Musical Modernism at the People's Theatre: Arthur Honegger and René Morax's *Judith* at the Théâtre du Jorat

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Mon goût et mon effort ont toujours été d'écrire une musique qui soit perceptible pour la grande masse des auditeurs et suffisamment exempte de banalité pour intéresser cependant les mélomanes – un art à la fois populaire et personnel.

Arthur Honegger[1]

[My inclination and my efforts have always been to compose music that would be accessible to the general public and yet sufficiently free from banality to interest music-lovers – an art both popular and personal.]

Cet homme marque un goût étrange pour les héroïnes tout à la fois vierges et viriles que sont Judith, Antigone et Jeanne la Pucelle. Trois figures de femmes, si typiquement siennes, vouées non au plaisir mais à l'héroïsme; trois exemples de sacrifice, de don suprême non à un homme, mais à une idée.

Jean Matter[2]

[This man shows a strange taste for heroines who are both virgin and virile, such as Judith, Antigone and Joan of Arc. Three women, so typically his, devoted not to pleasure but to heroism; three examples of sacrifice, of a supreme gift not to a man but to an idea.]

[1] Arthur Honegger cited in Willy Tappolet, *Arthur Honegger*, translated to French by Claude Tappolet (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1957), 133.
[2] Jean Matter, *Arthur Honegger, ou la Quête de la Joie* (Lausanne: Foetisch Frères, 1956), 87.

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Abstract

The Théâtre du Jorat was founded in 1908 by the playwright René Morax, in Mézières, a small village in the Swiss countryside. Influenced by Romain Rolland and Maurice Pottecher's populist theatrical enterprises in France,[3] Morax created a people's theatre that the local inhabitants could not only identify with, but also actually be involved with by actively participating in the various theatrical projects he produced. Morax's interest in music and his recognition of the popularity of his homeland's choral tradition led him to incorporate music into his theatrical concept. The prominence of music, and especially of the choir, in Morax's productions became one of the theatre's characteristic features. The Théâtre du Jorat also came to serve as a platform for local artists and contemporary composers such as Arthur Honegger. Honegger and René Morax's first collaboration for the Théâtre du Jorat, *Le Roi David* (1921), was a great popular and critical success, immediately propelling the young composer to the forefront of the Swiss and French musical scenes. Eager to repeat this initial triumph, the two artists went on to create three more works for the theatre over a period of twenty years, from the *années folles* to the end of the Second World War,[4] a fruitful and eclectic collaboration which is too seldom discussed in the literature.[5]

Honegger and his work for the Théâtre du Jorat were certainly not immune to the shifting social and political contexts in Europe, especially France, the composer's country of residence. Particularly sensitive to the rise of left-wing political factions on the eve of the French Popular Front, Honegger sought to reconcile his new social preoccupations with his modern, at times even experimental, musical idiom; the Théâtre du Jorat offered him the perfect venue to do so. Indeed, the tension between the composer's modernist artistic tendencies and his nascent political and humanist concerns lies at the core of the genesis, production and reception of *Judith* (1925), his second collaboration with Morax for the Théâtre du Jorat. Like *Le Roi David*, *Judith* is a biblical drama narrating the story of Judith and Holoferne as told in the Old Testament. Religious topics of this sort generally appealed to the more conservative rural theatregoers who made up a large percentage of the audience. Nevertheless, the highly sensual character of Morax's Judith severely weakens the moral rectitude of the original parable.

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[3] Maurice Pottecher founded his Théâtre du Peuple in Bussang, France, in 1895 and Romain Rolland published his influential essay *Le Théâtre du Peuple* the same year. Romain Rolland, *Le Théâtre du Peuple* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 2003).

[4] The four works that came out of the Morax-Honegger collaboration are: *Le Roi David* (1921), *Judith* (1925), the operette *La Belle de Moudon* (1931), and finally *Charles le Téméraire* (1944).

[5] Indeed, the only book primarily concerned with Honegger and his association with the Théâtre du Jorat contains mostly a mixture of factual and anecdotal information with very little discussion of the music: Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1993).

The moral ambiguity and latent eroticism of *Judith* are often held responsible for the poor reception of the play at the Théâtre du Jorat.

This thesis, then, will focus on *Judith*'s inherent paradox between a complex musical idiom and the composer and theatre's populist intentions by looking at the work's composition, production and reception. In *Judith*, Honegger experiments with polytonality, complex harmonies and dense rhythmic counterpoints. Most important though is Honegger's attempt to facilitate the audience's understanding of Morax's text by creating a personal and original system of prosody. *Judith* exists in several versions and the task of writing about the incidental music, as originally performed at the Théâtre du Jorat, is difficult. Indeed, the later operatic and oratorio versions almost completely eclipsed the one for the spoken stage. No recordings of the first production are readily accessible if they exist at all. Fortunately, some idea of what these original performances may have been like can be gleaned by looking at the manuscript piano-voice reduction score of the first version. This is housed at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, Switzerland, in parallel with contemporary accounts of the initial production. Moreover, surviving photos of the various rehearsals and performances of *Judith* at the Théâtre du Jorat may be accessed through the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Therefore, in addition to addressing a specific research problem related to modernism and populism, this thesis will provide the most complete account available in the literature of the source situation surrounding the initial version of *Judith*. This project will attempt to piece together the remaining accounts of *Judith*'s original theatrical production through scrutiny of archival documents, photographs and contemporary newspaper articles kept, for the most part, at the Paul Sacher Foundation and the Théâtre du Jorat's archives preserved at the Bibliothèque Cantonale Universitaire in Lausanne.

Abrégé

Le Théâtre du Jorat fut fondé en 1908 par le dramaturge René Morax, à Mézières, un village situé dans la campagne Suisse. Influencé par les entreprises de Romain Rolland et Maurice Pottecher pour la création d'un théâtre populaire en France, Morax créa lui aussi un théâtre populaire auquel la population locale pouvait s'identifier et participer activement aux différentes productions théâtrales. L'intérêt de Morax pour la musique et sa connaissance de la tradition chorale Suisse l'incita à incorporer cette forme d'art dans son concept théâtral. La présence importante de musique, et particulièrement du chœur, dans l'oeuvre de Morax, fit de la musique une des caractéristiques propres à son concept de théâtre populaire. Le Théâtre du Jorat devint donc une plateforme pour les artistes locaux et les compositeurs contemporains comme Arthur Honegger. La première collaboration d'Arthur Honegger et René Morax pour le Théâtre du Jorat, *Le Roi David* (1921), fût applaudi par la critique et devint un grand succès populaire expédiant ainsi le jeune compositeur aux devants des scènes musicales suisses et françaises. Dans l'espoir de renouveler leur triomphe précédent, les deux artistes collaborèrent sur trois autres projets pour le théâtre sur une période de vingt ans depuis les années folles jusqu'à la fin de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale.[6] Une collaboration qui s'avéra donc riche et éclectique, mais n'est malheureusement que rarement citée dans la littérature sur Honegger.[7]

Honegger et son travail pour le Théâtre du Jorat furent évidemment influencés par les contextes sociaux et politiques instables en Europe et particulièrement en France, le pays de résidence du compositeur. Sensible à la montée des factions politiques de gauche à la veille du Front Populaire, Honegger essaya donc de réconcilier ses nouvelles préoccupations sociales avec un langage musical moderne, voire expérimental: le Théâtre du Jorat lui offrit un lieu idéal pour expérimenter avec ses nouvelles aspirations musicales et sociales. En effet, la tension entre les tendances artistiques modernistes du compositeur et ses nouvelles préoccupations politiques et humanistes sont à la source de la genèse, production et réception de *Judith* (1925), sa seconde collaboration avec Morax pour le Théâtre du Jorat. Tout comme *Le Roi David*, *Judith* est un drame biblique narrant l'histoire de Judith et Holopherne citée dans l'Ancien Testament. Les sujets religieux de la sorte attiraient en général les spectateurs plus conservateurs du théâtre qui constituaient une partie majoritaire du public. Néanmoins, le caractère explicitement sensuel de la Judith de Morax affaiblit sensiblement la rectitude morale de la parabole originale. L'ambiguïté morale et l'érotisme latent de *Judith* sont souvent considérés comme étant responsables de la mauvaise réception de la pièce au Théâtre du Jorat.

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[6] Les quatre collaboration de Morax et Honegger sont : *Le Roi David* (1921), *Judith* (1925), l'opérette *La Belle de Moudon* (1931), et finalement *Charles le Téméraire* (1944).

[7] En effet, le seul écrit principalement concerné par l'association entre Honegger, Morax et le Théâtre du Jorat relate un mélange de faits et d'anecdotes en évitant toute discussion approfondie de la musique : Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat* (Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1993).

Au travers une étude de la composition, production et réception de l'œuvre, cette thèse se concentrera principalement sur le paradoxe inhérent dans *Judith*: son déchirement entre un langage musical complexe et les aspirations populaires du théâtre et du compositeur. Dans *Judith*, Honegger expérimente avec la polytonalité, des harmonies complexes et des contrepoints rythmiques denses. Néanmoins, le plus important reste l'effort d'Honegger pour faciliter la compréhension par le public du texte de Morax en créant un nouveau système de prosodie original et individuel. *Judith* existe en plusieurs versions ce qui rend la tâche d'écrire à propos de la musique de scène, tel qu'elle était jouée au Théâtre du Jorat, plutôt difficile. En effet, l'opéra et l'oratorio composés ensuite éclipsèrent presque complètement la version pour le théâtre. De plus, il n'existe pas d'enregistrements de cette première version. Heureusement, la production originale peut être reconstituée en partie en consultant les manuscrits de la partition originale, conservée à la Fondation Paul Sacher à Bale en Suisse, en parallèle avec des récits contemporains ayant pour sujet la première production de l'œuvre. De surcroît, des photos des répétitions et performances de *Judith* au Théâtre du Jorat sont disponibles dans les archives digitales de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Cette thèse, en plus d'aborder un problème de recherche spécifique concernant le modernisme et le populisme, fournira donc un des comptes-rendus les plus complets disponibles des sources de la première version de *Judith*. En effet, ce projet essaiera de rassembler les différentes sources traitant de la production originale de *Judith* en examinant divers documents d'archives, des photographies et des articles de journaux contemporains préservés, pour la plupart, à la Fondation Paul Sacher et dans les archives du Théâtre du Jorat conservées à la Bibliothèque Cantonale Universitaire de Lausanne.

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Introduction

Arthur Honegger and René Morax's first collaboration for the Théâtre du Jorat successfully marked the reopening of this people's theatre after the First World War in 1921. *Le Roi David* instantly became a great popular and critical success, propelling the young composer to the forefront of the European musical scene. Eager to repeat this initial triumph, the two men went on to create three more works for the theatre over a period of twenty years from the early 1920s to 1944,[8] a fruitful and eclectic collaboration which is too seldom covered in the literature.[9] Radically different in genre, content and subject matter, these collaborations range from Swiss legends to biblical parables representing the richness and variety of Honegger's craft. Furthermore, as they span twenty years of his career, these four associative works take us through many of the composer's important stylistic, aesthetic and ideological changes, as he constantly adapted himself and his work to ever-changing political, social and cultural contexts.

Although all four works were of a significant importance in the composer's output, *Le Roi David* and *Judith* both stand out as cornerstones in Honegger's vocal oeuvre. According to Pierre Meylan, they also represented a "turning point" in the musical evolution of the Swiss-French artistic scene.[10] Not only did these two biblical dramas allow Honegger to explore the potential of the oratorio genre

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[8] The four works that came out of Morax and Honegger's collaboration are: *Le Roi David* (1921), *Judith* (1925), the operette *La Belle de Moudon* (1931), and *Charles le Téméraire* (1944).

[9] Indeed, only one book has been written about the Honegger and Morax collaborations at the Théâtre du Jorat which consists mostly of factual information with little discussion of the music: Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1993).

[10] Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 211.

and reinvigorate it but the Théâtre du Jorat also gave him the opportunity to create a new, decidedly modern, musical idiom in a performance context that conformed to his social concerns. Little is known of Honegger's self-questioning and political aspirations beyond vague descriptions of his "humanism." However, the composer's collaboration with a people's theatre, his association with the Popular Front in the late 1930s and his public anti-fascist declarations allow for certain inferences about his populist or humanist stance towards his art and his audience.[11]

The tension between the composer's modern artistic tendencies and his nascent social preoccupations lies at the core of the genesis, production and reception of *Judith*, his second collaboration with Morax. Premiered at the Théâtre du Jorat on 13 June 1925, *Judith* was poorly received by the public for a number of musical and other reasons, as will be discussed in this thesis. In fact, although religious topics of this sort generally appealed to the theatre's more conservative rural spectatorship, the play's explicit eroticism and promiscuousness bring Morax and Honegger's work dangerously closer to Oscar Wilde's *Salome* than to the biblical parable. This severely weakened *Judith*'s original moral rectitude and religious character. Morax's *Judith* goes as follows: The starving people of Bethulia, besieged by Holopherne and his army, beg their princess, Judith, to open the city's doors and stop the siege. The princess,

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[11] For more on Honegger's collaboration with the Popular Front see: Nigel Simeone, "Music at the 1937 Exposition: The Science of Enchantment," in *The Musical Times* 143 (2002): 9-17; Christopher Moore, "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934-1938): politics, aesthetics and reception," (PhD diss., McGill University, 2006). One of Honegger's antifascist discourses was published in the Communist journal *Clarté* in 1939; Jacques Tchamkerten, *Arthur Honegger ou l'Inquiétude de l'Espérance* (Geneva: Editions Papillon, 2005), 128.

however, refuses to submit to the Assyrians but decides to lead her people to victory instead. With her servant's help, Judith enters the Assyrians' camp and asks to be introduced to Holopherne. After a drunken feast, the Assyrian chief asks Judith to spend the night with him. She follows him into his tent and beheads him in his sleep. Her mission accomplished, Judith returns to Bethulia and presents Holopherne's severed head to her people. She then orders her army to attack immediately. After a short but intense battle, Holopherne's troops capitulate. The people praise Judith and God, thanking them for their victory, but Judith, filled with remorse, retires to her room.[12]

This thesis will focus on *Judith*'s inherent paradox between a complex musical idiom and the theatre's social concerns and populist ideals by looking at the work's composition, production and reception. Why was *Judith* so poorly received by the Théâtre du Jorat's local audience when it had supposedly been carefully tailored to support the theatre's populist aims? Did Honegger's challengingly modern score support or undermine the theatre and Morax's political stance? And, how did Honegger himself reconcile the combination of a modern and challenging musical idiom with his own populist or humanist concerns?

Although *Judith* was originally composed as incidental music to accompany Morax's biblical drama, Honegger later revised his work, creating an *action musicale* (or oratorio) and an opera out of the original play and score. These two later versions were performed on several occasions internationally, thus eclipsing the first version composed specifically for the Théâtre du Jorat. Therefore, whilst

[12] See appendix no. 2 for a detailed synopsis of *Judith*.

scores and recordings exist for the second and third versions of *Judith*, no recordings or published scores of the first production are readily accessible if they exist at all. This renders the tasks of reconstituting and writing about the original version rather difficult.

Therefore, in addition to addressing a specific research problem related to modernism and populism, this thesis will provide the most complete account available in literature of the source situation surrounding the initial version of *Judith*. Indeed, this project will attempt to piece together extant accounts of *Judith*'s original theatrical production through scrutiny of archival documents, photographs and contemporary newspaper articles. Fortunately, for the purpose of this thesis, Honegger was a prolific writer and his articles and other writings have been edited and published.[13] Although the correspondence between Honegger and Morax has disappeared, the Swiss musicologist René Meylan wrote a factually detailed account of Honegger and Morax's collaboration.[14] Chapters in other key works about *Judith* by Harry Halbreich and Geoffrey K. Spratt are also crucial in helping reconstruct aspects of *Judith*'s first version.[15] Surviving photos of various rehearsals and performances of *Judith* at the Théâtre du Jorat may be accessed through the digitalized archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the archives of the Théâtre du Jorat kept at the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire of Lausanne. Moreover, a manuscript score of the first version (a

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[13] Arthur Honegger, *Ecrits*, ed. Huguette Calmel (Paris: Editions Honoré Champion, 1992).
[14] Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*.
[15] Harry Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992); Geoffroy K. Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987).

reduction for piano and voice) is held at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel. For the purpose of this thesis, this manuscript score will be used alongside the score of the *opéra sérieux*, which features all of the material present in the first version although slightly re-arranged and extended.

This thesis will first focus on the Théâtre du Jorat giving a brief history of the institution and its artistic and ideological profile. Specifying the theatre's aims and values is crucial in discussing *Judith* for each work the Théâtre du Jorat produced at the time was tailored to fit the theatre's requirements and ideological values. The plays were systematically commissioned and approved by Morax and the theatre's committee. *Judith* will be discussed in detail as exemplifying the theatre's inherent paradox: its ideological versus its artistic identities, two facets of the theatre and its production which are not necessarily reconcilable or compatible as this closer study of *Judith* will demonstrate. *Judith* will be considered as a work of transition between the populism of *Le Roi David* and the modernism of *Antigone* because it is one of Honegger's first attempts at striking a balance between his popular and modern compositional procedures. By using traditional and novel techniques, Honegger created a work which could conform to the theatre's inherent duality, its two paradoxical and arguably contradictory facets.

Finally, by looking at musicological studies, such as Daniel Albright's *Untwisting the Serpent*, contemporary studies by Paul Collaer and even Jean Cocteau's pamphlets, *Le Coq et L'Arlequin* and *Le Rappel à l'ordre*,[16] this thesis

[16] Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature and Other Arts* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); Daniel Albright, *Modernism and Music:*

will also seek to provide a possible definition of a kind of "modernism" that would best describe Honegger's populist/experimental works. This interpretation will attempt to reconcile the composer's ideological and artistic preoccupations by aligning his work for the Théâtre du Jorat with the modernist trends composers affiliated with the Popular Front explored a decade later.

An Anthology of Sources (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Paul Collaer, *A History of Modern Music*, trans. Sally Abeles (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1961); Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin: Notes Autour de la Musique* (Paris: Stock, 1918); Cocteau, *Le Rappel à l'Ordre* (Paris: Stock, 1930).

Une Œuvre Populaire: Morax and the Théâtre du Jorat

Situated in Mézières, a small village in the Swiss-French countryside, the Théâtre du Jorat aimed to be, from the very beginning, a theatrical enterprise of and for the people. Reportedly, its opening was preceded by a performance of René Morax's play *La Dîme* to celebrate the centenary of the Canton de Vaud's joining the Swiss Confederation in 1903. The play was exclusively performed by local amateurs and semi-professionals in a disused train station in Mézières.[17] Five years later, in 1908, Morax, with help from the local vicar Emile Béranger and other art-lovers from the region, founded the Théâtre du Jorat. Unfortunately, the initial committee, hierarchy and organization of the theatre are hard to reconstitute as membership lists and other similar administrative documents have not been preserved. Apparently, the committee consisted of local personalities from both Mézières and Lausanne. The theatre's opening production, René Morax's drama *Henriette*, was created and performed by local amateurs and craftsmen, immediately defining the theatre as a quintessentially artistic enterprise of the people. From then onwards, Morax put on a play every two years, drawing his cast from the local populace and writing works that he believed would appeal to all strata of the Swiss urban and rural societies.

Morax's people's theatre was directly inspired by similar theatrical ventures in neighbouring countries such as Maurice Pottecher's Théâtre du Peuple in Bussang founded in 1895 and by Romain Rolland's study *Théâtre pour le*

[17] Details of this performance of *La Dîme* in Mézières can be found in: Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat* (Neuchâtel: Editions Attinger, 1933), 24-25.

