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Emma K. Schubart

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

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MUSICAL HYBRIDIZATION AND POLITICAL CONTRADICTION: THE SUCCESS OF ARTHUR HONEGGER'S ANTIGONE IN VICHY FRANCE

EMMA K. SCHUBART, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
MENTOR: SHARON JAMES

Abstract

Arthur Honegger's modernist opera *Antigone* appeared at the Paris Opéra in 1943, sixteen years after its unremarkable premiere in Brussels. The sudden Parisian success of the opera was extraordinary: the work was enthusiastically received by the French public, the Vichy collaborationist authorities, and the occupying Nazi officials. The improbable wartime triumph of *Antigone* can be explained by a unique confluence of compositional, political, and cultural realities. Honegger's compositional hybridization of French and German musical traditions, as well as his opportunistic commercial motivations as a Swiss composer working in German-occupied France, certainly aided the success of the opera. Additionally, the contradictions that characterized the fascist Vichy state and the rise of modernism in France also abetted the opera's success.

Arthur Honegger's opera *Antigone* premiered in 1927 at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. This musically innovative opera, set to a libretto by French writer Jean Cocteau, featured sets by Pablo Picasso and costumes by Coco Chanel. Initial reviews of the opera were generally positive, but the work was not enthusiastically received until sixteen years later at its French premiere at the Paris Opéra in 1943 (even though it had originally been rejected by the Paris Opéra for being too modern).¹ Once on the Parisian stage, the opera was a sensation; when especially moved by the opera, audiences would interrupt with bursts of applause. In addition to receiving acclaim from the French public, Honegger's *Antigone* was surprisingly approved by both Vichy officials and the occupying German authorities. How is it that this opera, which is now largely forgotten, could be enthusiastically endorsed by the Parisian public, the collaborationist French government, and Nazi occupiers, particularly given that the opera fearlessly addresses the conflict of morality and legality (as did the original Greek tragedy

¹ For the French premiere, Jean Cocteau designed the sets and costumes.

penned by Sophocles)? The answer to this question has extraordinary implications vis-à-vis an understanding of culture within Vichy France. This paper will analyze how the political climate in Paris in 1943 and Honegger's own willingness to navigate that climate enabled the success of a modernist opera that was based on a politically charged Greek tragedy.

Sophocles produced his tragedy *Antigone* sometime in or around 441 BCE. The play begins right after the deaths of brothers Eteocles and Polynices, who died on opposite sides of the civil war fighting for the throne of Thebes. Creon, King of Thebes, decreed that Eteocles would receive an honored burial while Polynices's body would be left to rot on the battlefield without being sanctified by holy rites. Such a refusal to allow burial was the mark of extreme disgrace and dishonor. The play begins with Antigone deciding to disobey her king (who is also her uncle) by burying and sanctifying Polynices's body. After she accomplishes this, she is summoned before Creon and is questioned. She fearlessly admits to administering the funeral rituals to Polynices, defends the morality of her actions, and denounces the immorality of Creon's law. Creon then condemns her to being buried alive in a cave. The play ends with Antigone's suicide, the suicide of her betrothed, Haemon, and the suicide of Creon's wife, Eurydice. This ancient Greek tragedy is simultaneously accessible and distant: it grapples with the ageless conflict between morality and legality, yet the text is obviously situated in the context of Ancient Greece. As Oudemans explains, "The text oscillates between the familiar and the alien because the *Antigone* is part of a cosmology ... which differs radically from our own."² Nonetheless,

the cosmology of the *Antigone* is familiar to us, not merely because this tragedy touches emotional chords in the modern European mind, but primarily because it tries to cope with cosmological problems with which we are confronted as well, although its solutions and ours are mutually exclusive. In this sense, the *Antigone* is a thorn in the side of modern European cosmology; small wonder that a range of interpretative efforts have been made either to remove the thorn or to turn it into something beneficial.³

The "familiarity" of the ancient Greek tragedy was palpable when it appeared on the Parisian stage in 1943. Evidently, it struck a chord with its factious European audience. Instead of hindering such a musically unconventional opera from taking

² Oudemans and Lardinois, *Tragic Ambiguity*, 1.

³ Oudemans and Lardinois, 1.

hold, the complicated “cosmology”—the political and cultural realities of Vichy France and, more broadly, of Europe during World War II—actually seem to have facilitated its accessibility and, in turn, its success.

