have been enough

Dayenu (coaxing the congregation)

CONGREGATION

Dayenu!

MYSTERIOUS CREATURE

Est ist genug

CONGREGATION

It is enough

MYSTERIOUS CREATURE

It is enough

I don't exist

I shouldn't persist

A failed tryst

Genug . . . Est ist

I did not make your

Great nation sick.

I CAN'T HELP YOU!

Dayenu - Dayenu

The fire you cannot douse

Is the curse on your house

(The Mysterious Creature starts to leave, gets near the door and turns back - looks at Joan)

It is enough

It would have been enough

Dayenu

Est ist genug

It is enough, it is enough

Shalom, Shalom - -

The Golem of La Jolla, climbs over the wall and in the blink of an eye, disappears - and we see via projections that all in the surrounding neighborhood is as it was - no cars have been overturned, no trees toppled, no damage discernible, no fires. Silence. Perhaps the sound of leaves rustling, blowing in autumn wind.

Finally, Rabbi Joan sings with help of her congregation

RABBI JOAN

Hear O Israel

Hear us in our land America

May the Almighty

who blessed our ancestors

May the Power

**In our universe
Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,**

**Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah
bless and heal those among us
Now ill, Soon to be ill
Daughters of Abraham
Sons of Sarah**

**May the love of humanity
overflow with compassion upon us
to restore us
to heal us
to strengthen us
to enliven us
to forgive us
And grant us wisdom**

More text to follow for Rabbi Joan - - - still a work in progress

The chanting of a nearing crowd becomes audible and rhythmic - Rabbi Joan looks towards the synagogue's main doors - there stands the Prague Rabbi, staring back at Rabbi Joan -

**Before the scourge
We have created
Surrounds us
And crushes us
crushes us
crushes us down
and let us all say
Amen!**

Rabbi Joan casts her gaze at the entire congregation. Chanting from outside crescendos - Sudden silence. Rabbi Joan and Prague Rabbi look at each other in a locked stare