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Dukas's 'Victory': a cultural and political reading of a post-WWI manuscript

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THE TALE of Paul Dukas's crippling critical view of his own music is familiar to scholars: when his friend George Enescu enquired in early 1935 as to the whereabouts of his unpublished manuscripts, he reportedly replied that he had burned them all.¹ The truth of this story is confirmed by the fact that the sole unedited Dukas scores in existence today are a handful of student efforts dating from his time at the Paris Conservatoire. When coupled with the reality that the composer only published 13 works, the avenues available to researchers seem frustratingly restricted. An important but little-known detail, however, is that Dukas's dissatisfaction with his works did not encompass all aspects of their conception. A sizeable number of scenarios, outlines, scenery sketches – and even a whole, typed libretto – for proposed works, which were often at least partially developed before being obliterated, are still intact today. These rich resources remain underexploited. Consequently, there are gaps in Dukas scholarship, notably on the subject of his later years where the paucity of finished scores is most striking.

In this article, I examine one example of such surviving source material: a vivid but virtually unknown scenario from 1920 that Dukas produced as a reflection on World War I.² A potent combination of the past and the promise of the future, this source explores notions of French politics, nationhood and identity. While set in a time poised on the brink of peace, the scenario nevertheless includes reminiscences of the country's previous military struggles. This dialectic is negotiated through a dialogue between prominent voices of the past (Camille Saint-Saëns, Alfred Bruneau, Emile Zola and Paul Déroulède) and a few who would make a mark in the future (the poetry of Jean Richepin and the politics of Albert Sarraut). Dukas alludes, in various ways, to them all.

We have no confirmation of the extent to which this document made the transition to a full musical work. But it is nonetheless of essential value in offering the most compelling evidence yet of its creator's commitment to a patriotic artistic path in later life. My findings from this long overlooked source are supplemented by notes in a journal kept by the composer in 1919.³ Significant discoveries emerge from the investigation of these materials. First of all, they provide us with a wealth of insights into Dukas's postwar creative plans, enabling a deeper understanding of his work. Fundamentally,

1. Rollo Myers: *Modern French music: its evolution and cultural background from 1900 to the present day* (Oxford, 1971), p. 59.

2. My translation of the scenario and a copy of the original document (Carnet W.51: 96, Département de musique, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris) are contained in the Appendix.

3. Carnet W.51: 98–1, BnF.

they assist in answering how questions of cultural politics pertain to him. The contents of these sources illustrate that the reconciliation of past and future offered a means by which figures such as the Jewish Dukas could bridge the divide between that which was judged 'foreign' and that seen as authentically French. Thus, in addressing the composer's position in relation to society, I also contribute to the ongoing debate about issues of cultural and national identity in France during the Third Republic.⁴

Dukas's music after WW 1 and the significance of source W.51: 96

A composer whose output was of limited quantity his whole life, Dukas sanctioned the appearance of only two scores after 1918 despite actively participating in the Paris music scene until his death in 1935. Both were brief pieces commissioned in honour of Debussy (*La plainte, au loin, du faune*, for piano, 1920) and the poet Ronsard (*Sonnet de Ronsard*, for voice and piano, 1924). Such minor achievements belie his aims for much more complex works, which eventually were either abandoned or destroyed. As in the early years, his perfectionist standards hindered the publication of works; plus, as discussed below, in later life he also had to contend with meeting expectations of a modernist style for which he felt no affinity. Whether published or incomplete, produced before the war or after it, little of Dukas's œuvre is abstract: he was primarily interested in the intersection between music, texts and drama.⁵ Moreover, he was drawn to the intertextual use of different authors within a single conception.⁶ The plurality of texts and authors involved in the 1920 scenario strongly suggests that this aesthetic conviction became more entrenched with age.

The specific source under discussion is noteworthy for several reasons: one, it is a key addition to the list of post-WW1 Dukas plans; two, it enhances an understanding of his other unfinished projects, namely the adaptation of *The tempest*; three, and chiefly, it begs a reconsideration of a range of assumptions about Dukas. As one whose ethnic origins did not affect his friendship with the vocal antisemite Vincent d'Indy, he is perceived as a resolutely neutral presence in an inflamed political climate. The document in question explodes this notion, revealing that the war stirred long-standing but latent patriotic sentiments. Instead of offering an instinctive reaction to the ravaging of France, Dukas articulated his response in a carefully nuanced fashion. More than merely dramatising emotive events of the immediate past, the scenario absorbed them into a greater historical narrative. The composer's post-1918 creative course, as traced out here, speaks of a determination to balance historical integrity against the challenge of responding to a modernist climate that demanded innovation in art.