To understand the Parisian success of *Antigone* in 1943, one must first examine the political climate in which the opera premiered. The Vichy regime was the French puppet government that lasted from the German invasion of France in 1940 until 1944. On June 22, 1940, occupied France, led by new head of state Marshal Pétain, signed an armistice with Nazi Germany that effectively cut France in half. According to the Hitler–Pétain pact, in exchange for complete cooperation, Pétain would be free to control the “free zone” of the country and German forces would remain in the occupied north. Even though Pétain claimed to be the protector of the French public, his regime was a fascist one with its own ultraconservative agenda: divorce was prohibited, members of the French Resistance were arrested, phone calls were monitored, and the press was censored. During and immediately after German occupation, the Vichy regime depicted itself as the lesser of two evils. To use the words of Prime Minister Pierre Laval, it was thanks to the Vichy government that France managed to “*éviter le pire*.”⁴ In his statement before the High Court of Justice in 1945, Pétain defended his government, claiming his regime had stood between the French public and the enemy: “I used my power as a shield to protect the French people. Every day, a dagger at my throat, I struggled against the enemy's demands. History will tell all that I spared you, though my adversaries think only of reproaching me for the inevitable.”⁵

Despite Pétain’s claims, Vichy certainly was no shield between the French public and its Nazi occupiers. As Paxton notes, “In fact, France became the largest single supplier to Germany of foreign male labor in all occupied Europe in 1943, east or west.”⁶ Indeed, the Vichy regime did not spell safety for the nearly 80,000 Jewish refugees who were shipped from France to death camps. It was not until decades after the end of World War II that the Vichy government’s role in the Holocaust fully came to light. As Lorraine Boissoneault explains,

The misconception that the Vichy Regime was the lesser of two evils endured only for the first few decades after the war. Since then, as more

⁴ Paxton, *Vichy France*, 358.

⁵ Paxton, 358.

⁶ Paxton, 366.

archival material has been made public, historians have gradually come to see the collaborators as willing participants in the Holocaust.⁷

Hannah Arendt points to particularly “hair-raising” proof of the Vichy government’s part in the Holocaust. In the summer of 1942, 4,000 Jewish children who had been rounded up with their parents in Paris were left at the concentration camp at Drancy after their parents had been shipped to Auschwitz. After spending ten days at the concentration camp, these children, too, were shipped to Auschwitz. It was “[Prime Minister] Laval himself [who] had proposed that children under sixteen be included in the deportations; this meant that the whole gruesome episode was ... the outcome of an agreement between France and Germany, negotiated at the highest level.”⁸ During the summer and fall of 1942, twenty-seven thousand stateless Jews—eighteen thousand from Paris and nine thousand from Vichy France—were deported to Auschwitz.⁹

Key to the Nazi implementation of a *collaboration d'etat* with Vichy France was the divided and disorganized political landscape in France. Stanley Hoffmann outlines the political “incoherence” that defined Vichy France and identifies those members of French society who condemned the republic as an oppressor that “had both corrupted the French polity ... and weakened French society,” the socially discontented, anti-republican conservatives, and the fascists who sought either “French regeneration or revitalization” via totalitarian leadership or insurrection.¹⁰ This was the splintered political landscape in France in 1940 upon which Hitler capitalized. “What made Hitler's apparent ‘moderation’ ”—that is, the exploitation of France without implementing *total* Nazi occupation—“of June 1940 so Machiavellian was its very ability to maximize France's inner tensions.”¹¹

While the political fragmentation in France lent itself to exploitation by its Nazi occupiers, it also translated to a disintegration of any distinct French cultural identity. As Jane Fulcher explains, “What constituted French values during Vichy was far from clear. The contradictory nature of the government’s goals led to inconsistency and confusion in its cultural policies.”¹² This cultural confusion was systematically exploited by German programs that were implemented to undermine French culture. For example, German propaganda sought to undercut the prestige

⁷ Boissoneault, “Puppet Government.”

⁸ Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, 164.

⁹ Arendt, 164.

¹⁰ Hoffmann, “Collaborationism in France.”

¹¹ Hoffmann.