Peuple.[18] Morax clearly stated his respect for Rolland's essay when he argued that *Le Théâtre Populaire* [sic] "does not speak the dry language of abstract theories but the passionate language of profound convictions."[19] Moreover, Morax was also a fervent Wagnerite and, as such, was certainly interested in and, to some degree, influenced by the ideological and artistic properties of Wagner's *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth.[20] However, unlike these other theatres and theatrical concepts, Morax's had no educational mission. Rather, it sought primarily to entertain the local population, thus differentiating itself from other artistic populist/educational enterprises. Just before the opening of the Théâtre du Jorat, Morax published a brochure entitled *Un Théâtre à la Campagne* in which he clearly discusses his artistic and ideological motivations. He first describes the theatre from a practical point of view, insisting on the popular appeal of the theatre's architecture (Fig. 1):

> Let us hear it: it was about creating first, *practically*, a popular theatre; a theatre with limited resources, given by people's trustful generosity; - a theatre responding, all in all, to everybody's desire: see well, hear well and be simply yet comfortably seated… […] Therefore, it was well and truly up to Mézières to build, with limited resources, a rustic building adapted to the country's physiognomy and containing a vast hall and a stage suitable for great spectacular achievements.[21]

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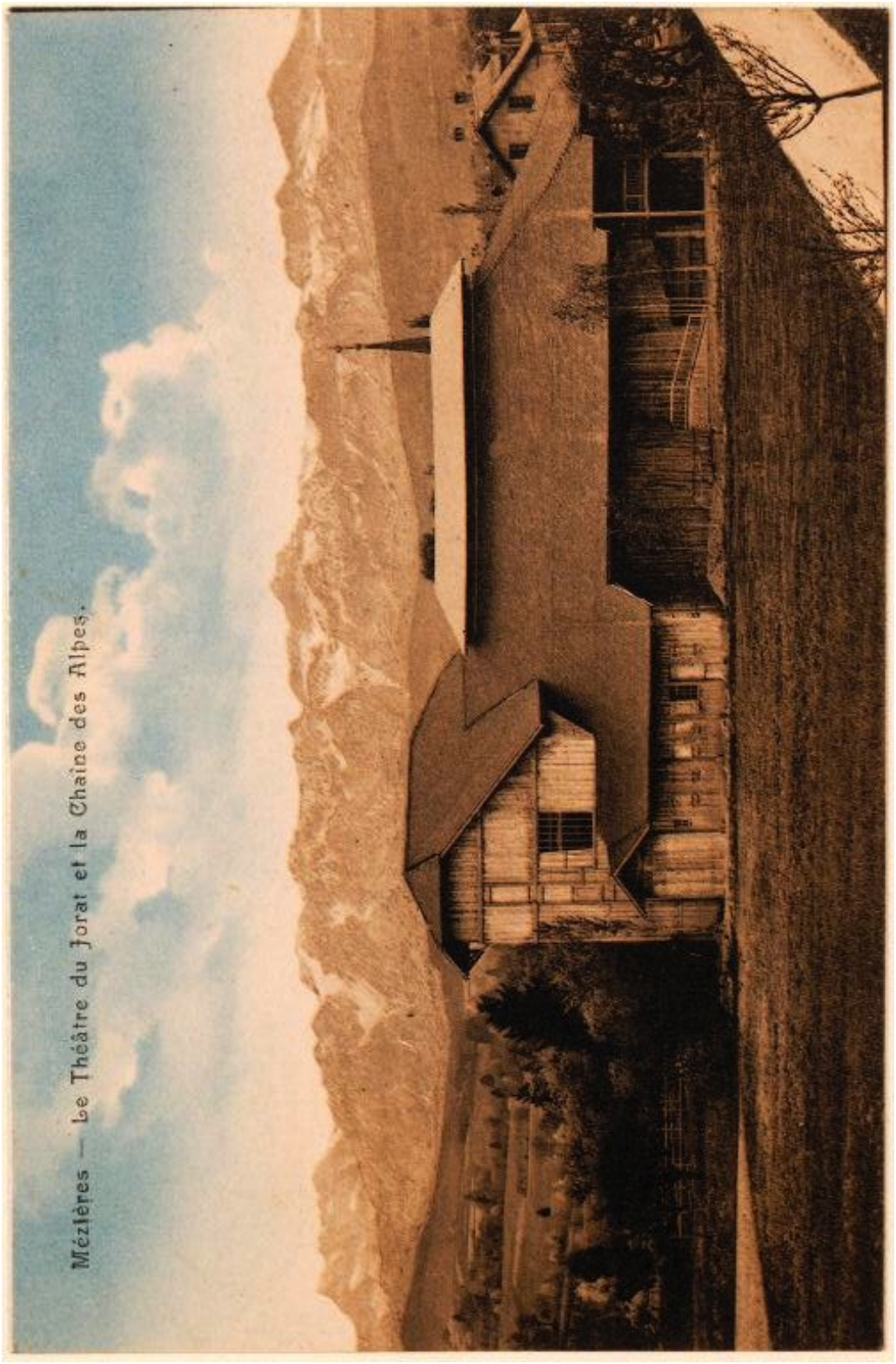
[18] Romain Rolland, *Le Théâtre du Peuple* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 2003), originally written in 1895. For more on popular theatre in France, read: Chantal Meyer-Plantureux, *Théâtre Populaire, Enjeux Politiques* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 2006).
[19] "Son livre, le *Théâtre Populaire*, […] ne parle pas la langue sèche des théories abstraites, mais la langue passionnée des convictions profondes." René Morax cited in Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 44.
[20] Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 14.
[21] "Qu'on l'entende bien : il s'agissait de créer d'abord, pratiquement, un théâtre populaire ; un théâtre avec les ressources limitées, accordées par la générosité confiante des uns et des autres ; - un théâtre répondant, en somme, au désir de tous : bien voir, bien entendre et être simplement, mais confortablement installé… […] Donc, il s'agissait bel et bien, à Mézières d'édifier, avec des ressources restreintes, un bâtiment rustique, adapté à la physionomie du pays, et contenant une salle vaste et une scène propre à de grandes

Fig. 1. Le Théâtre du Jorat.



réalisations spectaculaires." René Morax cited in Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 37-38.

Situated in the middle of fields with the Alps as its backdrop, the Théâtre du Jorat is a large renovated barn. The hall has no preferential seating, simply wooden benches, treating all of the spectators equally, like Bayreuth, irrespective of their social standing or involvement in the theatre. In his manifesto, Morax also discusses his conception of a people's theatre in more details:

> The first requirement of a popular theatre is to be entertaining.
> The second rule is to be a source of energy.
> The theatre must be a light for the intelligence.
> Joy, strength and intelligence, here are the three principal conditions of a people's theatre.[22]

Although insisting primarily on the entertainment value of his productions, Morax also sought to write plays that would be intellectually stimulating for the audience. Therefore, the Théâtre du Jorat did not resemble any countryside theatre but was a spectacular and influential artistic enterprise. It is no surprise that the theatre was immediately nicknamed the "Grange Sublime," or "Sublime Barn" in English, by the press and its audience.

The Théâtre du Jorat is also characterized by its patriotic streak, seeking inspiration in Swiss local and national legends. This is the case for *Tell* (1914), for example, one of Morax's early popular successes, and also of *La Belle de Moudon* (1931), his third collaboration with Honegger.[23] In his book on the Théâtre du Jorat, Vincent-Vincent showed the patriotic elements underpinning Morax's plays and, as a result, the theatre's. He wrote that "art is precisely one of the active

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[22] "La première condition d'un théâtre populaire, c'est d'être un délassement. Que le théâtre soit une source d'énergie, c'est la seconde loi. Le théâtre doit être une lumière pour l'intelligence. La joie, la force et l'intelligence, voilà les trois conditions capitales d'un théâtre populaire." René Morax cited in Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 44-45.

[23] Whilst *Tell* is based on the well-known national legend of William Tell, *La Belle de Moudon* paints the portrait of a picturesque village, Moudon, situated in the Canton de Vaud only a few kilometres away from Mézières, and it inhabitants.

forms of a character, of a personality inscribed within a precise framework, clinched to its land, to its traditions, to its past, to the colour of its sky, in short: to the representation of ethnic ideas and sentiments, sometimes even regionalist." [24] Saint-Saëns in a short "review" of the Théâtre du Jorat also noted the patriotic nature of Morax's project:

> […] Switzerland is a country where artistic manifestations are not so rare; each year, one hears of imposing performances in which the population itself participates; people come from all around and even from a great distance thanks to the easy means of communication so frequent in this delightful region. It is therefore no great surprise to have seen a theatre being built there in the pretty village of Mézières, near Lausanne, for the performance of works by a young poet, Mr. Morax, dramas accompanied by choirs, for which the region itself provides the elements.[25]

Surely, the theatre's latent patriotism and the straightforward egalitarian nature of its setting were important factors in its popularity as it created a strong, almost visceral, attachment between the theatre and its local audience. The "Grange Sublime" rapidly became the pride of Mézières and its people.

Besides being a patriotic enterprise for and of the people, the Théâtre du Jorat was also an artistic one as it sought to provide a platform for new music and theatre. It did this by producing original plays every summer, thus supporting local contemporary artists, such as Swiss composers Gustave Doret and

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[24] "Car l'art est précisément une des formes agissantes d'un caractère, d'une personnalité s'inscrivant dans un cadre précis, rivée à sa terre, à des traditions, à son passé, à la couleur de son ciel, en bref : à la représentation d'idées et de sentiments ethniques, parfois régionalistes même." Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 57-58.

[25] "[…] La Suisse est un pays où les manifestations artistiques ne sont pas rares ; chaque année, le bruit nous arrive de représentations grandioses, où le peuple lui-même prend part ; on y vient assister de tous côtés, et même de fort loin, grâce aux faciles moyens de communication si fréquents dans cette délicieuse contrée. Il est donc moins étonnant qu'ailleurs d'y avoir vu construire un théâtre dans le joli bourg de Mézières, près Lausanne, pour la représentation des œuvres d'un jeune poète, M. Morax, drames accompagnés de chœurs, dont le pays même fournit les éléments." Saint-Saëns cited in Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 104-105.

Honegger. From the beginning, music was an essential component of the Théâtre du Jorat's theatrical productions. Morax immediately recognized the popularity of choral singing in Switzerland and was keen to incorporate this national tradition within his own plays. The playwright discussed his theatrical/musical concept with Romain Rolland, also a passionate music-lover. The latter, probably unaware of the popularity of the Swiss choral tradition, argued that incorporating a choir within the play would only contribute to alienating the people from the elite because of its references to and affiliation with antique classical theatre. He wrote in a letter to Morax: "I fear the ancient ideal. It does not seem to answer today's needs; and I am afraid that it will rise yet another barrier between the thoughts of the elite and those of the people which are already far enough from one another."[26] Morax proved Rolland wrong by successfully striking a balance between the Swiss choral tradition and the "ancient ideals" of classical theatre. He did so by clarifying the dramatic and musical roles of the choir and shaping its music into an accessible idiom. By making music an essential component of his theatrical concept, he was then able to attract choral societies and their audiences to the theatre, appealing to a specifically musical spectatorship which would not necessarily have come otherwise.[27] Morax's interest in music was not solely opportunistic though as he was himself an aspiring composer and had been active

[26] "Je crains l'idéal antique. Il ne me semble plus répondre aux besoins d'aujourd'hui; et je redoute qu'il ne mette une barrière de plus entre la pensée de l'élite et le peuple, qui en est déjà bien assez loin." Romain Rolland cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 14.
[27] Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 12.

in the Swiss and French musical circles for several years before founding the theatre.[28]

Despite his keen interest in music, Morax did not work towards a synthesis between these two art forms. Rather, he established a subtle interrelationship between music and text which was nonetheless governed by a clear hierarchy. His text was to remain the play's most important aspect, the music only intervening to underline the dramatic action or to help create a particular atmosphere.[29] By bringing these different art forms and musical traditions together, Morax successfully laid the foundations of a new people's theatre. The playwright explained his all-embracing theatrical concept himself to the Swiss writer Gaston Bridel: "The remoteness of Mézières and even its difficulty of access guaranteed, in a way, the special character of this integral theatre, of this theatre where speech, music, choirs, décors, architecture, painting were equally honoured and formed this aggregate that is called a theatrical performance."[30] Vincent-Vincent later praised the all-embracing quality of Morax's "integral theatre":

> […] The Théâtre du Jorat has demonstrated, in the pre-First World War epoch, that dramatic art could at last exist by itself and for itself in French-speaking Switzerland. And, by *Dramatic Art*, I mean a *complete* art where the text becomes plastic, painted, sculpted, alive; where the music – the first magical or tragic element – finds its place in the theatre, and where costumes and décors are not left to the most

[28] Indeed, Morax wrote the incidental music for his play *La Nuit des Quatre Temps* (1902). Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 13.
[29] Pierre Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 11.
[30] "L'éloignement de Mézières et même sa difficulté d'accès garantissaient en quelque sorte le caractère spécial de ce théâtre intégral, de ce théâtre où la parole, la musique, les chœurs, le décor, l'architecture, la peinture étaient également honorés et formaient cet ensemble qu'on appelle une représentation théâtrale." Morax cited in Gaston Bridel, *Le Théâtre en Suisse Romande* (Lucerne: Theaterkultur-Verlag, 1937), 51.

> manifest chance anymore but are part of the action, being necessary creations themselves.[31]

Thus, the Théâtre du Jorat was not a simple rustic countryside theatre but a sophisticated and intellectual artistic project whose spectacularly stunning productions could attract a large and varied audience. Its reputation was such that French critics and artists, such as Saint-Saëns, acknowledged the theatre's quality and promoted it as an important and influential artistic institution in the Swiss and French artistic milieux.

Le Roi David

Four plays, *Henriette* (1908), *Aliénor* (1910), *La Nuit des Quatre Temps* (1912) and *Tell* (1914), sufficed to propel Morax and his new "integral" and populist theatrical concept to the forefront of the Swiss artistic scene. By 1914 people from the country and the cities flocked to the Théâtre du Jorat. The theatre immediately enjoyed a great popular and critical success. It appealed to amateurs and specialists alike, creating a large circle of devotees from both the countryside and the city. However, the First World War put a sudden halt to the whole enterprise after only six years. Nevertheless, Morax continued exploring new artistic possibilities and opening up his aesthetic perspectives influenced by his travels to India and his acquaintance with Igor Stravinsky whom he met through Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz. The theatre reopened in 1921 with *Le Roi David*, a work that

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[31] "[…] le Théâtre du Jorat a démontré, à l'époque d'avant-guerre, que l'art dramatique pouvait enfin exister par soi-même et pour soi-même en Suisse française. Et par Art Dramatique, j'entends un art complet, où le texte est rendu plastique, peint, sculpté, vivant ; où la musique – premier élément féerique ou tragique – se trouve à sa place sur le théâtre, et où les costumes et les décors ne sont plus laissés au hasard le plus manifeste, mais font partie de l'action, étant eux-mêmes créations nécessaires." Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 63-64.

stood in strong contrast with the theatre's pre-war productions. It was Morax's first biblical drama and his first attempt at writing a play with no particular ties to Swiss culture. He hoped that the story's "universal theme" could be received and understood by all whatever their origins and faith.

The realization of this new work was more difficult than expected: Gustave Doret, Morax's usual collaborator, had refused to work on *Le Roi David* as he was reportedly too busy with other artistic projects at the time. Pressed for time, Morax then turned to Arthur Honegger, a "prophet without honour in his own country" at the time, on the recommendation of the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet.[32] With only two months to complete his score, Honegger started working on *Le Roi David* immediately. He was forced to compose rapidly, sending the choral sections one by one to the theatre as soon as they were finished to allow rehearsals to start straight away. Honegger was also constrained by other limitations as he had to write for an amateur cast of mixed abilities and a small orchestra of fifteen players. Despite this precipitate start, *Le Roi David* was successfully premiered on 11 June 1921. Honegger's score immediately met with quasi-unanimous enthusiasm from both audience and critics. Discussing the work's premiere, French music critic Emile Vuillermoz of *Le Temps* praised the work and its composer by writing:

> This work will allow us to form a fairly complete opinion on the true nature of its author. It is particularly representative and significant. It is a recent work which no longer depends on a period of trial and error, drafts or rapid sketches on the basis of which an author does not

[32] James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof: Scenes from Musical Life in Paris in the Twenties* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 125.

> wish to be judged […] therefore, it is spontaneous, has no excessive frivolities and is very sincerely instinctive.[33]

Aloys Mooser, a reputable and exigent critic, also praised the work and Honegger's newfound compositional maturity in *La Suisse* on 13 June 1921:

> The integrity of this art, affirmed by an equal contempt for bluff and vain eccentricities of which so many others, Milhaud above all, are in the habit of using […] I am under the impression, however, that the public, despite being completely taken aback, has not remained indifferent to the expressive strength, the conviction and sincerity and the warm lyricism which make Honegger's score so alive and powerful.[34]

Mooser then goes on to argue that "the score is at the same time by a musician and a poet," then asking his readers: "Do you know many other modern works about which we can say as much?"[35] Gabriel Astruc in his *Souvenirs* (1929) went further still. Describing the work's popular appeal, he writes that "Honegger […] realized the sacred union with *Le Roi David* as the pontiffs, the snobs, the extremists and the true music-lovers agreed to consider it a master-work." [36]

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[33] "Cette œuvre va nous permettre de nous former une opinion assez complète sur la véritable nature de son auteur. Elle est particulièrement représentative et significative. Elle est récente, elle ne fait plus partie des ballons d'essai, des esquisses ou des pochades d'étude sur lesquels un auteur ne tient pas à être jugé; […] elle est donc spontanée sans coquetteries excessives, très sincèrement instinctive." Emile Vuillermoz cited in and translated by Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 58.

[34] "La probité de cet art, qui s'affirme par un égal dédain du bluff et des vaines excentricités dont tant d'autres – Darius Milhaud le tout premier – sont coutumiers […] J'ai l'impression cependant que ce public, tout surpris qu'il ait pu être, n'est point demeuré insensible à la force expressive, à la conviction et à la sincérité, au lyrisme chaleureux qui font si vivante, si fort la partition de M. Honegger." R. Aloys Mooser cited in and translated by Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 58.

[35] "[…] la partition est tout à la fois d'un musicien et d'un poète. […] Connaissez-vous beaucoup d'œuvres modernes dont on puisse en dire autant ?" Aloys Mooser cited in Marcel Delannoy, *Honegger* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1986), 75.

[36] "Honegger […] réalisait l'union sacrée avec Le Roi David que les pontifes, les snobs, les extrémistes et les vrais amis de la musique s'accordent à considérer comme un chef-d'œuvre." Gabriel Astruc cited in Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 144. By "union sacrée" or "sacred union," Astruc was probably referring to a political truce in France at the beginning of the First World War between all French political and religious parties.

Honegger was inspired by his successful first contact with the audience of the Jorat and with Morax's popular artistic preoccupations. They helped him rethink his role as a composer and the social and cultural impact his work could have on communities where it was being performed. In a 1951 interview for a Swedish radio programme, Honegger discussed the aftermath of *Le Roi David*'s success: "The reception the work was given after its first performance strengthened me in my understanding and in my efforts to create an art which is direct [or accessible] in every way, both to the music itself and the listener."[37] Not only did *Le Roi David* allow him to reconsider his work and his role "in the *polis*," it also initiated his huge contribution to stage and film music. The popular appeal of cinema, in particular, offered Honegger a way to reach the widest possible audience. As Halbreich observed, Honegger was an "eclectic composer with two audiences: the music-lovers of the Salle Pleyel and the starry-eyed girls [les midinettes] of the local movie theatres."[38] In 1923, Honegger rewrote *Le Roi David*, transforming it into an oratorio in order to facilitate the performance of the work abroad. In the long run, *Le Roi David* proved to be an immense contribution to both incidental music or *musique de scène* and oratorio as Honegger succeeded in transcending the genres' limitations to produce a score accessible to all.

According to musicologist James Harding, Honegger's triumph with *Le Roi David* was in large part due to his "conservative" style. As Harding wrote, Honegger set forth to "rejuvenate" these old traditions from Bach to Fauré and

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[37] Honegger cited in Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 61.
[38] "Arthur Honegger, compositeur éclectique à deux auditoires: les mélomanes de la salle Pleyel et les midinettes des cinémas de quartier." Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 698.

Debussy "with a quality of invention which though modern in technique was humane and accessible."[39] Honegger praised Bach for his polyphonic complexity and sophistication, writing in his book *Je suis compositeur*:

> I have a tendency, maybe exaggerated, to look for polyphonic complexity. My great model is Jean Sébastien Bach. […] Bach uses elements from tonal harmony in the same way that I would like to use modern harmonic superimpositions.[40]

Among others, Honegger also praised Beethoven for his large yet intricate formal architectures and Wagner for the effective musical effects and techniques used to construct and unify his spectacular *Gesamtkunstwerke*. Honegger's particular attachment to the German romantic tradition sets him far apart from his neoclassical colleagues. His Swiss-German roots and brief studies at the conservatoire in Zurich may have allowed him to explore and identify himself closely to German art music, including that of the late nineteenth century, which many of his French colleagues sought to avoid. Honegger's influences were so transparent and reverential that musicologists, such as Marcel Delannoy, went as far as to call him a "spiritual son of the German Romantics."[41]

Judith

Honegger started working on *Judith* towards the end of 1924 and finished his score in April 1925. Not much is known about the actual collaboration between Honegger and Morax on *Judith* for their correspondence is inaccessible. Besides, Honegger seldom discussed the particulars of his work for the Théâtre du Jorat.