4. See Barbara L. Kelly, ed.: *French music, culture, and national identity, 1870–1939* (Rochester, 2008).

5. This also forms an important theme in his music criticism. For more, see Laura Watson: 'Paul Dukas's music-text aesthetic: a study of its sources, theory and practice, 1891–1907' (PhD diss., Dublin, 2008).

6. Like Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907) is based on a libretto by Maurice Maeterlinck. When, in act 2, the character of Mélisande is introduced in Dukas's opera, the composer quotes the motif associated with her in Debussy's work.

The nature of the 'Victory' document

Carnet W.51: 96 contains a four-page typescript prepared c.1919–20. Simply titled 'Scenario', it was presumably meant to be the basis for a stage work, but its multifaceted nature is unique and raises the possibility that the composer never intended to elaborate a full score for it. The brevity of the document – plus the few conversational exchanges contained within – suggests that lyric scenes, a 'choreographic poem' like *La péri* (1911) or even programme music of some description were envisaged. The typescript is in two parts. A three-page text, divided into eight prose scenes of varying length, is a celebration of the WWI victory, after which I have nicknamed it. A poem by Richepin (1849–1926) comprises the fourth page. Both parts are all that survive of the work. Dukas may have made only limited progress with it overall but the fact that the text exists in typescript form, in its own folder rather than merely outlined in a journal, lends it an authority that few of his other unfinished works possess.

The closest comparable document is his adaptation of *The tempest*, the typescript of which also dates from around 1920 despite work on the project commencing in 1899.⁷ The final French translation is over 60 pages long and probably primarily intended as a libretto, although the critic Pierre Lalo who saw the score remembered it thus in 1942: 'Sometimes it was, simply, a music drama; then scenic music, still other times a vast symphonic poem, in which each part expressed the personality of the various characters.'⁸

Not a single note of *Tempest* music remains. Nonetheless, Dukas's decision to preserve the text is testament to its value. The literary remnants of these works comprise the main sources for studying the composer's artistic direction in later life. One difference between the *Tempest* and 'Victory' scripts is that the latter is adorned with very few final corrections. Both 'Victory' alterations were confined to the pivotal third scene. Dukas firstly rescinded an overwrought display of patriotism incongruent with his reserved demeanour by crossing out the following line: 'An amputee offers his sacrifice to the motherland'. He then removed a reference to a conversation about those lost in battle, thus ensuring that the episode closed more dramatically and abruptly with the 'arrival of prisoners'. Two annotations, discussed below, overtly acknowledge Bruneau and Richepin as inspiration.

As mentioned above, the 'Victory' scenario is special because it is not Dukas's adaptation of a different author's creation to suit his own ends or a wholly independent prefatory text. Instead, it confronts us with the following: Dukas's own literary material and the barest bones of his musical substance via the reference to an overture; Saint-Saëns's *Marche héroïque* in E♭ major, op.34 (1871); extensive reference to the Bruneau opera *Messidor*

7. See Georges Favre, ed.: *Correspondance de Paul Dukas* (Paris, 1971), p.34. Dukas sought advice from his father in 1899 about the correct translation of a line from the play, so it seems that an adaptation was on his mind at this point.

8. Favre: *L'œuvre de Paul Dukas* (Paris, 1969), p.28. 'Tantôt s'était, simplement, un drame lyrique; tantôt une musique de scène, tantôt encore un vaste poème symphonique, dont chaque partie aurait exprimé le caractère des personnages divers.'

(1897); an allusion to remarks by French politician Paul Déroulède; an extract from a speech by parliamentarian Albert Sarraut; and a complete, separate poem, 'L'Aveugle', by Richepin. While the 'Victory' form is exceptional, its content is not. Paralleling the development of the scenario in 1919, a Dukas notebook from the same year indicates that he had envisaged many works based on military, historical or patriotic themes. Titles such as 'Les colonisateurs', 'Symphonie sur la Résistance' and 'Les revoltés' abound, with succinct summaries of their proposed plots or programmes. The 'Victory' scenario is the most complete expression of the ideas fleetingly explored there.

Contextualising the manuscript: a journal from 1919

In 1919 Dukas penned the phrase 'La route de la gloire' in one of his journals.⁹ Nestled between Nietzsche aphorisms, observations about literary editions and sketches for works based on nationalistic subjects, these words ('The road to glory') almost certainly refer to a painting by the same name that depicts the French Revolution. The painting, by the French artist Pierre Victor Robiquet (1879–1951), was exhibited in the Salon des Artistes Français in 1906 and 1914, where Dukas may have encountered it.¹⁰ Its allusions to social disturbance, state politics and violence resonated strongly with the themes of the symphonic and stage works that Dukas drafted in the immediate aftermath of the war.