¹² Fulcher, “French Identity,” 651.

of French music by emphasizing the similarities between French and German music, insinuating that French music did not belong to France. Vichy officials actively participated in these propaganda efforts. There were concerts throughout France, sometimes with lectures, specifically organized to emphasize the superiority of German music.¹³ This cultural ambiguity in French society, complicated by massive political disorder, actually seems to have been the perfect backdrop for the composer Arthur Honegger, as he never defined himself or his music as distinctly French or German and instead managed to straddle the traditions of both cultures.

Arthur Honegger was born in France in 1892 to German-speaking Swiss parents. As World War I was brewing, he obtained Swiss citizenship, which he assumed would be his safest option (though he would live in France for most of his life). Honegger was therefore a man without a straightforward sense of national identity, living in Europe during a time in which the political rhetoric was centered upon nationalism. As Fulcher describes, “this was a period saturated with nationalist rhetoric concerning art and the natural ‘soil,’ which created ambiguities within Honegger that would long remain.”¹⁴ Honegger’s personal ethnic ambiguities were mirrored in his compositional education. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire from 1911 to 1918 with [Charles-Marie Widor](#) and [Vincent d’Indy](#). As Honegger himself put it, he arrived in Paris already “nourished on the [German] classics and romantics, enamored of Strauss and Reger,” but he quickly fell in love with the French tradition when he found that in Paris, “it was not that [German] school, but the [French] Debussyites in full bloom.”¹⁵ Honegger’s affinity for both French and German musical traditions would fortuitously lend itself to a successful career in German-occupied France.

The German–French eclecticism that defined Honegger’s ethnicity and education came to characterize Honegger’s music in *Antigone*. This was also evidenced in the composer’s controversial political behavior throughout World War II. Honegger was a member of Les Six, a group of six notable French composers who were given this title in 1920 by French music critic Henri Collet in his article entitled “The Russian Five, the French Six, and M. Erik Satie.” The five other members of Les Six were Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, and Germaine Tailleferre. Les Six spearheaded musical modernism in France. Musical modernism refers to the new culture of music that emerged after

¹³ Fulcher, 653.

¹⁴ Fulcher, *Composer as Intellectual*, 184.

¹⁵ Honegger, *I Am a Composer*, 91.

World War I that embraced atonality (without necessarily dismissing tonality) as well as innovative rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic concepts. Edward Campbell explains the modernist musical aesthetic as one that is based upon “the conviction that music is not a static phenomenon defined by timeless truths and classical principles, but rather something which is intrinsically historical and developmental,” and even though “the belief in musical progress or in the principle of innovation is not new or unique to modernism, such values are particularly important within modernist aesthetic stances.”¹⁶

Les Six actively used their music as an instrument of revolt against social, political, and cultural norms. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Les Six became more and more politically engaged. This meant—with the notable exception of Honegger—celebrating traditional French values and condemning German fascism. Unlike the other members of Les Six, Honegger was not as concerned with the disruption of cultural and political institutions. He also differed from his contemporaries in that he was never anti-German. While the other five members of Les Six were heavily involved in the anti-German Resistance movement throughout the war, Honegger’s career was benefitting not only from the support of French civilians but also from German and Vichy endorsement. In 1941, he was invited to join the French Resistance group the Front National des Musiciens after he wrote a column defending French music for the arts journal *Comoedia*. As Harry Halbreich writes, “Honegger’s popularity had never been as great as during those years when [his compositions] *Jeanne d’Arc au Bûcher*, *La Danse des Morts* and the *Symphony for Strings* united audiences in packed concert halls in a single spirit of enthusiasm and hope.”¹⁷ Later that same year, however, Honegger was invited to Vienna to participate in the international Mozart festival, which was organized by the German Ministry of Propaganda under Joseph Goebbels. After this trip, Honegger was granted exit visas by German officials to give concerts of his piece *Pacific 231*, which Nazis actually considered “degenerate” music, throughout Europe. In 1942, he attended a German embassy reception for Heinz Drewes, who was the head of Goebbels’s music department in Berlin. That same year, French orchestras began reviving *Pacific 231*, and in June and July, German officials allowed French musicians to celebrate Honegger’s birthday with weeklong festivals. In fact, Honegger was the only living composer to receive such an honor in occupied France.¹⁸

¹⁶ Campbell, Boulez, *Music and Philosophy*, 37.

¹⁷ Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger*, 164.

¹⁸ Sprout, “Unlocking the Mystery of Honegger.”