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[39] Harding, *The Ox on the Roof*, 127.
[40] "J'ai une tendance peut-être exagérée, a recherché la complexité polyphonique. Mon grand modèle est Jean Sébastien Bach. […] Bach se sert des éléments de l'harmonie tonale, comme je voudrais me servir des superpositions harmoniques modernes." Honegger cited in Eric Landowski, *Honegger* (Bourges: Editions du Seuil, 1957), 119.
[41] Marcel Delannoy, *Honegger* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1986), 23.

Presumably, because the two men resided in two different countries, they worked independently on *Judith*, Honegger only making minor, mostly aesthetic, modifications to Morax's libretto. In his open letter, *Pour Prendre Congé*, Honegger discussed interdisciplinary collaborations, a discussion which could potentially shed some light on the associative artistic projects he took part in before 1931:

> I dream of a collaboration which would succeed in being total; that the poet would think of himself as a musician and the musician as a poet, in order that the work produced from this union would not be a hazardous result of a series of approximations and concessions, but the harmonious synthesis of two aspects of one and the same thought.[42]

By 1931, Honegger was clearly still waiting for a "total collaboration" in which music and text could reach the "harmonious synthesis" he longed for. When composing for the Théâtre du Jorat, Honegger was presumably dependent on Morax's text and held back by the theatre's physical limitations, reputation and ideology. The theatre's restrictions did not allow for a true symbiosis between text and music to be achieved, but rather led to a dichotomy between these different artistic mediums. This encouraged many critics and musicologists to judge the text separately from the score and *vice versa*.

During the five years separating *Judith* from *Le Roi David*, an important shift in Honegger's aesthetics and compositional style can be observed. This shift is especially audible in works such as his now famous "symphonic movement" *Pacific 231* (1923), a complex exploration of rhythmic and contrapuntal

[42] "Je rêve d'une collaboration qui parviendrait à être totale que, souvent, le poète pensât en musicien et le musicien en poète, pour que l'œuvre issue de cette union ne soit pas le hasardeux résultat d'une série d'approximations et de concessions, mais l'harmonieuse synthèse de deux aspects d'une même pensée." Honegger, cited in Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 240.

possibilities and techniques. As Spratt observed, in the transitory period separating these two works, "there is particular evidence of Honegger's conscious effort in experimenting with the renewal, adaptation and development of traditional aspects of form and tonality in conjunction with his views on melodic and rhythmic relationship and equilibria."[43] Therefore, although *Judith* was born out of the success of *Le Roi David* and shared many points of comparison with its predecessor, Honegger had matured as a composer over the course of the preceding five years. More experienced and confident, he was then open to explore and able to assimilate smoothly new ideas and techniques into his own works.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Honegger experimented with several compositional techniques and genres in both vocal and instrumental music. He produced a series of contrasting works drawn from different subject matters, from folklore to religion, and intended for virtually every medium, including the theatre, concert hall, cinema and radio. *Le Roi David* and *Judith* exemplified Honegger's passion for Bach and the German symphonic and operatic tradition. As Honegger wrote: "I do not have the culture of the fair and the music hall but, to the contrary, that of chamber and symphonic music at its most grand and austere."[44] Honegger's strict, idiosyncratic and reverential recasting of past musical traditions and modern compositional techniques contrasts with his colleagues' light-hearted audacity and provocative playfulness. Unlike many of

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[43] Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 63.

[44] "Je n'ai pas la culture de la foire et du music-hall, mais au contraire, celui de la musique de chambre et de la musique symphonique dans ce qu'elle a de plus grand et plus austère." Honegger cited in Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 185.

his colleagues, Honegger was generally unmoved by musical fashions. By embracing works by composers who were demonized by others, such as Wagner and Debussy, he showed a radical aesthetic distance from many of his colleagues. Honegger's reliance on traditional compositional procedures accounts in part for the general popular appeal of his work of the early 1920s as A. G. Browne, a contemporary musicologist, argued:

> There is no denying that Arthur Honegger is popular. This is all the more striking when we consider the relative unpopularity of his harmonic and rhythmic peers – Strawinsky [*sic*], Schönberg, Prokofieff, or Hindemith. Honegger has never sacrificed his modern idiom for the sake of being understood but in some way his music excites admiration which is different from the rather fierce and conscious acclamation accorded to Srawinsky. We like Honegger spontaneously because he gives us something more than a sense of experiment: his music rests on foundations which we know to be of good stuff.

The author concludes his review by arguing that "Honegger may show us that it is possible to develop the classical tradition without becoming neo-classic, whatever that may purport."[45] Browne thus insists on distancing Honegger from his colleagues of Les Six and the "neoclassical trend" in general.

Honegger's musical influences were primarily drawn from three musical cultures: German, French and Swiss. The history of Swiss-French music mostly moves in parallel with that of France. However, Harry Halbreich noted a stark contrast between the two cultures that shaped Honegger's compositional identity. He insisted that the different political and ideological climate of the two countries sets them apart musically. Accordingly, the Swiss decentralized political structure encouraged local initiatives, such as that of Mézières and the proliferation of good

[45] A. G. Browne, "A Study of Arthur Honegger," in *Music and Letters* 10/4 (October, 1929): 372-377, 372 & 377.

choral societies. These initiatives supported artistic freedom by providing an important number of performance possibilities, especially for choral music.[46] French-speaking Switzerland's Protestantism and strong choral tradition thus led to a renewal of several religious and choral genres in the 1930s and 1940s, including the oratorio. Therefore, Honegger, with works such as *Le Roi David* and *Judith*, led the way for Swiss composers such as Frank Martin, author of several oratorios including *Le Vin Herbé* (1938-1941) and *Golgotha* (1945-1948).

Although other Swiss composers such as Gustave Doret and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze also enjoyed success in Geneva, Lausanne and Paris, Honegger symbolized for many a union between the Swiss and French musical scenes.[47] As argued by Michèle Alten, the complexity of Honegger's compositional identity resides in his "composite personality of Calvinist Swiss, provincial French bourgeois and Parisian artist."[48] Honegger discussed his "composite identity" and the differences between his French and Swiss inheritance on numerous occasions:

> Born in Le Havre from Swiss parents, I lived in France for most of my life, I studied there as if I had been French, but carrying inside a Swiss seed, an atavism, what Milhaud called my "Swiss sensitivity."[49]

He later added:

> What do I owe to Switzerland? Without doubt, the protestant tradition, a great difficulty in deceiving myself about the true merit of my

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[46] Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 700.
[47] René Dumesnil, *La Musique en France entre les Deux Guerres 1919-1939* (Geneva: Editions du milieu du monde, 1946), 48-49.
[48] Michèle Alten, "Arthur Honegger et son temps: Les combats d'un conservateur du progrès," in *Arthur Honegger: Werk und Rezeption / L'Œuvre et sa Réception*, edited by Peter Jost (Bern: Peter Land, 2009), 93.
[49] "Né au Havre de parents suisses, j'ai vécu en France la majeure partie de ma vie, j'y ai fait mes études, comme si j'avais été français, mais en portant au fond de moi un germe, un atavisme suisses, ce que Milhaud appelait 'ma sensibilité helvétique.'" Honegger cited in Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: Un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 699.

> actions, a naïve sense of honesty, a familiarity with the Bible: these are rather disparate elements.[50]

Honegger cherished his eclectic influences and his rich, multi-facetted, cultural identity, seeking not to "strike a balance between tendencies acceptable to progressives and those that pleased conservatives," as Jane Fulcher argued, but rather to use his atypical musical references as the foundations for an idiosyncratic modern transnational idiom.[51]

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[50] "Ce que je dois à la Suisse? Sans doute, la tradition protestante, une grande difficulté à m'abuser sur la valeur de ce que je fais, un sens naïf de l'honnêteté, la familiarité de la Bible." Honegger cited in Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 699.

[51] Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 186.

Judith as Transition: Tradition Versus Modernity

Before focusing on the music for *Judith*, a short description of the work's complex editorial situation is crucial.[52] Shortly after the first production of the work at the Théâtre du Jorat, Honegger revised his score several times. The first was to produce an *opéra sérieux*, commissioned by the Monte-Carlo Opera House, premiered on 13 February 1926; and secondly an oratorio or *action musicale*, premiered on 16 June 1927 in Rotterdam. Moreover, two different versions of the *drame biblique* (or biblical drama) were also discovered, the second one containing movements that later found their way into the opera and *action musicale*.[53]

Previous analyses of *Judith* are based essentially on the two later versions of the work as the manuscript score for the biblical drama was held safely in a private collection for many years. Therefore, none of the musicologists offering an analysis of the work, such as Meylan, Spratt or Halbreich, were able to access the surviving manuscript at the time. For instance, the score Spratt uses for his analysis of *Judith* is not that of the first version but presumably that of the *action musicale* as he mentions several movements which are not featured in the biblical drama such as "Mort d'Holopherne" and "Retour de Judith." The complex editorial situation of *Judith* and the impossibility to consult the first version's original score at the time led Spratt to mistake the *action musicale* for the *drame*

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[52] *Judith*'s editorial situation has been researched and documented by Huguette Calmel: Huguette Calmel, "Les différents visages de *Judith*," in *Bulletin de l'Association Arthur Honegger* 8 (December 2001): 11-25.

[53] See annexe no. 1 for a clear performance and editorial history of the different versions of *Judith*.

biblique. Thus, he only acknowledged the existence of two versions in his analysis, the oratorio and the opera. Alternatively, Meylan's analysis of *Judith* is solely based on the opera, but he does acknowledge the existence of three different versions. Nonetheless, their analyses are still relevant as all of the material used in *Judith*'s original version was incorporated and developed in the two later versions. Therefore, Spratt's leitmotivic study of the work can certainly be applied to an analysis of the *drame biblique*, although the more intricate tonal and motivic correlations he observes between the movements are certainly more fully developed in the later lengthier versions of *Judith*.

The incidental music Honegger composed for *Judith* originally comprised thirteen distinct movements, thus forming an overall more integrated and cohesive score than that of *Le Roi David* (Fig. 2). The latter is constituted of 27 shorter numbers and, therefore, appears to be more fragmented and diffuse. *Judith*'s first version was orchestrated for a small orchestra of fifteen players: percussion, harmonium, two pianos and strings and a large mixed choir. Honegger's score only features two sung roles, the "servant girl" (soprano) and Judith (mezzo-soprano). Judith sings in the first, third and last movements but only "Prière" is a solo piece as the other two movements feature crowd scenes and are accompanied by a choir. The servant girl only sings in "Chœur des Vierges" which is accompanied by a women's choir. There are four instrumental movements, "La Trompe d'Alarme," "Fanfare," "Musique de Fête," and "Nocturne." Unlike the opera version, *Judith* is not composed of longer solos but consists of a succession of instrumental, choral and soloist sections colorfully punctuating the onstage "spoken" drama. Thus, these movements, despite being clearly delineated and

self-contained musical numbers, are cleverly integrated in the story. They actively participate in advancing or revealing the plot, such as in the battle scene which is solely musical or the opening movement, "Lamentations," which helps set the context for the whole story. Unfortunately, because the manuscript score of this first version only features the musical movements, it is impossible to assess how the spoken dialogues interacted with the music. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, contemporary critics did not discuss the interaction between text and music but tended to focus on either one or the other. Therefore, many details of this first production at the Théâtre du Jorat still remain open to speculation.

Fig. 2. Structure of *Judith*'s first version.

Drame Biblique
1. Lamentations
2. La Trompe d'Alarme
3. Prière
4. Cantique Funèbre
5. Invocation
6. Incantation
7. Fanfare
8. Scène à la Fontaine
9. Musique de Fête
[9bis La Mort d'Holopherne]*
10. Nocturne
[10bis Retour de Judith]*
11. Cantique de Bataille
12. Chœur des Vierges
13. Cantique de Victoire

* "La Mort d'Holopherne" and "Retour de Judith" are featured in the second version of the biblical drama registered by Huguette Calmel. These two movements, although not performed at the Théâtre du Jorat, were later incorporated into the *action musicale* and the opera. The *action musicale* also features an 11bis movement titled "Interlude."

"Honeggerian Prosody"

Judith is best described as a work of transition, one that symbolizes Honegger's passage from *Le Roi David* to *Antigone*, from a traditional and youthful compositional identity to one that is more radically modern and mature. As Halbreich famously wrote about *Judith*: "It is not *Le Roi David* anymore, it is not yet *Antigone* and, between the oratorio and the opera, it is searching for itself."[54] Although still reverential towards his past musical sources, Honegger uses these more subtly in *Judith* as a means to create solid and familiar foundations for his novel musical ideas and modern compositional techniques. Therefore, *Judith* can be understood as a remodelling and exploration of past musical traditions and modern techniques from Bach to Stravinsky. However, Honegger's influences are transformed and rendered unfamiliar by the use of modern and idiosyncratic compositional tools, such as "Honeggerian prosody," and the exploration of new fiercely dissonant harmonic possibilities. Looking at the interplay between the work's traditional and modern elements will help us understand in what ways Honegger sought to reconcile the theatre's populism with his musical experimentalism.

Whilst composing *Judith*, Honegger was also working in parallel on another project for the stage, his opera *Antigone*. He started work on this opera in 1924, only a few months before *Judith*, and the work premiered in Brussels on 28 December 1927. Therefore, it is no surprise that these two vocal works have many musical features in common. However, *Antigone* was generally more musically

[54] "Ce n'est plus *Le Roi David*, ce n'est pas encore *Antigone*, et, entre l'oratorio et l'opéra, elle se cherche." Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 499.

radical than *Judith* as its harmonic language was consistently experimental and dissonant. Moreover, Cocteau's libretto was modern and challenging and the *mise-en-scène* mixed tribal and futuristic elements which would have been rejected at the Théâtre du Jorat. Nonetheless, both works elaborate on a new system of prosody, one that, according to Honegger, would allow for a better understanding of the text. Therefore, although *Antigone* may have incarnated Honegger's new ambitions, or rather his revolutionary outlook on lyrical expression, *Judith* led the way for his novel vocal compositions by providing him with an opportunity to explore his new ideas. By the late 1920s, Honegger's new system of prosody had become one of the most distinctive and recognizable features of his style of vocal writing.

According to Landowski, this innovative system relies on three essential principles: first, the melodic line must be rigorously syllabic; second, the melodic line must remain within the singer's middle range, avoiding melismas and high, long-held notes which would only impede the singer's projection of the text; and, finally, accents are voluntarily displaced in order to render the words more percussive.[55] Honegger explains his interest for prosody in the preface to *Antigone*: "Here were my preoccupations when writing the music for *Antigone*: […] To look for the correct accentuation especially in the accentuated consonances in opposition to conventional prosody which treats them as anacrusis."[56] Although still in its experimental phase in *Judith*, this new system

[55] Landowski, *Honegger*, 92.
[56]"Voici quelles ont été mes préoccupations en écrivant la musique d'*Antigone*: […] Chercher l'accentuation juste principalement dans les consonnes d'attaque en opposition à la prosodie conventionnelle qui les traite en anacrouse." Honegger cited in Huguette

generally allowed for a clearer projection of the text. Honegger successfully preserved the words' rhythmic profiles and their percussiveness by displacing their natural accent. Thus, Honegger's *Judith* presented a radical change from a denser and, to some extent, more virtuoso operatic vocal style with which a large percentage of the spectators and amateur performers of the Théâtre du Jorat would presumably have been familiar. Despite the technique's newness and originality, Honegger's concerns for clarity and accessibility aligned his experiments with prosody with the aims of the people's theatre.

This interest in conveying the text clearly through music has a long tradition in a number of different musical cultures from Dargomïzhsky to Janáček and Debussy.[57] Honegger thus explores new musical possibilities by building on an already existing tradition. However, unlike Debussy in *Pelléas et Mélisande* for example, Honegger does not seek to transpose the natural flow or intonations of spoken French into music in *Judith*. In fact, Honegger's reliance on accent

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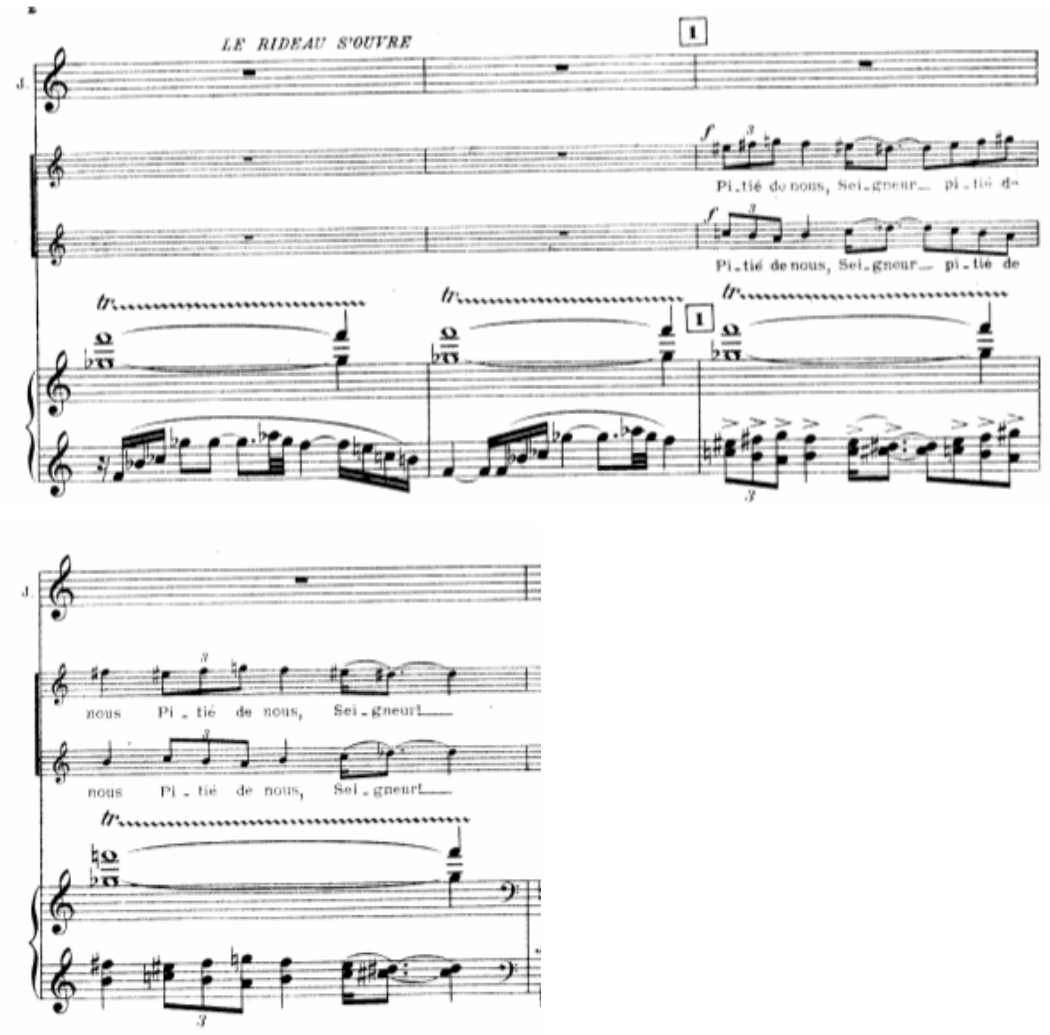
Calmel, "Quelques problèmes posés par les rapports texte/musique dans l'œuvre d'Honegger," in *Honegger-Milhaud: Musique et Esthétique: Actes du Colloque International Arthur Honegger-Darius Milhaud*, ed. Manfred Kelkel (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1994), 94-107, 95.