The first page of the journal contains reminders about 'returning to the subject of the Revolutionaries'.¹¹ Beneath this ideas for a four-movement 'Symphony on the Resistance' are outlined. The hypothetical symphony carries obvious programmatic significance, as the subtitles for the first two movements ('Activity' followed by 'Weariness') further indicate. The title of the third is left blank, and the fourth was to be based on 'reunified motifs', maybe to suggest a kind of final peace.¹²

A world in turmoil also forms the basis for the next new project identified. (In between these are notes on *The tempest*, referring to Caliban, Prospero and the island. On p.25 Dukas subsequently wrote 'Pour la *Tempête* and underscored the word 'Prelude'.) Pages four and five plot out 'The sanctuary', a work presumably destined for the stage, because Dukas remarked to himself: 'Set the action in an époque of great social or national upheaval'. The protagonist is someone who has 'lost faith, who is a kind of disillusioned being'. In contrast, this character's son displays a religious fervour that 'burns with the thirst of a martyr'.¹³ A thematic parallel with Dukas's overture *Polyeucte* (1891), after Corneille's play of the same name about a Christian martyr in ancient Rome, is evident.

As promised at the outset of the journal, he soon revisits the topic of the

9. W.51: 98–1, p.8.

10. It also appeared in the following exhibitions: Exposition: Salon des Artistes français, Paris (1906); Palais de l'Élysée, Paris (1907); Louvre, Paris (1922); Ambassade de France, London (1922).

11. W.51: 98–1, p. 1: 'Reprendre le sujet des Révoltés'.

12. W.51: 98–1, p. 1: 'des motifs réunifiés'.

13. W.51: 98–1, pp.4–5: 'Placer l'action dans une époque de grande surrection sociale ou nationale [...] Le principal [...] a perdu la foi, [est] une sorte d'être désabusé [...] Son fils [...] brûle de la soif du martyr.'

French Revolution (pp.12–15). Evidence as to whether it constitutes a new work or a different aspect of one already outlined, as with *The tempest*, is not conclusive. The title 'Les revoltés' ('The revolutionaries') is decisively underlined; perfunctory drafts of two key themes and brief accompanying verbal descriptions follow. Similar to 'The sanctuary', religion is in the foreground, with explicit references to Paradise and Hell in an explanatory paragraph (p.12). The following pages comprise basic musical sketches of two separate scenes, with the comment 'Establish the Action on this theme' to signify the first of these. Progress on the opening episode is further suggested by the fact that it was given a title: 'The beautiful evening'.¹⁴

Political agitation again inspired the final major programmatic plan sketched in the journal, for a work entitled 'Les colonisateurs' ('The colonisers'). As with 'Les revoltés', two separate themes are stated, along with short explicatory asides. The first theme, given the title name, belongs to the colonising protagonists, while the second relates to the exploits of Napoleon in Egypt.¹⁵

Immediately prior to those sketches, p.31 bears a title that is not historically or politically inflected, but which is imbued with a postwar sensibility all the same. Dukas inscribed the following: 'Symphonie Moderniste, Suite de la Fantastique ou le Triomphe de Laid'. This 'Modernist Symphony, after the *Fantastique* [my emphasis] or the Triumph of the Ugly' is bereft of musical examples that might usefully enable us to establish whether, as the title suggests, the composer intended this as an ironic comment on the state of the French symphony after Berlioz or possibly as an indictment of the circumstances imposed on composers. It remains a stark indicator of its author's view in later life that musical modernism was symptomatic of a degenerate society. This opinion was elaborated in his 1924 article, 'Tendencies of contemporary music'.¹⁶ It is summed up thus: 'To conquer the public in the few hours that it grants them, musicians [...] are constrained by the need to astonish, which is not easy. And that is how, little by little, a violent and rapid art is formed.'¹⁷ The composer's somewhat old-fashioned musical allegiances are on display from the outset of the 'Victory' scenario.

A cultural, political and historical reading of the scenario

An overture opens the proceedings. Beside the overture, Dukas plainly identifies Saint-Saëns's *Marche héroïque*. Whether the full piece should be played here, or excerpted in an overture of Dukas's invention, is not clarified. The historical baggage brought to the 'Victory' scenario by the Saint-Saëns march is an equally intriguing matter. It was written as a patriotic gesture in the face of French defeat to Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian

14. W.51: 98–1, pp.12–15: 'Etablir l'Action sur ce thème' is noted at the end of p.12, followed by 'La belle soirée'.

15. W.51: 98–1, pp.32–35.

16. Paul Dukas: 'Les tendances de la musique contemporaine', in *Les écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique* (Paris, 1948), pp.667–71.