By 1943, in light of his connections to Nazi officials, Honegger was dismissed from the Resistance; however, as Leslie Sprout notes, “the timing of these events [his connections with Nazi authorities] suggests that Honegger was motivated not by political sympathy for the occupiers but by professional opportunities.”¹⁹ After the war, Honegger sought to defend his dealings with German authorities when he wrote, “Going to the enemy’s camp does not automatically mean that one supports his cause”²⁰; nonetheless, records of Honegger’s wartime compositions certainly do not exonerate him. His *Chant de liberation* was performed in 1944 in one of the first concerts in Paris after the Liberation. At the time, French author Maurice Brilliant wrote of the piece, “For our joy and honour, Honegger was a composer of the Resistance.”²¹ The score was lost until 2010. The melody of the piece comes from the music for the film *Joan of Arc* that Honegger composed in 1942. The film was a piece of Vichy propaganda meant to depict Pétain as a virtuous protector of the French people against the enemy of Great Britain. Honegger also composed an oratorio on *Jean d’Arc au Bucher* (Joan of Arc at the Stake), which the Vichy regime toured throughout southern France. Honegger later claimed that he used the melody from *Joan of Arc* in a piece that he composed as a Resistance song as early as April 1942, however. This composition celebrated the Allied powers and incorporated quotations from “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “La Marseillaise.” If the date of this composition had been correct, it would prove that Honegger’s allegiance lay with the Resistance even while he was outwardly in contact with Nazi authorities—but when *Chant de liberation* was uncovered in 2010, it bore a date of April 1944, two years later than Honegger had claimed. “Instead of placing Honegger as a Resistance composer,” Daisy Fancourt explains, the 1944 composition date “suggests that he feared he would be accused of collaborating, so [he] wrote a Resistance song and lied about its date to provide evidence that might save him during a trial.”²²

Tellingly, the next year, Honegger produced a song entitled “Hymne de la délivrance,” composed in the style of Resistance songs, which he used in the score of a film about Resistance fighters, *Un Ami Viendra ce Soir*, later that year. Honegger’s flurry of anti-German Resistance compositions, all produced when Allied victory was becoming likely, points to the opportunism of the composer. Throughout World War II, Honegger’s behavior with the Resistance, the Vichy

¹⁹ Sprout.

²⁰ Quoted in Sprout.

²¹ Quoted in Fancourt, “Les Six.”

²² Fancourt.

collaborationist government, and Nazi authorities was indicative of a composer whose motivations were not ideological as much as commercial. His ability to toe the line between French and German politics was mirrored in his music, and this ultimately facilitated approval by a wide audience.

Honegger revered the music of Beethoven, Wagner, and Bach but was also strongly influenced by Debussy, Ravel, and d'Indy. He not only managed to exist in both musical contexts but was also able to highlight the musical idioms of both worlds in his music. He conveyed the modern French style within the framework of the German tradition, becoming something of a musical hybrid of a composer. Honegger embodies what Jay Winter describes as the emotional response of the post–World War I generation to move forward with “a refashioned set of ideas and images derived from a range of older traditions”; instead of completely rejecting tradition, this generation sought to “recast” it, as a way of “walk[ing] backwards into the future, struggling to understand the chaotic history of this century.”²³ Honegger’s music certainly did walk backwards into the future; his compositions embraced tradition while striding boldly into the new post–World War I era of music modernism.

This duality of traditional and modern may be best seen in Honegger’s opera *Antigone*. French composer Olivier Messiaen often heard Honegger announce, “If something should last after my death, it ought to be *Antigone*.”²⁴ Although the opera is largely unknown today, it has nonetheless been singled out by prominent composers as a masterful, pivotal work. *Antigone* was considered by French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez to be a pioneering opera, charting new territory for the next generation of composers. The innovation within Honegger’s *Antigone* lies in his realization of Cocteau’s libretto. Through his libretto, Cocteau sought to revitalize *Antigone* in a post-World War I context. After seeing a performance of the tragedy by Sophocles at the Comédie Française, which Cocteau described as “incredibly boring,” he decided to update the play with a condensed three-act libretto.²⁵ In 1922, Cocteau explained that he meant to “put a new dress on the old Greek tragedy, adapting it to the rhythm of our own language.”²⁶ He accomplished this by using French colloquialisms (as did Sophocles, though in Greek) and by making the libretto compressed and synoptic. Cocteau compared his libretto to a “pen drawing after a painting by an old master” and “an aerial

²³ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 221–222.