[57] Russian composer Aleksandr Sergeyevich Dargomïzhsky had already explored novel possibilities for text setting in his opera *The Stone Guest* composed on a text by Pushkin, which later inspired Modest Musorgsky for his unfinished operatic venture *The Marriage* on a text by Gogol. In Czechoslovakia and France, similar ideas were being explored in works by Leoš Janáček and Claude Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. For more on Dargomïzhsky's *Stone Guest*, read: Richard Taruskin, "Dargomïzhsky and His Stone Guest," in *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 70-75; For more on Musorgsky's *The Marriage*, read: Richard Taruskin, "Chapter 2: Handel, Shakespeare, and Musorgsky: The Sources and Limits of Russian Musical Realism," in *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 71-95; For more on Janáček's use of declamation in his vocal works, read: Miloš Štědroň, "Direct discourse and speech melody in Janáček's operas," in *Janáček Studies*, ed. Paul Wingfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79-108; For more on Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, read: Roger Nichols and Richard Langham-Smith, *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

displacement works against reproducing the natural intonation of speech. Instead of focusing on the sound of the spoken word, Honegger acknowledged its rhythmic profile and successfully emphasized it when setting the text to music. One of his fundamental preoccupations with the vocal parts of his score was to project the words clearly over the orchestral part in order to support and convey the signification of each sung word in Morax's text. The clarity of the text setting is particularly relevant to the context in which *Judith* was premiered. There was no amplification system in Mézières to help actors and singers get the text across to over a thousand spectators.

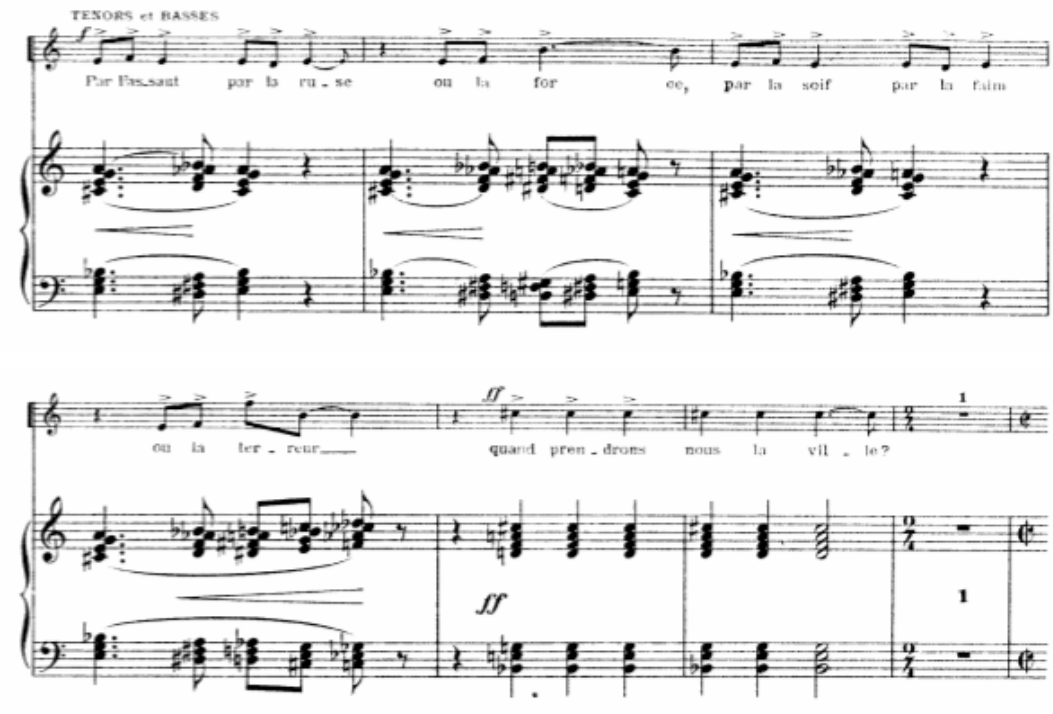
For instance, the opening of "Lamentations" is particularly representative of Honegger's preoccupation with prosody (Ex. 1). The text is set syllabically and the two lines sit within a comfortable range for the different vocal forces thus allowing them to project the words loudly (*forte*), clearly and convincingly. Moreover, the two vocal parts are homorhythmic and emphasize the accents on key words such as "*Pitié*" and "*Seigneur*" throughout.

Ex. 1. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 1. "Lamentations," mm. 1-8.



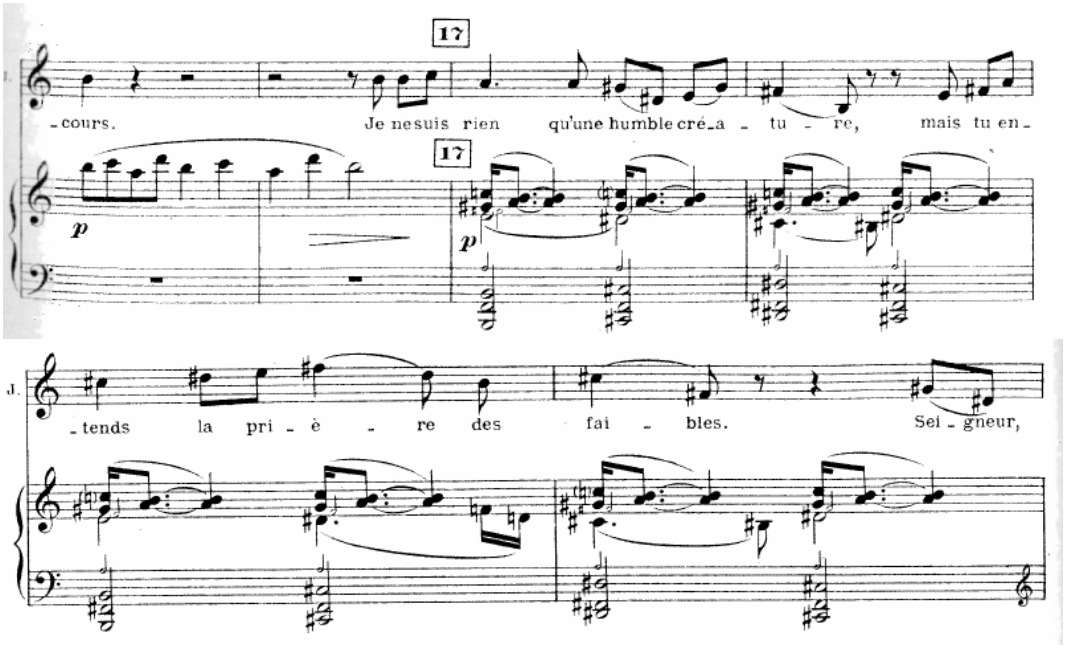
A further example of Honegger's treatment of prosody can be found in the choral section "Incantation" in which the voices are treated rhythmically rather than melodically, simply progressing through harmonic shifts around pivot notes (Ex. 2). The repetition of simple and short rhythmic cells, such as a two eighth notes and quarter note motive, also allow for a better understanding of the text. These clear, unambiguous, rhythmic and melodic profiles of the vocal line with forceful accentuation on key words such as "*forces*" and "*assaut*" focus the listener on what is being sung, rather than how it is being sung.

Ex. 2. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 6. "Incantation," mm. 28-34.



This technique is used throughout the work in both the choral and solo sections, even though Judith's lines tend to be slightly more lyrical and rhythmically intricate than in the choral sections. This may be observed clearly in her solo "Prière," although even here the characteristics of Honegger's distinctive system of prosody are maintained (Ex. 3). The text is set syllabically, all unnecessary melodic ornaments are removed and the accents on key words such as "*créature*" are emphasized.

Ex. 3. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 3. "Prière," mm. 5-10.



Judith's Generic Identity

As mentioned previously, Honegger's juxtaposition of a variety of past musical traditions with modern compositional procedures is arguably one of the work's most crucial features. It seems to affect each of the work's constituents, including its generic identity. The first version of *Judith* has no clear generic markers but mixes elements from various genres, most notably oratorio and opera. By embracing both traditional and more progressive stylistic devices and expanding the borders delimitating these different musical genres, Honegger explored and renewed stage music and oratorio.

Although Honegger did not write oratorios *per se* for the Théâtre du Jorat, he did explore and incorporate a variety of its generic markers within *Judith*. He could then easily transform his work into a full-blown oratorio, thus adapting Morax's plays to the concert hall. The most recent precedent was presumably

Debussy's *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911) which was originally composed as incidental music and later transformed into a *drame lyrique*.[58] However, Honegger's influences go back further to Romantic and Baroque oratorios embracing many of the most traditional aspects of the genre. The generic markers of oratorio are hard to define accurately because of its strong ties to opera throughout its history. However, Honegger's *Judith* clearly incorporates a number of its less ambiguous characteristics starting with its religious subject matter. *Judith* is a setting of a biblical story based on the Old Testament, even though Morax's dramatic treatment of it, its strong oriental and erotic flavours, owes more to Wilde's *Salome* than to the original parable. One may argue that the troubled psychological profile of Honegger and Morax's heroine is not dissimilar to other contemporary (or slightly earlier) operatic efforts whose composers shared a similar interest in psychosis or psychotic characters. These include Strauss with *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), Bartók with *Bluebeard's Castle* (1918) and Berg with *Wozzeck* (1925), among others.

Honegger confessed on several occasions his passion for opera. However, he acknowledged the difficulty of having an opera performed and the elitist nature of the cultural institutions in charge whose stages could never serve as a platform for his social and humanist ideals: "My dream would have been to compose only operas; but it would have been a waste of effort in an epoch where lyrical theatre

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[58] Claude Debussy's *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien* was originally composed as incidental music for soprano, two contraltos, choir and orchestra for a play by Gabriele D'Annunzio in 1911. The music was later adapted into a *drame lyrique* incorporating elements of ballet, oratorio and sacred dramatic mime. Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 483.

is about to disappear."[59] Therefore, Honegger composed very few operas, focusing his efforts on oratorios, which were more adaptable for performance and, consequently, easier to disseminate.[60] Throughout his career, the oratorio has, to some extent, functioned as a substitute for opera. It contained many of its musical characteristics yet renounced the more luxurious and elitist aspects of the genre's production practices. The flexibility, adaptability and accessibility of the genre suited Honegger's humanist and social concerns better. Moreover, the oratorio functioned as a platform for musical innovation throughout its history as it was constantly reshaped by new ideas and techniques. By the end of the 19th century, for example, composers, such as Franz Liszt or Joachim Raff, opened the genre to innovative techniques and new harmonic and melodic procedures.[61] Therefore, it is no surprise that Honegger felt free to experiment with the genre himself by incorporating his modern musical ideas and compositional techniques within a pre-defined, yet adaptable, framework. The play's religious subject matter and the score's reliance on the choir are two aspects inspired by Baroque oratorio which help shape that framework.

Indeed, in addition to "Honeggerian prosody," one of *Judith*'s most characteristic features is its numerous choral sections. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the choir in general was a crucial feature of the productions at the Théâtre du Jorat. Although the theatre's amateur choir was most certainly very

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[59] "Mon rêve aurait été de ne composer que des opéras; mais c'eût été peine perdue à une époque où le théâtre lyrique est sur le point de disparaître." Arthur Honegger, *Je suis Compositeur* (Paris: Editions du Conquistador, 1951), 111.
[60] Honegger only composed three "serious operas": *Judith*, *Antigone*, and *L'Aiglon* in collaboration with Jacques Ibert (1937).
[61] For more on the history of the oratorio, see: Howard E. Smither, "Oratorio," in *Grove Music Online*.

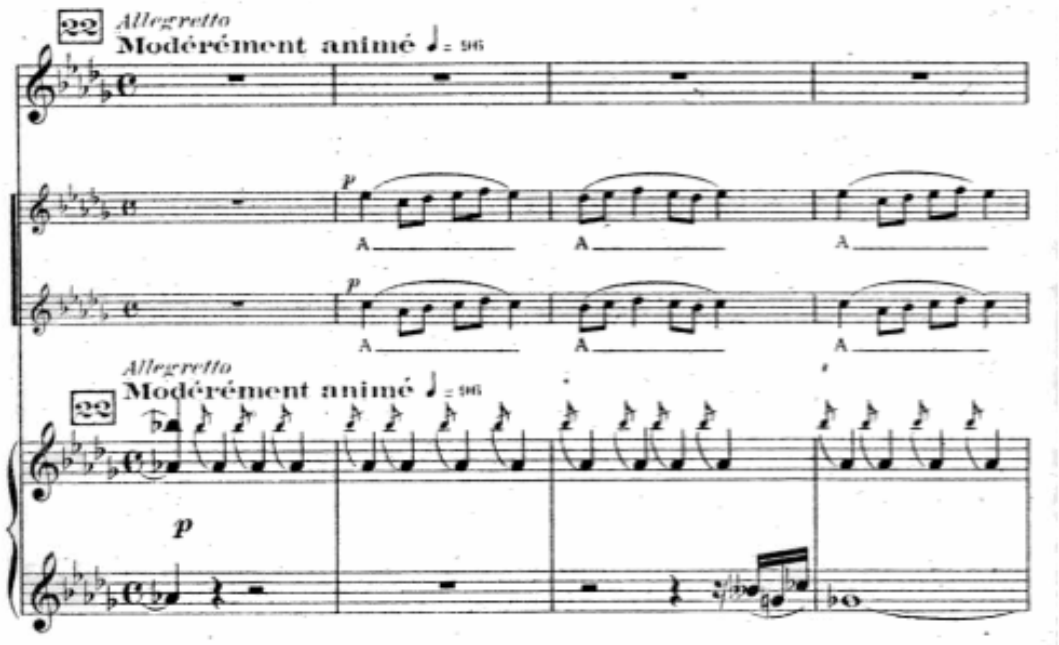
experienced, *Judith*'s choral sections were still one of the greatest challenges for the theatre. The performers would presumably never have been exposed before to the score's sophisticated rhythmic and contrapuntal demands and modern musical idiom, given the general conservatism of the Swiss musical scene and Mézières' distance from an urban centre in which modern, more experimental, music may have been performed. Despite *Judith* being musically challenging, Honegger and Morax's dramatic treatment of the choir was, as with *Le Roi David*, slightly more traditional with a tendency to use the chorus to advance the plot by using it to portray the women of Bethulia and Holopherne's warriors.

Although the music for the choral sections in *Judith* is particularly innovative, the score still reflects the theatre's social and popular ideals. The use of a choir projects a strong sense of community, thus conforming to the theatre's and Honegger's humanist preoccupations. In *Judith*, Honegger depicts the choir as a unified gathering of valued individuals rather than an all-encompassing, almost ethereal, entity. This can be observed by the propensity to mark out different members of the choir as soloists. In the work's opening movement, "Lamentations," for example, a woman steps out from the crowd to address Judith directly in the name of the people of Bethulia. Crowd scenes are given important dramatic value in *Judith* as they seem to convey particularly well a sense of united community which is crucial to Honegger and Morax's social and humanist concerns. Indeed, the work not only opens but also ends with a crowd scene. It begins with the women of Bethulia lamenting over the city's and its people's fate, thus setting the context in which the story is to take place, and concludes with a

"Cantique de Victoire" in which the choir celebrates Judith's and Bethulia's victory.

Honegger and Morax constantly explore the dramatic possibilities of the choir by alternating between purely musical and purely spoken dramatic roles.[62] For example, in "Chœur des Vierges," the choir is given a purely musical role at the beginning singing a vocalise which pervades the entire movement before commenting on the enemy's flight (Ex. 4). In this passage, the choir does not take part in the action but helps establish a particular atmosphere.

Ex. 4. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 12. "Chœur des Vierges," mm. 1-4.

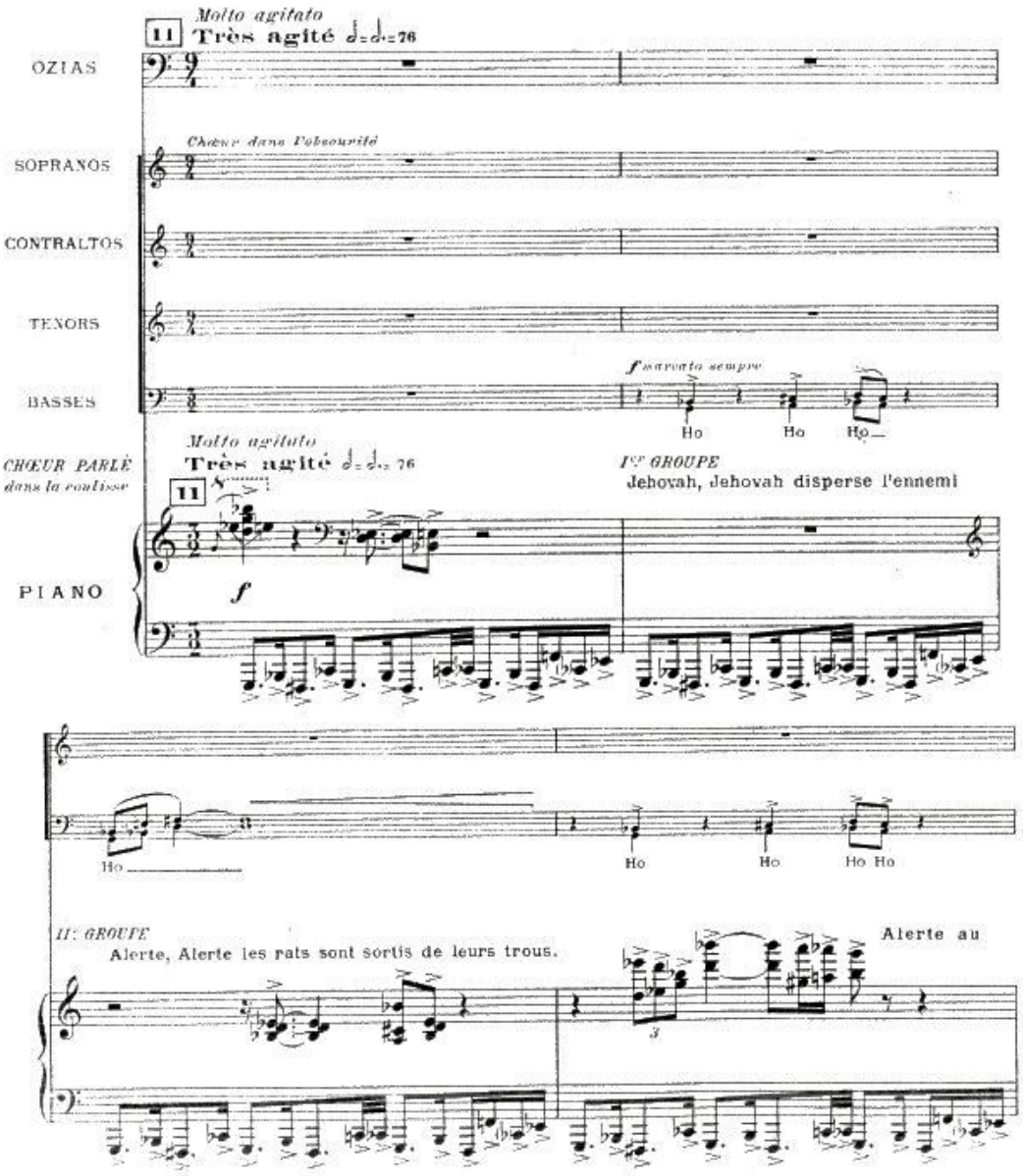


At the beginning of "Cantique de Bataille," the choir is divided into two distinct forces, one speaking the text "Jehova, Jehova disperse l'ennemi" and the other singing an ostinato with no words characterized by a sharp rhythmic profile, presumably depicting either the action of the battle or the warriors' cries (Ex. 5).

[62] Joseph Roy, "La conception du chœur dans les oratorios d'Honegger," in *Honegger-Milhaud: Musique et Esthétique*, ed. Kelkel (ed.), 178-190, 180.

In this way, the two groups are assigned either a purely musical (passive) or a purely dramatic (active) role. The unusual juxtaposition of spoken and sung choral parts in this passage helps create a barbaric and fierce atmosphere for the battle scene. This scene is not enacted on stage but only through music. Therefore, the spoken text is essential in guiding the audience through the highly dissonant and challenging "Cantique de Bataille."

Ex. 5. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 11. "Cantique de Bataille," mm. 1-4.



Building on traditions inherited from Baroque masters, most notably Bach, Honegger pushes the choir to the centre of his work, making the choral sections one of *Judith*'s most complex features. His choral writing is stylistically eclectic using a number of different textures from complex melodic and/or rhythmic counterpoint to sober homophonic passages. In "Cantique de Victoire" for example, Honegger inserts a strict four-voice fugal exposition over a one-bar ostinato in the orchestral part, thus producing a sensation of gradual building up towards the work's climatic ending (Ex. 6). Although Honegger departs from the rules of tonal harmony which traditionally govern a fugue, his inclination to insert such a strong, recognizable, contrapuntal device in the middle of the work's final movement can be understood as a commitment to tradition. As Stravinsky wrote in his *Poetics of Music*, "a real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone, it is a living force that animates and informs the present. […] Tradition thus assures the continuity of creation."[63] Honegger later echoed this thought by writing:

> One must not interrupt the development of musical tradition. A branch separated from its trunk dies quickly. One must be a new player in the same game because changing the rules would destroy that game and take us back to the starting point. Economy seems difficult to me but also more useful than voluntary audacity. It is pointless to break in when one can simply open the door.[64]

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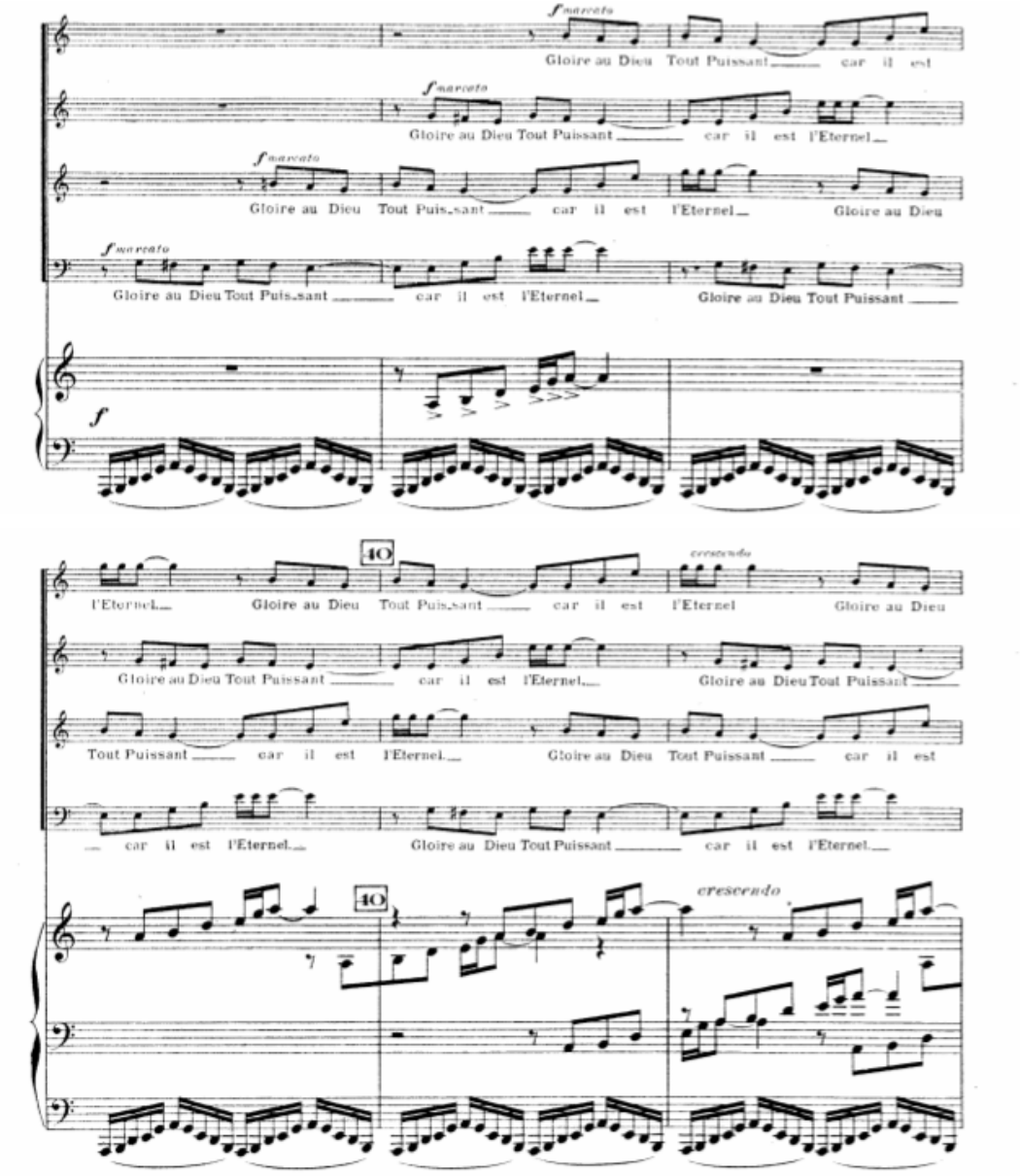
[63] Igor Stravinsky, *The Poetics of Music*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 57.

[64] "Il ne faut pas rompre le lien du développement de la tradition musicale. Une branche séparée du tronc meurt vite. Il faut être un nouveau joueur du même jeu, parce que changer les règles, c'est détruire ce jeu et le ramener au point de départ. L'économie me semble souvent difficile, mais aussi plus utile que l'audace trop volontaire. Il est inutile de défoncer dès qu'on peut ouvrir." Honegger cited in André George, *Arthur Honegger* (Paris: Aveline, 1926), 68-69.

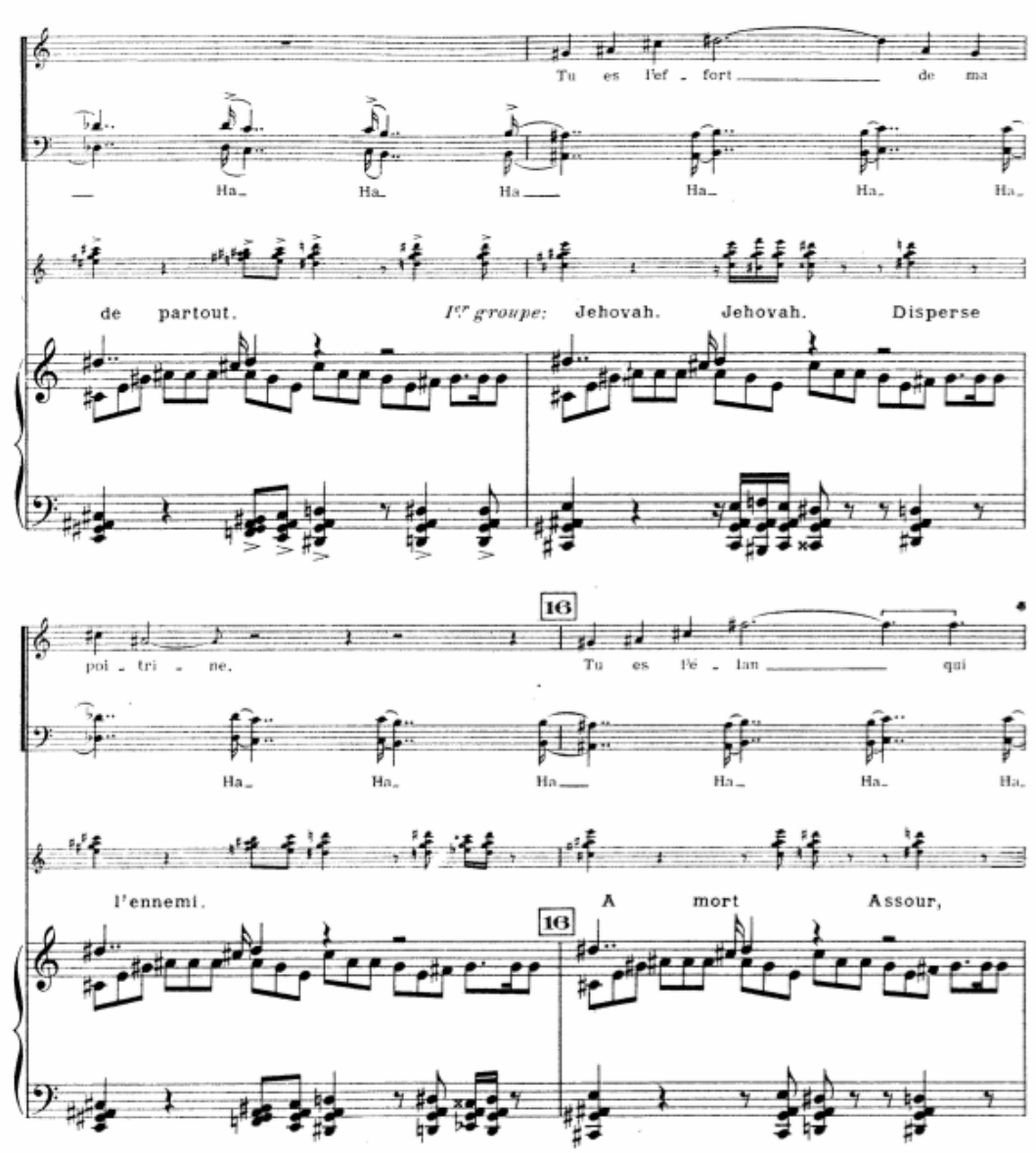
Ex. 6. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 13. "Cantique de Victoire," mm. 112-117.



Honegger's passion for Bach shows through his dense polyphonic writing. He also exploited his skills as a contrapuntist when treating his rhythmic ideas, notably by setting them against one another in a grinding rhythmical mechanism similar to those found in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913) or *L'Histoire du*

Soldat (1918). Honegger's treatment of rhythm is one of the most challenging aspects of his score. For example, another excerpt from "Cantique de Bataille" exhibits great rhythmic complexity and sophistication (Ex. 7). Different rhythmic patterns or ostinatos of various lengths and character are juxtaposed thus creating a series of changing vertical combinations, a clever and dense interplay of several radically different rhythmic ideas. By juxtaposing these various ostinatos, Honegger sets in motion a mechanism whose conclusion can only be provoked by a sudden interruption. In "Cantique de Bataille," a loud dominant seventh chord brings the ostinatos to a halt. The brutality of this movement successfully illustrates the barbarity of the Assyrians and the violence of the battle but its harsh and dissonant counterpoint could be rather disturbing and confusing for the theatre's familial audience.

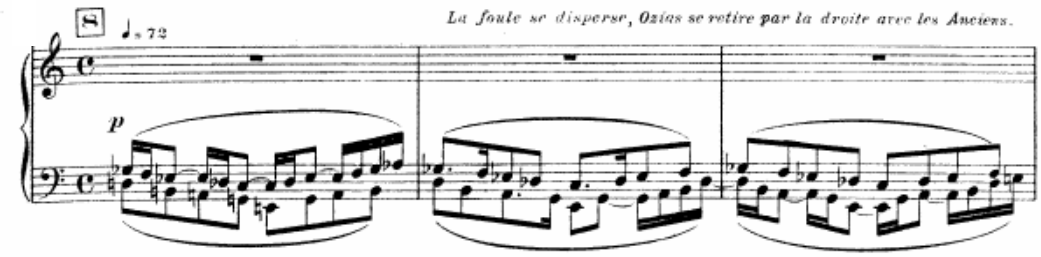
Ex. 7. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 11. "Cantique de Bataille," mm. 17-20.



Another example of Honegger's rhythmic counterpoint can also be observed in "La Trompe d'Alarme" (Ex. 8). Similar to the preceding example, the same rhythmic cells are repeated and juxtaposed following a clear pattern. In this passage, the two three-bar ostinatos presented in the lower register of the piano part are constituted of four different rhythmic one-bar motives: the tenor ostinato

consists of a succession of motives a, b and c whereas the bass ostinato is formed by motives c, d and a in chronological order. However, although these rhythmic intricacies may at times supersede the movement's melodic aspects, they still remain intrinsically linked and subject to its harmonic structure.

Ex. 8. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 2. "La Trompe d'Alarme," mm. 1-3.



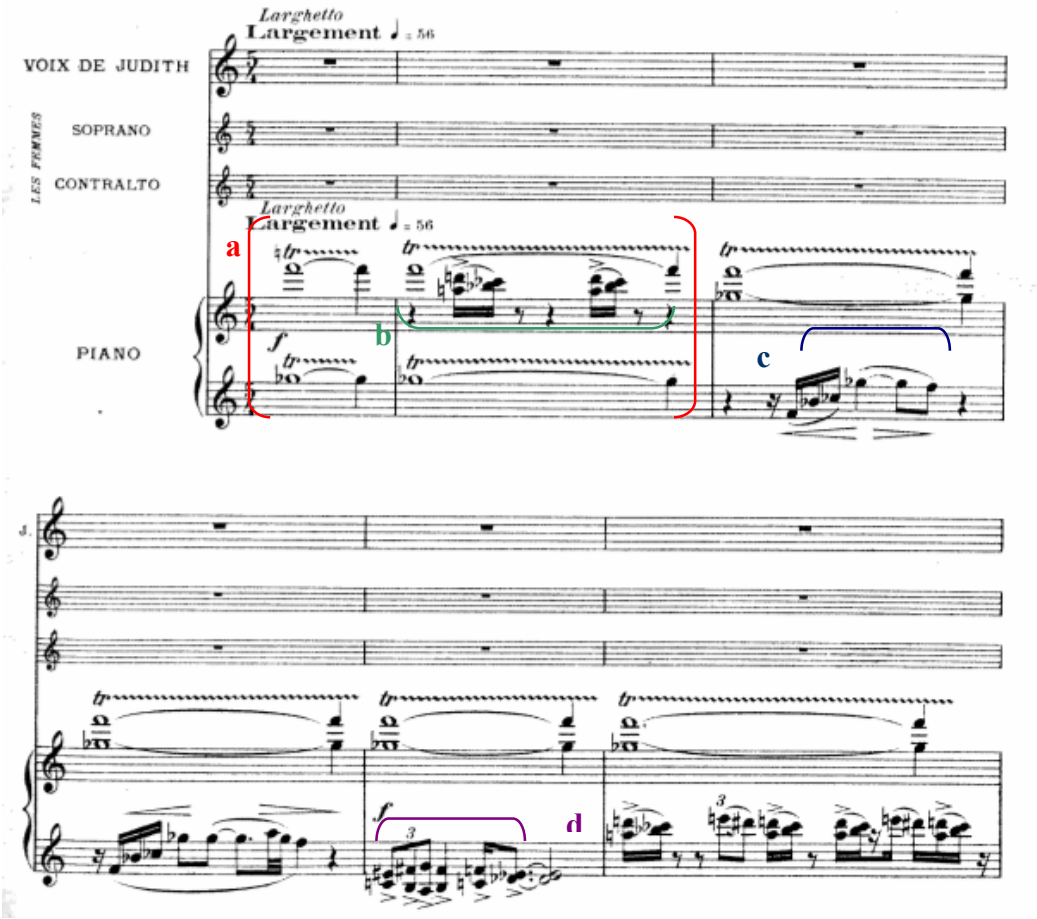
Motivic Web

Honegger's technique of developing musical cells or motives throughout *Judith* may be traced back to both Beethoven and Wagner. Indeed, *Judith*'s leitmotives are used as both an architectural tool, one that allows to build a large unified musical structure, and as an effective dramatic tool to help characterize the protagonist and add a greater level of symbolism to the play, among other things. Although a similar compositional technique can be found in embryonic form in *Le Roi David*, Honegger created an intricate web of recurrent thematic materials for *Judith*. Arguably, these motives also add greater psychological acuity to the play, as will be discussed in relation to the "grief" and "Judith" motives. This provides the discerning listener with a deeper understanding of Morax's text by complementing what the latter subtly and tacitly attempted to suggest. Taking into account the criticism he had received for *Le Roi David*, Morax successfully intensified the action by reducing the number of secondary characters and

focusing almost exclusively on Judith. The score's recurring motives help establish and maintain Judith's centrality throughout the play and define her psychological profile with a little more sharpness.

In his analysis of *Judith*, Spratt establishes a detailed list of what he perceives as the work's recurring musical themes.[65] For example, in the opening "Lamentations," Spratt notices four distinct melodic fragments in the orchestra which he labels a to d and names the "grief motives" (Ex. 9).

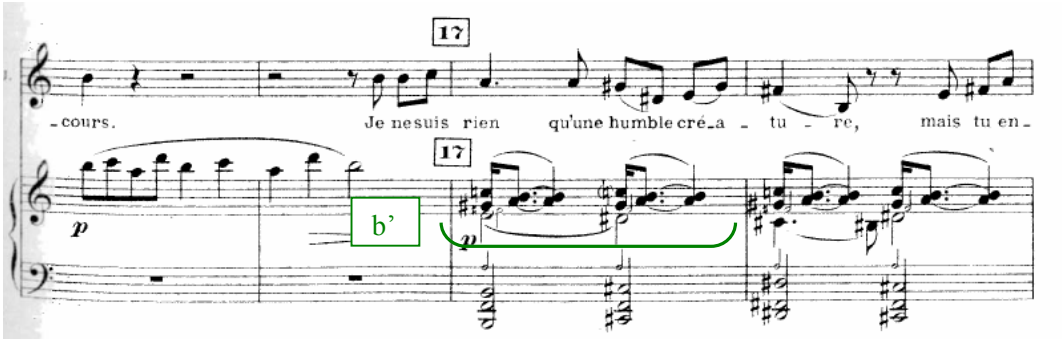
Ex. 9. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 1. "Lamentations," mm. 1-6 (the "Grief motives").



[65] For a full thematic and motivic analysis of *Judith* by Geoffrey K. Spratt, read: Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 76-92.

According to Spratt, these "four fragments […] are developed into thematic ideas, which represent the grief of the people of Judith as they await the seemingly inevitable fate at the hands of Holopherne and his army."[66] These grief motives are never repeated literally but recur in various transformed guises throughout the work. For example, in *Judith*'s third movement "Prière," a rhythmically altered version of the second fragment (b), a sigh-like motive, is set against a two-bar ostinato in a dramatic context that would suggest grief (Ex. 10).

Ex. 10. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 3. "Prière," mm. 5-8 (second fragment of the "Grief motives").



In his analysis, Spratt goes on to discuss other motivic recurrences which he names the "danger motive," the two *vocalises* and Judith's motive.[67] However, not all of the leitmotives Spratt mentions in his analysis are necessarily obvious. For instance, his so-called "Judith motive" is highly ambiguous. Indeed, he argues that Judith is characterized by a minor seventh arpeggio which recurs throughout the work in all of her lines.[68] Judith's opening melody in "Lamentations" uses this minor seventh arpeggio as a framework (Ex. 11).

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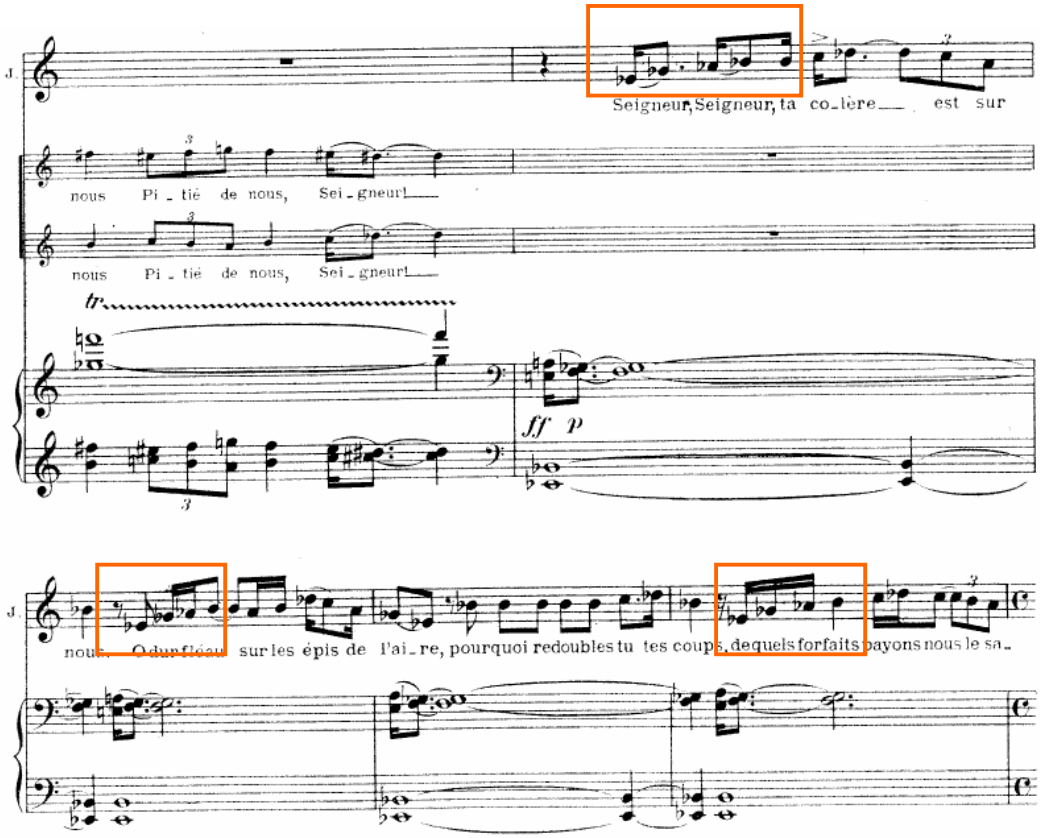
[66] Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 76.
[67] All the motives listed in Spratt's analysis of *Judith* are gathered in a diagram which indicates the different correspondences between these motives and where they appear in the score. Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 82.
[68] Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 80.