²⁴ Quoted in Shapiro, *Les Six*, 182.

²⁵ Quoted in Fulcher, “French Identity,” 658.

²⁶ Quoted in Fulcher, 658.

photograph of the Acropolis.”²⁷ As his analogies suggest, Cocteau’s libretto was rough and ungarnished. This presented an exciting challenge to Honegger, who was inspired by Cocteau’s bare-bones approach.

Honegger himself explained that, to complement Cocteau’s innovative writing, he would have to be inventive as he set the libretto to music: “[As] ... I was composing the music for *Antigone*, on a violent and even brutal text, I sometimes said to myself: ‘If I combine words and music for this text in the customary fashion, it will lose its character, its power.’”²⁸ Besides the challenge posed by the austerity of the libretto, Honegger was also attracted to its fast pace.

He believed that slowness was the great failing of lyric theater and felt that twentieth-century audiences were conditioned by technological advancements in the media for rapidly unfolding plots. As he explained in his 1929 address to the Rice Institute:

The principal reasons for the lack of success of the great part of the work by the lyric theatre seem to me to be the following: the slowness of the action, exaggerated by the chorus and the symphony and the impossibility of understanding the text. In this day we are accustomed to speed. The motion picture has given us the taste for the swift succession of tableaux and the public no longer has any patience.²⁹

As such, Honegger composed *Antigone* with the goal of complementing the condensed libretto with music that was just as swift and succinct.

Specifically in the case of *Antigone*, as he composed the vocal lines, Honegger sought to avoid the patterns of stress and intonation that are inherent in the French language. To achieve maximum clarity, he often displaced the natural syllables and accents of the language. He was guided not by the French language but by the theatrical context of the words he was setting to music. In so doing, he managed to strike a balance between the Italian bel canto tradition and the Debussian tradition of recitatives.³⁰ Honegger disliked bel canto—a style of singing that prioritizes lyricism above the realities of prosody—because the singer can hold the vowel for as long as he or she wishes, which obviously interferes with the audience’s comprehension of the text. As Honegger put it, it is thanks to bel canto

²⁷ Quoted in Fulcher, 658.

²⁸ Quoted in Spratt, *Music of Arthur Honegger*, 131.

²⁹ Quoted in Shapiro, *Les Six*, 183.

³⁰ The tradition of continuous recitatives is attributed to French composer Claude Debussy because he employed this technique throughout his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

that “in the lyric theatre one can never understand the singers. Now, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, it is not the singers’ fault, but the fault of the composers.”³¹ Clearly, Honegger meant to set himself apart from such misguided composers. He also rejected the operatic tradition of recitatives—a compositional technique of employing continuous holds in the music as the singer “sings” in the rhythm of ordinary speech on the same note—which Honegger described as “monotonous repetition” and “impassive syllabism.”³² Instead, he created a compositional hybrid that combined bel canto lyricism and the realistic prosody of recitatives by emphasizing the consonants of the words. He believed consonants facilitate language, and with this in mind, he accentuated the consonants in the vocal lines in *Antigone*.

Years after he composed *Antigone*, Honegger explained his compositional process: “I sought for the right stress, especially on the attacking consonants. ... What is important in the word is not the vowel, but the consonant: it really plays the role of a locomotive, dragging the whole word behind it ... the consonants project the word into the hall.”³³ To illustrate this consonant-focused compositional technique, Honegger used the following example from *Antigone*:

At one instance, Créon violently interrupts the choir, crying out: ‘Assez de sottises, vieillesse!’ The conventional prosody suggests the following stress: ‘Assez de sottises, vieillesse!’ Try to project this phrase in anger with this rhythm: the aggressive effect is immediately blunted. Respecting the dramatic situation and Créon’s anger, I made it: ‘Assez de sottises, vieillesse!’ leaning on the roots of the words.³⁴

In keeping with Cocteau’s spirit of revitalization, Honegger breathed new energy into this Greek tragedy. He broke with operatic convention in order to allow the text to reach the audience with maximum effect. He musically shed what he felt was distracting and superfluous about the French language so a reenergized twentieth-century *Antigone* could pierce the hearts of her audience. The enraptured audiences’ eruptions of applause throughout the opera proved that Honegger’s efforts to modernize the opera were successful.

In addition to the Parisian public, Vichy and German critics were equally enthusiastic about *Antigone*. Music critic Arthur Hoérée praised the opera in the

³¹ Quoted in Spratt, *Music of Arthur Honegger*, 131.

³² Quoted in Spratt, 131.

³³ Quoted in Spratt, 131.

³⁴ Quoted in Spratt, 131.

Vichy-approved journal *L'Information musicale*. Tellingly, in his glowing review of the opera, Hoérée claimed that Creon, not his defiant niece Antigone, deserves empathy. Similarly, Nazi-approved forces also commended *Antigone*. German composer Werner Egk, who was a favorite composer of Joseph Goebbels, praised Honegger's eclectic compositional approach.

Enthusiastic reception of Honegger's modernist opera sheds an interesting light on the goals of the Nazi state with regard to art censorship. Traditionally, historical analyses of art sanctioned by the Nazi regime indicate that the Nazi state was primarily interested in promoting the musical compositions of ethnically German composers—Bruckner, Bach, Strauss, Beethoven, Wagner, etc.³⁵ It is critically important to remember, however, that the Nazi regime also sought to establish itself as unmistakably modern and therefore encouraged modernist art. As Michael Kater highlights, “On close examination we can find in the Third Reich elements we would not expect in the dictionary definition of a totalitarian regime,” such as “avant-garde attempts at modernism that may not have conformed with the modernist conceptions of the early republic but were nonetheless novel and were in fact officially welcomed and even subsidized as such.”³⁶ This is reflected in a speech given by Joseph Goebbels in Munich in 1936: “The National Socialist Weltanschauung is the most modern thing in the world today, and the National Socialist state is the most modern state. There are thousands of motifs for a modern art in the spirit of this weltanschauung.”³⁷ Apparently, Honegger's *Antigone*, an opera derived from the ancient Greeks and served up in the middle of World War II in France, fit perfectly with the Nazi objective of cultural modernism.

All art is subject to varying, even conflicting, interpretations. It is an extraordinary piece of art that can withstand the test of contradictory interpretations arising from a fraught political climate and a highly contentious cultural zeitgeist. Politically speaking, *Antigone* was able to endure through myriad interpretations thanks to its composer's ethnic ambiguity, commercial opportunism, and compositional language of musical hybridization. In addition, it must be underscored that this opera satisfied the cultural needs of the occupied French public, the Vichy government, and the Nazi forces, which helped to ensure its relevancy. The opera's music, however, seems to be the primary reason for

³⁵ Beethoven proved an interesting challenge for Nazi officials who wanted to claim his music as their own but had to considerably revise his biography in order to do so. See Schubart's “Tainted or Transcendent” for an explanation of the lengths Nazi officials went to in order to revise Beethoven's questionable (i.e., not Aryan) heritage.

³⁶ Kater, *Twisted Muse*, 6.

³⁷ Quoted in Kater, 177.

Antigone's wide cultural appeal. The innovative musical realization of the text, the atonality, and the innovative rhythmic figures combined to form a piece of modernist music that concomitantly satisfied the Nazi regime's agenda of appearing avant-garde, pleased the collaborationist Vichy government, and gave the culturally sidelined French public a particularly timely story.

In its day, the opera was hugely popular and was predicted to go down in history as a masterpiece. This prediction was incorrect, as today, Honegger's *Antigone* has been largely forgotten. Regardless of its relative obscurity, however, this opera charted new, modernist musical territory and paved the way for the next generation of composers to expand the limits of musical expression. Both musically and culturally, Honegger's *Antigone* was made possible by an extraordinary confluence of political circumstances. An innovative French librettist collaborated with a cultural hybrid of a composer at precisely the moment in history when an occupied French nation, its collaborationist French government, and Nazi occupiers would all be supportive of the rebirth of a story that fearlessly and incongruously questions the rule of law. The enthusiastic Parisian reception of Honegger's *Antigone* reveals the chaos of a culturally fragmented and politically hypocritical Vichy France. At the same time, the Parisian response to the opera reveals a common desire among Honegger's audiences: the desire to see the traditional reclothed in the modern. The very admittance of this opera onto the Parisian stage reveals the political, social, and cultural conflicts that existed within the fascist Vichy regime and sheds light on the development of French modernism at a moment in history when French culture was quite literally under siege.

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