Ex. 11. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 1. "Lamentations," mm. 10-14 ("Judith's motive").



Although this motive is clearly repeated and attached to Judith throughout the opening movement, its brevity and vagueness (for it is never repeated literally as its rhythmic profile is systematically altered to fit her declamation) prevents it from being understood as a traditional leitmotive. Rather, Judith seems to be depicted, not by any one motive in particular, but by a number of musical elements, a general atmosphere which is created in part by the repetition of this Eb minor seventh arpeggio. Indeed, Judith's first line resembles a lament with a distinct oriental flavour. Although lacking any stereotypical oriental characteristics, such as sophisticated melodic ornaments for example, the melody is lyrical and expressive, spanning a wider range than previously sung by the

choir and containing more rhythmic intricacies. The repetitiveness of both melody and accompaniment produces a sense of quasi-hypnotic stasis. Besides, the chromatic ostinato in the orchestral part and the open fifth pedal on Eb and Bb in the bass also contribute to this sense of otherness produced by Judith's lament. Therefore, the large-scale motivic planning Spratt discusses is quite loose and open to interpretation. The score's structure does not seem to rely solely on thematic development to create a sense of unity and cohesiveness. However, the different motives, alongside other musical factors, do help characterize the work's troubling and troubled protagonist.

There are many thematic connections throughout *Judith* that may symbolize particular elements in the story or help characterize its protagonists. However, the significance of these recurring musical ideas is highly ambiguous as they are systematically transformed and presented in equivocal contexts, so allowing for much speculation but rendering any definite conclusions impossible. *Judith*'s large-scale thematic and tonal architecture allowed Honegger to experiment with more radical or modern compositional techniques without loosing his audience in a "sonorous slump." In other words, this fairly conventional procedure provided him with a solid framework for his most daring ideas.

Harmony

Along with leitmotives, Spratt also analyses the work's fairly traditional tonal architecture, noticing symmetrical tonal relationships within and between particular movements which reinforce the work's large-scale unified tonal

construction.[69] For example, the opening movement "Lamentations" starts and ends in Eb minor whereas "Prière" starts in E major and ends with a *tièrce picarde*, thus producing an E major chord. There are also numerous tonal links between the various movements such as the recurrence of Eb minor throughout the work's first three movements for example, suggesting that the key may be intrinsically linked to Honegger's depiction of Bethulia.

Judith's over-arching tonal architecture notably allows Honegger to explore expressive possibilities outside the boundaries set by traditional tonality. Chromaticism and other non-tonal idioms are not used consistently throughout the work though but only in short movements such as "La Trompe d'Alarme" and "Fanfare" as Honegger still relies greatly on traditional harmony. In *Judith*, Honegger also uses chords of stacked fourths which he arguably inherited from German expressionism. Meylan writes that the interval of a fourth appealed to German expressionist composers, and later Honegger, for it was one of the sole diatonic intervals whose potential was yet to be uncovered.[70] The openness and ambivalence of this particular interval provides the composer with a means to express troubled, even psychotic, characters as the interval's ambiguity may be used to convey an undecipherable emotional state. A collection of successive stacked fourth chords can notably be found in the instrumental part of *Judith*'s opening movement "Lamentations" (Ex. 12). In this scene, Judith voices her doubts in the form of a prayer whilst the choir, the women of Bethulia, confront

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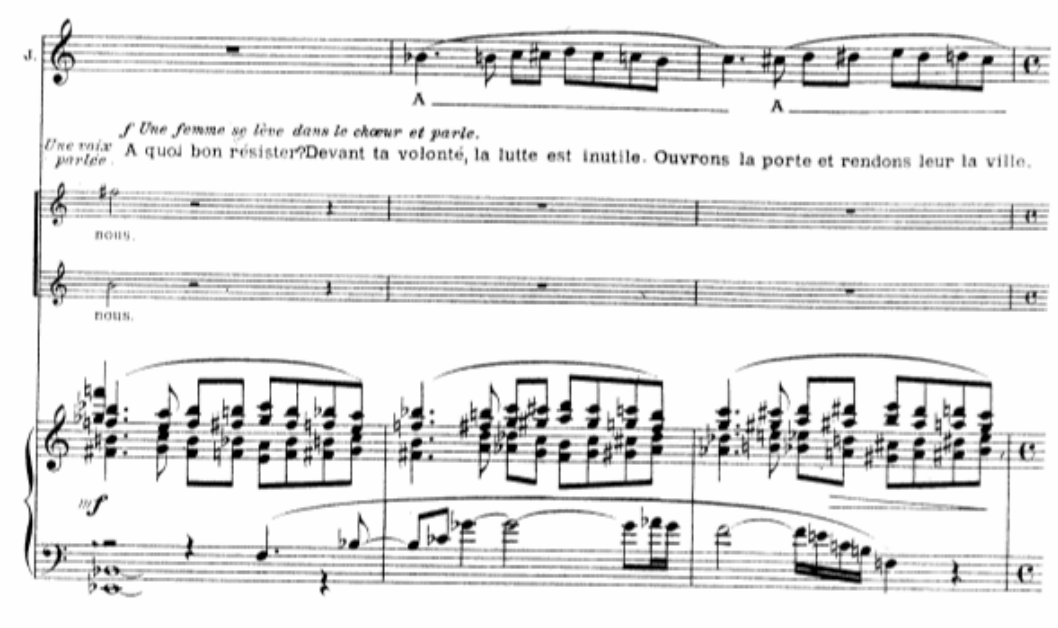
[69] In his analysis of *Judith*, Spratt also proposes a detailed chart of *Judith*'s tonal correspondences: Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 83-86.

[70] Meylan, *Honegger son Œuvre et son Message*, edited by Jacques Viret (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1982), 152.

her with a dilemma whose possible solutions all entail a sacrifice, either personal or collective. In this passage, the orchestral part's stacked fourths and irresolute, even torturous, harmonies depict Judith's own indecision and troubled emotional state.

Ex. 12. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 1. "Lamentations," mm. 21-23.

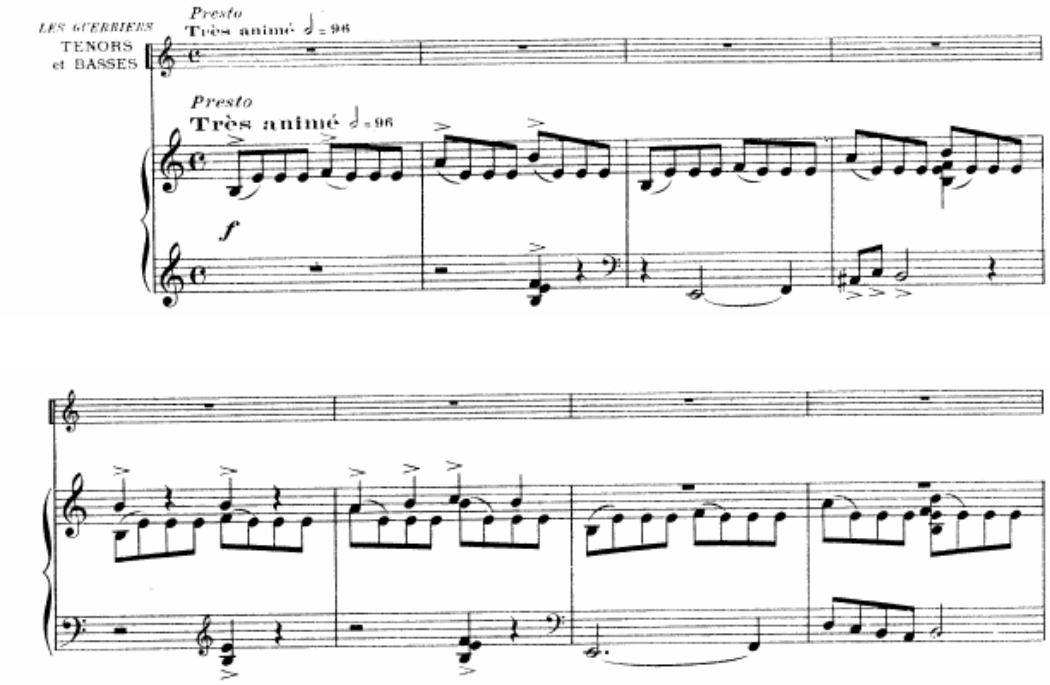


Honegger's preference for intervals that were partially "excluded" from tonal harmony is also particularly apparent in this excerpt. Indeed, the expressive potential of these intervals (seconds, ninths) are all explored, creating grinding harmonies and serpentine chromatic lines, thus setting the stage for Judith, her sacrifice and martyrdom. The opening choral section of "Lamentations," already discussed in connection with Honegger's treatment of prosody, is also rich in inconclusive dissonant harmonies and obsessive chromaticism which are mirrored in the orchestral part (Ex. 1).

The music composed to depict Holopherne's camp differs in many ways from that attached to Bethulia as it is generally of a more decisive and direct

character with a more precise rhythmic and structural drive. Thus, it contrasts with Judith and Bethulia's tortuous chromatic lines, intricate rhythms and richer, denser, harmonies, arguably symbolizing both the town's suffering and lushness. Honegger's musical portrayal of the Assyrian warriors can be observed in "Incantation" (Ex. 13). The movement's orchestral part is primarily constituted of an animated two-bar ostinato whose strong beats are forcefully accented. The harmonies are dissonant yet more sober than in "Lamentations" for example. Fourths still prevail but their inconclusive character is counteracted by the ostinato's forceful rhythmic drive providing the movement with an overall sense of direction.

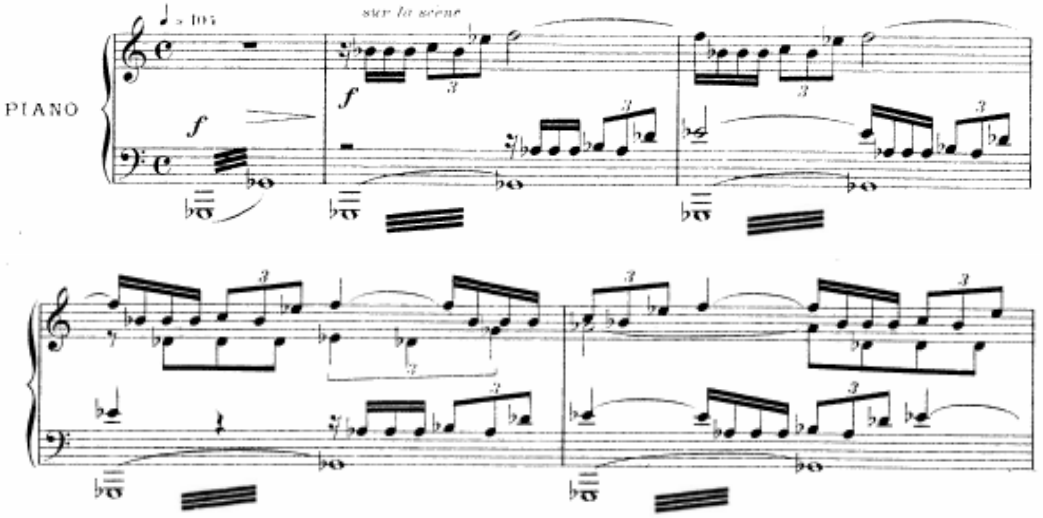
Ex. 13. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 6. "Incantation," mm. 1-4.



Honegger also explores various tonal and non-tonal possibilities in *Judith*, including polytonality, atonality or polymodality, which may, arguably, help characterization by adding to the protagonist's aura of otherness. For example,

"La Trompe d'Alarme," already briefly discussed in relation to rhythmic counterpoint, is polytonal as it superimposes Db major over d minor (Ex. 8). *Judith*'s second movement, "Fanfare," also consists of a combination of different keys as the movement features the keys of Bb major, Ab major, Db major and Eb major which are all supported by the same pedal on Gb (Ex. 14).

Ex. 14. Arthur Honegger, *Judith*, no. 7. "Fanfare," mm. 1-3.



Atonality and other alternatives to traditional tonality are only employed occasionally in Honegger's works. These modern techniques are solely used in instances when it is, as Meylan wrote, "a medium of psychological signifier which must result in a tonal conclusion."[71] For example, in "La Trompe d'Alarme," the clashing tonalities depict the angst of Bethulia's people and arguably augur Judith's dark fate (Ex. 8). The same is true of "Lamentations" where tortuous chromatic lines again depict grief and angst as the city is suffocating under Holopherne's long siege (Ex. 1). The movement does end on a

[71] "Toutefois on remarquera que pour Honegger l'atonalité représente toujours un moyen à signification psychologique qui doit aboutir à une conclusion tonale." Meylan, *Honegger son Œuvre et son Message*, 156.

conspicuous C minor chord though, thus momentarily settling the lamentations and hinting at a short yet striking harmony between Judith and her people as she is about to make public her sacrifice.

Judith's large-scale tonal, motivic and formal architecture and its reliance on past musical traditions provide an intelligible, if not familiar, framework for the more experimental elements of the score. Indeed, Honegger's tendency to produce self-developing themes and economize thematic material supports his efforts to obtain formal cohesion and convey an overall sense of organic continuity. Besides, Honegger's insistence on using a clear prosody and creating a system for achieving it can be understood as another one of the work's truly "populist" procedures as it allows for an easy understanding despite its densely chromatic language. So, Honegger was careful not to overwhelm his audience with the score's dissonant idiom by providing it with a familiar or, at least, discernible framework and intelligible compositional procedures:

> What rebuffs the [auditor] is to drown in a sonorous slump where he cannot see the shore and in which he is rapidly being engulfed. Then, he is bored and does not listen anymore.[72]

Honegger had the theatre's audience's interest very much at heart when composing *Judith* and sought, despite the more apparent complex and challenging details of his score, to produce a work which could be understood, if not appreciated, by the general public. By building on tradition and working with

[72] "Ce qui rebute [l'auditeur], c'est de se noyer dans un marécage sonore dont il ne voit pas le rivage et dans lequel il s'engloutit rapidement. Alors, il s'ennuie et n'écoute plus." Honegger cited in Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 736.

intelligible forms and structures whether it be within a movement or the entire score, Honegger created a clear framework for the more modern aspects of his style, thus striving towards a balance, if still slightly precarious in *Judith*, between his modern musical ideas and the work's sought-for popular appeal.

Judith at the Théâtre du Jorat: its Production and Reception

Despite Honegger's reliance on tradition and his concerns for accessibility and intelligibility, his modern compositional procedures seemed out of place in a people's theatre. The Théâtre du Jorat's committee showed little enthusiasm for *Judith* and initially rejected Honegger and Morax's project. The reasons for this refusal are unknown, but one may speculate that the score's challenging musical idiom and its difficulty of execution by amateur musicians did not conform to the theatre's populist aims. Besides, the play's dubious morals (Judith sacrificing her virginity and beheading her enemy to free her people) could have dangerously jeopardized the Théâtre du Jorat's popular and familial appeal. However, another committee, reacting against the theatre's initial decision, was rapidly formed in Lausanne, led by Georges Mercier, a generous patron of the arts. These fervent devotees insisted on having the world premiere of Honegger's new work take place in Switzerland and, after many arguments, finally managed to convince the Théâtre du Jorat to stage the first production of *Judith*.[73]

The complexity of Honegger's score, particularly of the choral sections, required the theatre to call for professional and semi-professional singers from the university and the conservatoire in Lausanne to help its usual cast. Furthermore, the play's two main roles, those of Judith and Holopherne, did not go to locals but to two French professionals, the actor Pierre Alcover[74] and the singer Claire

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[73] Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: un Musicien dans la Cité des Hommes*, 99.

[74] Pierre Alcover (1893- 1957) graduated from the Paris Conservatoire in 1917 and immediately went to work at the Théâtre Française (also known as the Comédie-Française), playing mostly in plays from the classic repertoire. After three years, he moves to the Théâtre du Gymnase and creates several roles there including that of Vagao

Croiza.[75] Unsurprisingly, the addition of professionals to the theatre's amateur cast did not go down well, especially with the local audience and participants. In fact, cohesion between the rural and the urban, the amateurs and the professionals, was hard to achieve during the rehearsals. It provoked many tensions within the group which ultimately had a negative impact on its performances. As Paul Boepple, the production's choir director, confirmed:

> It is difficult to build a cohesive choir and to gather its members for a sufficient number of rehearsals. The music in *Judith* is in general more complicated than that of *Le Roi David*. It is more mature and more advanced, and consequently less popular.[76]

Besides, it is likely that Gustave Doret, jealous of Honegger's international success, also contributed to the production's disaster by creating a cabal against

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in Henry Bernstein's *Judith*. He also works for the cinema and participates to the premieres of several other modern plays in different Parisian theatres such as *La Flame* (1922) by Charles Méré at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique. In the programme of Morax and Honegger's *Judith*, an anonymous writer described Alcover as "one of the most interesting comedians of the young generation; his art, supple, alive and powerful, allows him to tackle alternately tragedy, drama and comedy, with the same pleasure." [Pierre Alcover est l'un des comédiens les plus intéressants de la jeune génération; son art souple, vivant et fort lui permet d'aborder tour à tour la tragédie, le drame et la comédie, avec un égal bonheur.]

[75] Claire Croiza (1882-1946) was a French mezzo-soprano. Although a reputable opera singer, she primarily sang in recitals making French *mélodies* one of her specialities. She sang in many operas including Bizet's *Carmen*, Massenet's *Werther*, Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, and Fauré's *Pénélope*, among many others. In the programme of Morax and Honegger's *Judith*, an anonymous writer describes her art as being "fundamentally personal and instinctive, of a rare elegance and moderation" but also "thoughtful and intelligent." He concludes his panegyric by writing: "Subtle sensitivity, surprising intelligence, absolute faith in her art, simplicity of means, here are, in short, the essential features of this talent, so luminous, so Latin." [Il (son art) est foncièrement personnel et instinctif, d'une élégance et d'une mesure rares. Mais cet art est aussi réfléchi et intelligent. (…) Sensibilité subtile, intelligence surprenante, foi absolu dans son art, simplicité de moyen, tels sont, au résumé, les caractères essentiels de ce talent, si lumineux, si latin.]

[76] "C'est difficile d'en faire un chœur cohérent et de les réunir pour un nombre suffisant de répétitions. La musique de *Judith* est en général plus compliquée que celle du *Roi David*. Elle est plus mûrie et plus avancée, par conséquent moins populaire." Paul Boepple cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 100.

the work, inciting local artists and the theatre's *habitués* to boycott it.[77] Thus, Judith suffered from a strong oral, rather than written, opposition as it was plagued by Doret's derogatory campaign and the locals' tacit disapproval. Besides, as Pierre Meylan explained, a newly-blossoming extra-marital affair between Honegger and Claire Croiza also added an air of scandal to the already troubled rehearsals (Fig. 3):

> Thinking it a good idea, René Morax had rented in Mézières, for the actors and the collaborators, a house situated east of the church […]. This phalanstery of a new kind had the advantage of bringing together the interpreters and the authors and to create a climate conducive to the elaboration of a play, a climate of camaraderie and good entente. René Morax had not predicted that this promiscuity would lead to certain sentimental complications […].[78]

It is in this tense and difficult atmosphere that the rehearsals and the first performances of *Judith* took place. These events had little to do with the intrinsic qualities of the work in question but they sadly contributed to its debacle.

Although the models and sketches for the *mise-en-scène*, the costumes and the décors are now lost, it is known that several different teams worked separately on the project. For instance, the décors for the first and third section of the play were created by Jean Morax in collaboration with Gaston Farvel, whereas those for the second section were designed by Alexandre Cingria and Paul Baud (Fig. 4). The same process applies to the costumes as two different teams worked separately on the three sections, one on the first and third and the other on the

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[77] Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 102-103.

[78] "Croyant bien faire, René Morax avait loué à Mézières, pour les acteurs et les collaborateurs, une maison située à l'est de l'église […]. Ce phalanstère d'un nouveau genre avait l'avantage de grouper interprètes et auteurs et de créer un climat propice à l'élaboration de l'œuvre, un climat de camaraderie et de bonne entente. René Morax n'avait pas prévu que cette promiscuité engendrerait certaines complications sentimentales et c'est dans cette atmosphère qui manquait de sérénité que se déroulèrent les représentations." Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 118.

second (Fig. 5&6). Unfortunately, only a few photos remain of this production and none of them allow for a clear visualization of the differences in the *mise-en-scène* between *Judith*'s different sections. One must thus rely on contemporary accounts and descriptions of the décors. For example, Vincent-Vincent gives an interesting description of the visual aspect of *Judith* at the Théâtre du Jorat:

> The authors have sought to make evident the contrast between the Judaic civilization, sober and rough, and the sparkle of the Babylonian luxury. The splendor of Holopherne's camp follows the simplicity of the town built on a hill, behind the red fortifications from which the Hebrews upheld a long siege. We can imagine, without difficulty, with what calm and severe lines Jean Morax painted Bethulia's fortifications and Judith's terrace, and what ardor, what science of colors Alexandre Cingria deployed for the camp of Ashur's chief.[79]

It may be speculated that there was a clear artistic scission between the different sections of the play. This may have affected *Judith*'s reception by accentuating the work's rather manichean contrast between Holopherne's savagery and Judith's mysticism, arguably producing a splendid, yet fragmented and, therefore, slightly uncomfortable visual framework for the play.

[79] "Les auteurs ont cherché à rendre évident le contraste entre la civilisation judaïque, sobre et fruste, et l'éclat du luxe babylonien. La splendeur du camp d'Holopherne succède à la simplicité de la ville construite sur des murailles de laquelle les Hébreux soutinrent un long siège. On imagine, sans peine, de quelles lignes calmes et sévères Jean Morax a su peindre les murailles de Béthulie et la terrasse de Judith, et quelle fougue, quelle science des couleurs Alexandre Cingria a déployées pour le camp du chef d'Assour." Vincent-Vincent, *Le Théâtre du Jorat*, 160-161.

Fig. 3. Group photo during the rehearsals of *Judith* in Mézières; Front row from left to right: Arthur Honegger, Marthe Favre, Pierre Alcover, Claire Croiza, Jean Morax; back row from left to right: René Morax, Jean de Miéville, Alexandre Cingria. Mézières, 1925.

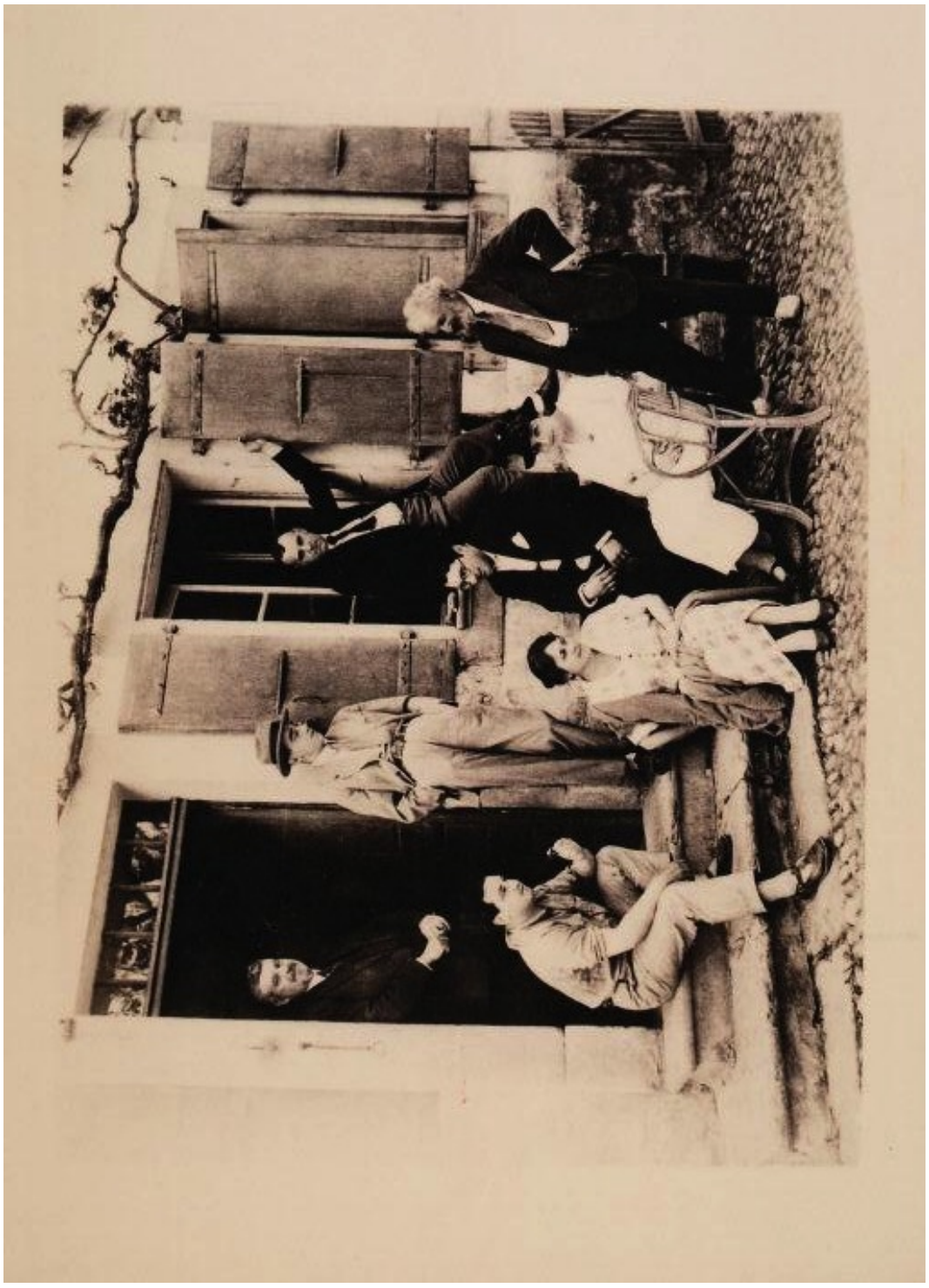
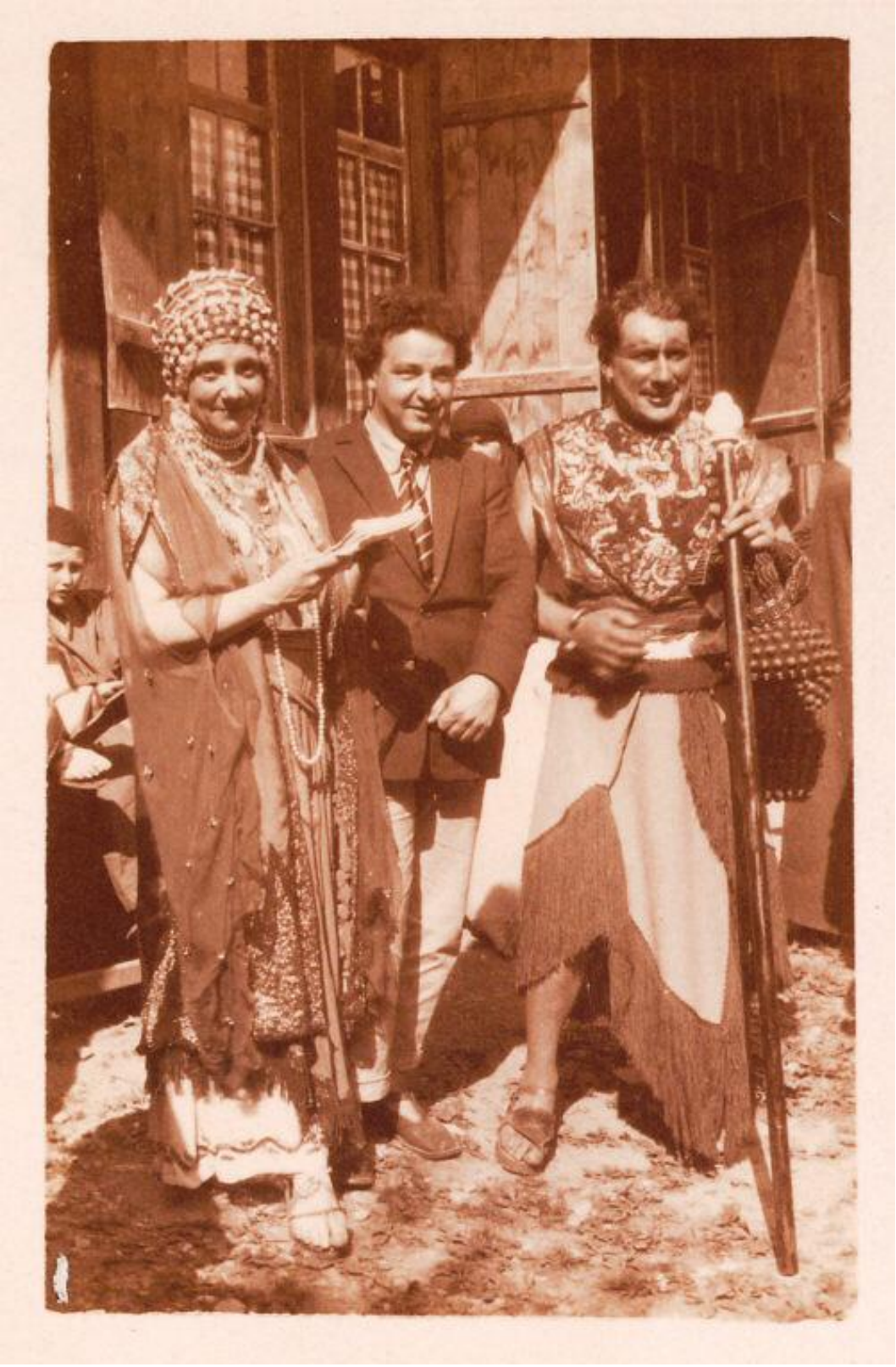


Fig. 4. A performance of *Judith* at the Théâtre du Jorat, 1925.

Fig. 5. Pierre Alcover as Holopherne at the Théâtre du Jorat, 1925.

Fig. 6. Claire Croiza, Arthur Honegger and Pierre Alcover at the Théâtre du Jorat, 1925.



The premiere of *Judith* took place on 13 June 1925 on a stormy night portending the reception that was to follow. Describing the scene, Meylan wrote: "the first clap of thunder of a terrible storm broke out just as Judith came out of Holopherne's tent, holding in her hands the bloodied head of her victorious fugitive."[80] Honegger conducted the premiere of his work at which various Swiss celebrities and politicians were present but then passed the baton over to Paul Boepple for the following performances. It is likely that the complexity of the score and the lack of rehearsals may have affected the quality of the performances. Morax, in an interview with Gaston Bridel, discussed the premiere of Honegger's works at the Théâtre du Jorat in greater detail:

> In Mézières, his [Honegger's] music was a little sacrificed, given the minimum time we had to study it. The choirs were not professional choirs, there were singers from Lausanne, from Moudon, from here and there, […]. They were not always good enough for the score.[81]

After the premiere, *Judith* became a severe financial disaster for the theatre. Despite the poor attendance and increasing deficit, no performances could be cancelled because Claire Croiza refused to terminate her contract. In fact, she feared that by doing so she would appear to be taking responsibility for the production's failure. For the last performances, only 250 to 300 seats out of the theatre's 1'100 were sold leading to a deficit of over 30'000 Swiss francs. The

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[80] "Le premier coup de tonnerre d'un orage terrible éclata au moment même où Judith sortait de la tente d'Holopherne, tenant dans ses mains la tête ensanglantée de son fugitif vainqueur." Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 104.

[81] "A Mézières, sa musique fut un peu sacrifiée, vu le temps minimum que nous avions eu pour l'étudier. Les n'étaient pas des chœurs professionnels, c'étaient des chanteurs de Lausanne, de Moudon, d'un peu partout, […]. Ils n'étaient pas toujours à la hauteur de la partition." Morax cited in Stéphane Audel, *Le Théâtre du Jorat et René Morax* (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1963), 51-52.

situation was so disastrous that organizers reputedly distributed free tickets to passers-by before each performance in an attempt to fill the theatre.[82]

Despite the poor popular reception of the work, most critics commended Honegger and Morax's *Judith*, although Morax's text was generally regarded as being the work's principal weakness. For example, Meylan argued that Morax's text did not have the same "energy or the same richness of invention as *Le Roi David*, its reservoir of images is more restrained, its sonic magic does not possess the same efficacy."[83] Despite the weaknesses of Morax's play, certain critics did acknowledge and praise the text's simplicity, concision and sobriety, qualities which seemed at home on the stage of a people's theatre. For example, an anonymous critic writing for *La Gazette de Lausanne* shortly after the premiere argued: "We find in *Judith* the qualities that make of René Morax one of our best dramatic authors: this ability to concentrate the plot, to reach the essential and to put each element of the drama in its proper place." However, this author's review of *Judith* as a whole is a little more equivocal as he argues that Honegger's score did not do justice to the play: "The spectator is too distracted by the sumptuous trappings of the drama. The music, the action are relegated to the background. This results in an annoying effect of dislocation which the reading of René Morax's text does not produce at all."[84] However, no other critics accuse

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[82] Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, p. 105.

[83] "Le livret de *Judith*, cela ne fait aucun doute, n'a pas la même sève ni la même richesse d'invention que *Le Roi David*, son réservoir d'images est plus restreint, ses magies sonores ne possèdent pas le même efficacité. *Le Roi David* avait des défauts, il n'avait pas de faiblesses." Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 103-104.

[84] "On retrouve dans *Judith* les qualités qui font de René Morax le meilleur de nos auteurs dramatique: cette faculté de concentrer l'intrigue, de dégager l'essentiel et de mettre

Honegger's score of being overpowering. According to Meylan, this anonymous article is biased as it is likely to have been written by Doret or one of his followers who were severely prejudiced against Honegger and his work. [85]

The critics' reviews of the performances were, for the most part, more inclined to discuss Honegger's score rather than Morax's text as the former was by then a well-respected composer and the author of several international successes, most notably *Pacific 231*. For example, *La Gazette de Genève* published a review praising the work's rhythmic variety, rhythms which "are often superimposed in an original interplay, conferring it [*Judith*] a straightforwardness of accents which is its principal appeal."[86] The same critic praised the innovative hybrid generic identity of the work as well. Charles Koëlla from *La Gazette de Lausanne* also applauded Honegger's second biblical drama as he wrote on 18 June 1925:

> This work is the expression of a conscious force which animates a creative breath. It is concise, concentrated; it has a unity and a diversity of accents sufficient for its restrained dimensions. The melodic line often appears to be very firm; it is supple and expressive. The exotic character, oriental if you like, clearly asserts itself; the Assyrians harshest musical idiom fortunately contrasts with the Israelites' more refined one, the pain with the joy, the moral distress with the resounding triumph.[87]

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chaque élément du drame à sa place exacte. […] Le spectateur est trop distrait par le somptueux vêtement du drame. La musique, l'action sont reléguées au second plan. Il en résulte une fâcheuse impression de décousu que la lecture du texte de René Morax est loin de produire."Anonymous critic cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 121-122.

[85] Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 121.

[86] Victor Andreossi cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 119.

[87] "L'œuvre est l'expression d'une force consciente, qu'anime un souffle créateur. Elle est concise, concentrée; elle a l'unité et une diversité d'accents suffisante dans ses dimensions restreintes. La ligne mélodique y apparaît souvent très ferme; elle est souple et expressive. Le caractère exotique, oriental si l'on veut, s'affirme nettement; le langage musical plus rude des Assyriens contraste heureusement avec celui plus raffiné des

Positive reviews of the Swiss premiere of the work even made it into the Parisian newspapers of the time. Paul Bertrand, a French music critic for *Le Ménestrel*, thoughtfully compared the work to *Le Roi David*:

> If this music is less exterior, less imposing maybe in its whole, it is more concentrated, more mysterious, with its muted, worried tints, expressing the supplications of the besieged city, its striking vigor translating the enemy's mocking, threats, burning incantations and the battle hymn which opens up into a dazzling hosanna. […] Singing seemed to succeed naturally to speech whenever the situation required that the words, insufficient, called on the mighty power of music.[88]

A year later and this time commenting on the operatic version of *Judith*, Roland-Manuel wrote:

> This work of circumstance is one for which we would like, with Goethe, to see promised a duration. *Judith* has more solidity, unity, more power than *Le Roi David* – and, moreover, dramatic movement… The interest of this opera increases from page to page and from scene to scene, until the sovereign peroration, until the victory hymn in which the composer exposes his magnificent appetite for polyphonic combinations.[89]

Although rare, there were also a few negative critics of the score, such as Henri Reymond, writing for *La Tribune de Lausanne*, who considered Honegger's

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Israélites, la douleur avec la joie, la détresse morale avec l'éclatant triomphe." Charles Koëlla cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 121.

[88] "Si cette musique est moins extérieure, moins imposante peut-être dans l'ensemble, elle est plus concentrée, plus mystérieuse, avec ses teintes sourdes, inquiètes, exprimant les supplications de la ville assiégée, sa vigueur saisissante traduisant les railleries, les menaces, les brûlantes incantations de l'ennemi et le cantique de bataille qui s'épanouit en un fulgurant hosanna. […] Le chant semblait succéder tout naturellement à la parole au moment où la situation exigeait que les mots, insuffisants, fissent appel à la toute-puissante magie de la musique." Paul Bertrand cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 123.

[89] "Cette œuvre de circonstance est de celles que l'on voudrait, avec Goethe, promettre à la durée. *Judith* a plus de solidité, d'unité, plus de puissance que *Le Roi David* – et de mouvement dramatique de surcroît… L'intérêt de cet opéra croît de page en page et de scène en scène, jusqu'à la péroraison souveraine, jusqu'au cantique de victoire où le compositeur donne libre cours à son magnifique appétit de combinaison polyphonique." Roland-Manuel cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 106.

music to be too challenging and modern and, therefore, unsuited to the Théâtre du Jorat:

> What has he [Honegger] done to this grandiose and poignant drama, the one out of all capable of making a dramatic composer vibrate and to unleash within him a current of strong and boisterous ideas? In the name of all true musicians and amateurs of true beauty, the Théâtre du Jorat in Mézières should return to what it was originally, a ennobled center respectful of Art.[90]

Although not necessarily representative of other critics, this commentary sadly seems to reflect quite accurately the popular reaction to the work. Indeed, the theatre's local audience was unimpressed by the play's originality as it presumably hoped for a second *Roi David*. Therefore, it was unprepared to decipher the intricacies of Honegger's changed and matured musical idiom. *Judith* was a lot more radical than Honegger's previous collaboration with Morax and so less likely to appeal to the general public. Indeed, although *Judith*'s foundations were based on familiar traditions, Honegger's radical reshaping of his past musical inheritance produced a challenging and sophisticated foreground, alienating the audience from the more familiar foundational aspects of his style.

However, the larger social, cultural and political context also certainly had an impact on the reception of the work. For instance, the modernist tint of Honegger's score must have seemed alien and irrelevant to an audience which was generally repelled by the complexity of new music and still exhausted by the

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[90] "Qu'a-t-il fait de ce drame grandiose et poignant, propre entre tous à faire vibrer un compositeur dramatique et déchaîner en lui un impétueux courant d'idées fortes et remuantes? […] Au nom de tous les vrais musiciens et amateurs du vrai beau, que le Théâtre du Jorat à Mézières redevienne ce qu'il a été, un centre ennobli et respectueux de l'Art." Henri Reymond cited in Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 121.

experience of the war.[91] Arguably, this audience primarily sought comfort, entertainment and probably a little escapism in a countryside theatre. Furthermore, spectators were generally less inclined to tolerate the experimental musical peregrinations of a composer as the notion of the "individual" was being replaced by that of the "collective." The latter was felt fairly strongly at the time in remote rural areas of Switzerland, such as Mézières. Therefore, whilst artistic individualism was sought and praised within an urban context, the audience of the Jorat looked for a rallying voice, one most people, whatever their education and social status, could identify with and appreciate. *Judith*'s sophisticated score and troubled subject matter were thus probably perceived as being out of place at a reputed people's theatre like the Théâtre du Jorat.

Furthermore, *Judith* was apparently doomed from the start because it was plagued by poor organization and other interpersonal factors that were not necessarily related to the work itself. Indeed, not only were the musicians ill-prepared, the staging and other details of the production had not been organized efficiently either. Moreover, the work's subject matter was not new to the most informed members of the audience as it had already been explored by many artists before Morax and Honegger: painters such as Klimt and Michelangelo; playwrights such as Abraham Goldfaden, Christian Friedrich Hebbel, and Henry Bernstein; and even composers like Scarlatti, Vivaldi, and, most famously, Mozart.[92] Morax's *Judith* could thus be compared with other similar artistic

[91] Harding, *The Ox on the Roof*, 127.
[92] Abraham Goldfaden, *Judith und Holofernes* (1892); Christian Friedrich Hebbel, *Judith* (1841); Henry Bernstein, *Judith* (1922); Alessandro Scarlatti, libretto by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni: *La Giuditta* (opera, 1693); Antonio Vivaldi, libretto by Lacopo Cassetti,

endeavors, comparisons that were not necessarily in Morax's favor. Worst of all, however, *Judith* could easily be compared to *Le Roi David*. By reading through the different contemporary reviews of the first production, the work clearly suffered from this comparison and its predecessor's success. As Meylan wrote: "*Le Roi David* had flaws but it did not have weaknesses," unlike *Judith* he implies.[93]

As mentioned previously, *Judith*'s main weakness seems to have been Morax's text, especially his characterization of Judith. Spratt, for instance, who criticized Morax's text for being too "monochrome in its imagery and too monotonous in its language," also argued that the playwright failed to explore Judith's psychological conflict by relying on redundancies and superficialities of her character.[94] It is likely that Morax brushed over the most troubling facets of his protagonist and toned down the most disturbing aspects of the story (such as the seduction and beheading of Holopherne) in order to fit his play to the requirements of the people's theatre. Therefore, the extent of Judith's troubled mind is conveyed primarily through the music. As mentioned previously, Judith's tortuous chromatic lines and exotic dissonant harmonies succeed in depicting her complex and ambiguous psychological journey characterized by both the beauty of her sacrifice and the barbarity of her actions, by innocence and guilt. The

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Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernis barbarie (oratorio, 1716); and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, libretto by Pietro Metastasio *Betulia Liberata* (oratorio, 1771).

[93] "Le livret de *Judith*, cela ne fait aucun doute, n'a pas la même sève ni la même richesse d'invention que *Le Roi David*, son réservoir d'images est plus restreint, ses magies sonores ne possèdent pas le même efficacité. *Le Roi David* avait des défauts, il n'avait pas de faiblesses." Meylan, *René Morax et Arthur Honegger au Théâtre du Jorat*, 103-104.

[94] Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 91.

inherent contradiction between the Assyrians' violence and Judith's mysticism or, as Harding puts it, between barbarism and religion is also depicted in the score as discussed in the precedent chapter.[95] Moreover, by casting Judith as a sung role, unlike the work's other protagonists, Honegger insists on Judith's difference and otherness. Thus, Judith as a character and a story is primarily built on friction and contrast. The score's sense of otherness, its chromaticism and clashing harmonies, counteracted Morax's efforts to mellow Judith's sacrifice and murder by emphasizing her troubling aspects and the story's explicit erotic nature. The play's latent sensuality and moral ambiguity was of course absent in *Le Roi David* which was easier and more direct. It generally seemed better tailored to suit the theatre's requirements.

Therefore, in many ways, *Judith* was Honegger's first step towards alienation from his public. This alienation was later confirmed by his opera *Antigone* and his oratorio *Les Cris du Monde* which ultimately led him to a severe identity and artistic crisis in the late 1920s and early 1930s during which his musical production came to an almost complete halt. Honegger wrote in his famous farewell letter, *Pour Prendre Congé*: "What is discouraging for a composer is the certainty that his work will not be heard or understood to what he conceived and tried to express."[96] *Judith* was thus a painful disappointment. Although it was tailored for the Théâtre du Jorat and its audience, it was initially

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[95] Harding, *The Ox on the Roof*, 192.

[96] "Ce qui est décourageant pour le musicien, c'est la certitude que son œuvre ne sera pas entendue et comprise selon ce qu'il a conçu et tente d'exprimer." *Pour Prendre Congé* was published simultaneously in three different magazines: *Plans*, *Appogiatures*, and *Dissonances* on 7 July 1931 and 2 February 1932. The original article and its translation can be found in: Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 234-240.

rejected by the former and, after its performance, by the latter. The institution and its public were unable to perceive the popular aspect of the work. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Judith* is a work of transition in which Honegger seeks to reconcile the humanist and social preoccupations of *Le Roi David* with his more radical musical experiments of the late twenties. He juxtaposes or opposes tradition with innovation, simplicity with complexity, familiarity with strangeness. Presumably, the theatre's audience was generally too confused by the surface melodic and harmonic chromaticism to notice its clearly-defined framework and reliance on past musical traditions and compositional procedures.

As mentioned previously, *Judith* nevertheless managed to survive the debacle of its premiere at the Théâtre du Jorat under two different guises. *Judith*, in its oratorio version, dominated the large-scale Festival Honegger which was held in Paris in 1928. Both the opera and oratorio were translated into various languages for numerous productions abroad especially in Germany and Poland.[97] During the 1930s, however, the work, in both its oratorio and operatic forms, disappeared almost completely from the theatrical and musical European stages. Nevertheless, *Judith*'s original choral director, Paul Boepple, successfully revived the *action musicale* on 3 May 1961 in New York. Therefore, *Judith* did have a few moments of glory on the international operatic and concert stages, although not comparable to those of *Le Roi David*, suggesting that its initial failure was mostly due to external factors rather than to weaknesses intrinsic to the score.

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[97] *Judith* was translated into English for a Chicago production in 1926, Italian for a production in Naples in 1937, German for a production in Cologne in 1927, and Flemish for a production in Antwerp, which took place in 1931.

Conclusion

Je veux qu'on me bâtisse une musique où j'habite comme dans une maison.[98]

Defining *Judith* as a work of transition forces us to consider Honegger's great versatility and virtuosity. In a way, *Judith* incarnates the duality between *Antigone*'s modernity and *Le Roi David*'s popularity in a time when modernism and accessibility were often contradictory. In his study of French musical modernism, Richard Taruskin wrote that "the modernist narrative, even though it is at bottom an instrument of social change, has always insisted on representing art as divorced from the social work, subject only to internally motivated stylistic change."[99] However, Honegger, keen to experiment with novel musical ideas and compositional tools, sought to create a music that would be accessible to all but would also be "sufficiently exempt of banalities to interest music-lovers" in other words, "an art both popular and personal."[100] Although attempting to tailor *Judith* to fit the theatre's popular aims and resources, Honegger sadly underestimated the difficulties of performing new, artistically challenging and unfamiliar music at a people's theatre with an amateur cast.

Therefore, *Judith* represents a point of crisis in the composer's career. After his two first collaborations at the Théâtre du Jorat and their radically different receptions, one's unanimous success and the other's tacit rejection,

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[98] "I want them to build a music where I can live like in a house." Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, 62.
[99] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Vol. 4, The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.
[100] Honegger cited in Willy Tappolet, *Arthur Honegger*, translated by Claude Tappolet (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1957), 133.

Honegger seriously reconsidered his role as a composer. Ultimately, he preferred to sacrifice his more radical musical experiments in order to produce a music that would appeal to the general public. Already in the early 1920s, just after the success of *Le Roi David*, Honegger discusses his new-found resolutions:

> The reception which the work had after its first performance strengthened me in my understanding and in my efforts to create an art which is direct in every way, both with regard to the music itself and to the listener.[101]

After the unanimous success of *Le Roi David* and *Pacific 231*, Honegger's more experimental idiom of the mid to late 1920s rapidly fell out of favour with the public. In fact, in the troubled economic, political and social context of the early 1930s characterized by the economic crisis and the ascent of French socialism, Honegger's experimentalism seemed somehow obsolete and irrelevant. Frustrated by a series of disappointments (including *Judith* and *Antigone*), Honegger was forced to consider separately his works' claims to quality and utility[102] and declared that "music must change its public, and address itself to the masses."[103] At the rise of the French Popular Front, Honegger increasingly felt the need to reconsider the aesthetic preoccupations of his earlier works in order to create a compositional style that would allow him to reflect in his output the nascent socialist and humanist concerns of the early 1930s.

Honegger's new humanist ideals are better exemplified in his grand popular frescoes, such as those composed later for the Popular Front: the collective work *14 Juillet* for example and his oratorio *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher*

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[101] Honegger cited in Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger*, 93.
[102] Michèle Alten, "Arthur Honegger et son Temps," 96.
[103] Honegger cited in Christopher Moore, "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934-1938): Politics, Aesthetics and Reception" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2006), 197.

written by Paul Claudel. He thus sought to counter the divorce between art music and the audience's social realities by acknowledging and embracing the troubled and constantly changing social and political realities of the epoch. Therefore, he transformed his musical experiments of the late 1920s into a relevant popular form of expression the general public could enjoy and identify with. According to Jean Roy, it was "a human art, without useless complications, an art that, whilst resting on solid techniques, speaks a clear, sensitive and powerful idiom in that it can be heard and touch a public rebuked by dryness and intellectualism."[104]

Although we have few details about Honegger's specific ideological aspirations, it seems that the composer was keen, above all, to defend the social importance of his output; he wanted to personify "l'homme de la rue," the "compositeur Populaire."[105] His work, composed in a comprehensible and accessible musical idiom, would appeal to the masses because of its ability to enlighten and comfort people. Honegger's own understanding of his social role as a composer was close enough to the socialist or the Popular Front's idea of music as a vehicle for social improvement. After the debacle of *Judith*, Honegger moved towards, what Christopher Moore terms, "populist modernism" which consisted in fusing popular and elite musical sources together to serve an explicit political message.[106] The impulse behind the creation of these new "populist modernist" works was very different to that of the 1920s, even though compositional

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[104] Jean Roy, *Le Groupe des Six* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 191.
[105] Honegger, *Je suis compositeur*, 14. Manfred Kelkel, "Avant-Propos," in *Honegger-Milhaud: Musique et Esthétique*, ed. Kelkel, 8. Read also Arthur Hoérée's account of the composer in: Jacques Feschotte, *Arthur Honegger: L'Homme et son Œuvre* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1966), 149.
[106] Moore, "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934-1938)," 25-37.

approaches and borrowing procedures remained unchanged for the most part. By incorporating national folk and revolutionary music, which resonated deeply with the French public's new political aspirations, these new populist modernist works, according to Moore, "channelled communal values by self-consciously embracing collective, as opposed to individualistic, modes of artistic creation."[107] Therefore, composers, such as Honegger, sought to create a new "national style" by incorporating French folk music and simple folk tunes within a new "modernist framework." However, traditional harmony and tonal systems were preserved in most cases, even if slightly stretched at times, as it was generally believed that the "people" would more easily relate to a music built on familiar musical systems. In his pamphlet *La Musique et le Peuple*, Charles Koechlin clearly defined these new aesthetic/socialist considerations and their imprint on the country's contemporary musical production: "We dream of a modern art, rich with all the conquests of harmony, counterpoint and orchestration (or more stripped down, if the subject calls for it) or even made of collective songs that will rise up in the air, simple and naked, unaccompanied, as it was in the past."[108]

Honegger's "experimental modernism" of the 1920s thus gave way, in the 1930s, to a different form or conception of musical modernism clearly associated with contemporary French political preoccupations. By this association, the very concept of modernism is vague and transient, relentlessly evolving and adapting to different socio-political contexts. However, French musicologist, Paul Collaer argued that "modern music differs in that it has no one single trend launched in a

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[107] Moore, "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934-1938)," 33.
[108] Charles Koechlin cited in Moore, "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934-1938)," 35-36.

given tradition. Rather, it is the meeting ground of numerous and divergent trends." This definition seems to suit Honegger's rich and versatile compositional style.[109] Therefore, following Collaer's idea, although "musical modernism" is a fleeting and, at times, rather indefinable concept, Honegger's very treatment of his musical sources, his eclecticism and natural curiosity towards a variety of different musical "trends" inscribe his work, to a certain extent, within an all-embracing modernist aesthetic. In his appropriation and treatment of his musical inheritance, Honegger also aligned himself with Baudelaire's dual formation of modernity as he sought to reconcile the "transient, the fleeting, the contingent" with the "the eternal and the immutable."[110]

As discussed previously, however, the greatest obstacle to *Judith*'s success was not necessarily its novel musical idiom as it was profoundly inscribed within a tradition that most would have been familiar with, but rather its immediate predecessor, *Le Roi David*, simpler and more direct in its aim and its content and so more accessible. However, *Judith* best exemplifies the quest of a young composer to find his voice in the musical world of the late 1920s, trying not only to fulfil the expectations of the general public but also to surprise the specialists or critics by his originality and personality. *Judith* truly exemplifies the continuous dialogue between Honegger's cultural, ideological and compositional identities, between complexity and simplicity, high and popular art, tradition and modernism. Although the experimental quality of *Judith*'s score did not meet the

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[109] Collaer, *A History of Modern Music*, 12.
[110] Charles Baudelaire cited in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1990), 10.

first of these aspirations, Honegger successfully struck a balance between the two by the end of his life. As his friend and colleague, George Auric, wrote:

> What is most typical in Honegger's career is the way in which this revolutionary has won over the people. He has always walked in a definite direction, following his own path, without making any concessions. And everywhere the vastest public rallied to his conceptions. One must believe that his genius was particularly convincing.[111]

Indeed, the Swiss composer managed to create a musical idiom which embraced his rich and varied musical roots, developing his own compositional voice based on solid past musical foundations which then allowed him to organize his sometimes transient creative ideas within a coherent whole or structure. Meylan described Honegger's work as follows: "Absolute freedom regarding diverse trends, the richest synthesis possible of past and present acquisitions, the affirmation of art which must carry a humanitarian message."[112] Throughout his career, Honegger succeeded in adapting to the changing political situations while staying close to his own aesthetic ideas. Collaer wrote: "The history of modern music is the story of the works of those composers who have expressed personal ideas and, in order to give them life, have created a language of their own."[113] Arthur Honegger's musical style was thus quintessentially modern in that his personality and voice always shone through his music regardless of the

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[111] "Ce qu'il y a de plus typique dans la carrière d'Honegger, c'est la façon dont ce révolutionnaire a gagné le peuple. Toujours il a marché dans un sens très déterminé qui était sa vraie voie sans faire de concessions. Et partout le public le plus vaste s'est rallié a ses conceptions. Il faut croire que son génie était particulièrement convaincant." George Auric cited in Landowski, *Honegger*, 10.

[112] "Liberté absolue à l'égard des tendances diverses, synthèse la plus nourrie possible des acquisitions du passé et du présent, affirmation d'un art qui doit être chargé d'un message humanitaire" Meylan, *Honegger son Oeuvre et son Message*, 148.

[113] Collaer, *A History of Modern Music*, 15.

circumstances and contexts in which or, in the case of the Théâtre du Jorat, for which it was being created.

Appendix no. I: Performance and Edition Details of *Judith*'s Different Versions

Version I.a: Biblical Drama by René Morax, stage music by Arthur Honegger. Commissioned by the Théâtre du Jorat, dedicated to Claire Croiza.
Premiered at the Théâtre du Jorat on 13 June 1925: Claire Croiza (Judith), Mme Andréossi (Serving Girl), Pierre Alcover (Holopherne), chorus and orchestra conducted by Arthur Honegger.
Performing forces: soprano (Serving Girl), mezzo-soprano (Judith), three chorus soloists (soprano, tenor, baritone); mixed chorus; orchestra: percussion (bass drum, cymbals, side drum, tam-tam, triangle), harmonium, two pianos, strings; numerous speaking roles.
Scores: Piano-voice manuscript kept, Paul Sacher Foundation; Orchestral manuscript (with sketches of the opera version at the end), Paul Sacher Foundation.

Version I.b: Biblical Drama II in three acts by René Morax, stage music by Arthur Honegger.
Performing forces: same than for the first version.
Scores: Piano-voice score, Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. E.M.S. 6718; Orchestral score (titled Opéra sérieux en trois actes et cinq tableaux on first page), Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. E.M.S. 7098.

Version II: Opéra Sérieux in three acts. Commissioned by Raoul Gunsbourg for the Monte Carlo Opera. Libretto by René Morax.
Premiered in Monte Carlo on 13 February 1926: Mme Bonavia (Judith), Tikin (The Servant Girl), Gervais (Holopherne), Chorus and Orchestra of Monte Carlo Opera, conducted by Arthur Honegger.
Performing forces: same than for the first version with the addition of a baritone (Holopherne), a bass (Ozias), and a tenor (Bagoas, a Soldier, a Sentinel, and an offstage Voice).

Changes: Honegger almost doubled the score for the opera version of *Judith*. In this version the music of each act is continuous, but there are pauses between the acts.
Scores: Piano-voice score, Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. E.M.S. 6938; Orchestral score, Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. 7099 (the orchestral version of the score differs slightly from the piano-voice reduction).

Version III: Action Musicale (oratorio)
Premiered in Rotterdam on 16 June 1927: Berthe Seroen (Judith), Evert Cornelis (Holopherne), chorus and orchestra conducted by Arthur Honegger.
Performing forces: same than for the first version but with the addition of a narrator.
Changes: The score was slightly modified, Honegger slightly extending numbers 2 (‘The Horns of Alarm) and 4 (‘Funeral Dirge’). He also inverted the orders of numbers 6 (‘Incantation’) and 7 (‘Fanfare’) and added voices to number 8 (‘Scene by the Well’) and three new movements: 9a. The Death of Holoferne; 10a. Return of Judith; 11a. Interlude. All these additions were taken from the second operatic version.
Scores: Piano-voice score, German translation by Léo Mélitz, Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. E.M.S. 6718; Orchestral score, Paris: Sénart, 1925. Ref. E.M.S. 7098.

Appendix no. 2: Synopsis

i. Lamentations: The women of Bethulia lament in front of Judith's window where Judith can be heard praying behind the curtains. The town is under siege without any access to water. A woman in the crowd asks Judith to open the doors of the town to halt the siege.

ii. The Horn of Alarm: Ozias, the Governor, followed by the Ancients and the guards, enters the stage. He tells the women that if reinforcements have not arrived in five days, he will give the town to Holopherne. Ozias then asks the guards to sound the horn of alarm to disperse the crowd. He leaves the stage followed by the Ancients.

iii. Prayer: Judith appears on her balcony dressed in black. She stands up abruptly when she hears the horns. Questioned by her servant, she then explains she will be leaving Bethulia that night in her best dress and jewels. She then prays to God asking him to help her seduce Holoferne, concluding: "Je suis l'offrande et je suis la victime" ("I am the offering and I am the victim"). The servant then draws the curtains.

iv. Funeral Dirge: The women of Bethulia appear on stage again, lamenting. Night has fallen and Ozias approaches the door his soldiers and the Ancients are guarding. He asks his guards to push the crowd aside. Judith then appears followed by her servant. Ozias attempts to stop Judith but finally agrees to let her go.

v. Invocation: Ozias blesses Judith and the choir prays for her safety. Judith and her servant walk away.

vi. Incantation: In front of Holoferne's tent, the priests and warriors of Assour gather around the sacrificial fire. They implore their God, Mardouk, to give them Bethulia. Holoferne walks out of his tent. He talks to his advisor Bagoas who tells him that the oracle has predicted a change but not a victory.

vii. Fanfare

viii. Scene by the Well: Judith and her servant stop by a well. Holoferne's camp is nearby. The servant doubts and asks her mistress to go back but the latter refuses.

ix. Festive Music: Judith is introduced to Holopherne. After a drunken feast, he retires to his tent and asks Judith to follow him. He falls asleep and Judith beheads him.

x. Nocturne: In front of the doors of Bethulia, the guards and the women await Judith's return. She appears, presenting Holoferne's severed head to the crowd. She then commands her soldiers to attack the enemy immediately.

xi. Canticle of Battle: The stage is pitch-black but the raging sounds of battle are heard.

xii. Canticle of the Virgins: Judith awaits the return of her soldiers. The choir of Virgins, on their way to meet with the soldiers, stop in front of Judith's house and sing. Ozias, head of the army, is then seen approaching. He gives thanks to Judith, calling her their "liberator."

xiii. Canticle of Victory: The choir praises Judith and God for their victory. The choir then vacates the scene. Judith, remorseful, is left alone with her servant. After a short dialogue, both enter the house.

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