17. Dukas: 'Les tendances', p.670: 'Pour le conquérir [le public] pendant les quelques heures qu'il leur accorde, les musiciens [...] sont contraints de l'étonner, ce qui n'est pas facile. Et c'est ainsi que s'est peu à peu formé un art violent et rapide.'

War in 1871. Therefore, in Dukas's post-WWI context it is transformed into a potent symbol of nationalistic pride rather than sorrow.

The curtain subsequently rises to expose a pastoral scene in France. As the day dawns, Dukas interpolates his second borrowed composition, now choosing the act 4 prelude from Bruneau's opera *Messidor*. Performed in 1897, *Messidor* was the product of a collaboration between Bruneau and Zola, who wrote its prose libretto.¹⁸ The term 'Messidor' refers to the tenth month, a harvest month, in the French Republican Calendar. This calendar was used by the government for a short period immediately following the Revolution and for 18 days in 1871. In an instant, Dukas's post-war celebration harks back to two tumultuous periods in French history. The creators of *Messidor*, fittingly, were both outspoken advocates of the Revolutionary ideals. Moreover, they were vocal supporters of Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish soldier whose unjust conviction of treason irrevocably damaged the French establishment in the late 1890s. Due to the known political affiliations of its creators, *Messidor* proved a failure. Dukas, unlike his contemporaries such as Debussy, however, had greater regard for the opera.¹⁹ As Ross highlights, he spoke of it 'as perhaps the most significant of the French works that have been played at the Opéra for ten years'.²⁰ Furthermore, a later Dukas article from 1899 lauded the 'melodic originality and expanse of feeling' in the act 4 Prelude specifically.²¹ The reminiscence of this piece in 'Victory' two decades later must be attributed to more than its pleasant musicality, despite Ross's claim that the composer 'paid no attention to Zola's and Bruneau's patriotic musings or to the political content of *Messidor*', being 'more interested in the opera's ambiguous relationship to Wagnerian music drama'.²² While this was probably true at that stage, the political issues undoubtedly attracted Dukas in subsequent years. In the left margin halfway down the first page of the scenario, beside a scene describing a French community, Dukas printed Bruneau's name for a second time, as if to stress the depth of the *Messidor* connection.

Fulcher and Kelly have recognised that the Dreyfus Affair acted as a catalyst for engaging artists, writers and musicians with matters of government.²³ Dukas differed little to his colleagues in this respect, except that his heritage and association with individuals such as d'Indy probably made him more circumspect in professing his views. It is not surprising that his opera *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907) – an allegory for truth, the individual and freedom, as Suschitzky has shown – is saturated in the kind of symbolism that distracted audiences from its true meaning.²⁴ (In quoting a motif from Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Ariane* serves as a precedent for the 'Victory' scenario's intertextuality too.) Nor is it difficult to imagine that the composer might have felt more comfortable voicing his sympathies for a radical agenda through the second-hand perspective that borrowing

18. For more on the political resonances of Zola's libretto, see Steven Huebner: 'Zola the sower', in *Music & Letters* 83/1 (February 2002), pp.75–105.

19. Richard Langham Smith: 'Debussy on performance: sound and unsound ideals', in James R. Briscoe, ed.: *Debussy in performance* (New Haven, 1999), p.6.

20. James Ross: 'Messidor: republican patriotism and the French revolutionary tradition in Third Republic opera', in Barbara L. Kelly, ed.: *French music, culture, and national identity, 1870–1939* (Rochester, NY, 2008), p.123

21. Dukas: 'Les concerts', in *Écrits*, pp.438–45. See p.445: 'l'originalité mélodique et l'ampleur de sentiment'.

22. Ross: 'Messidor', p.124.

23. See Jane F. Fulcher: *French cultural politics and music: from the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York, 1999) and Kelly, ed.: *French music*.

24. Dukas persuaded Maeterlinck to change aspects of the original *Ariane* libretto. For more, see Simon-Pierre Perret & Marie-Laure Ragot: *Paul Dukas* (Paris, 2007), pp.458–61. For discussion of allegory in the opera, see Anya Suschitzky: 'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue: Dukas, the light and the well', in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9, pp.133–61.

Messidor offered. Significantly, its libretto communicates through a mask of symbolism too.²⁵ Dukas's attraction to the Zola text surely extended far beyond its literary style, though. His first critique of the Zola-Bruneau artistic partnership, a review of *L'Attaque du moulin* in 1893, rhapsodised about the Zola story upon which the libretto was based.²⁶ Emphasising that this premiere showcased the performance of a *human* lyric drama, he applauded Zola for recognising the following: 'The first condition which a poem destined for music and the stage must fulfil is that it is interesting, vibrant and vivid.'²⁷

In the next paragraph Dukas further praised the 'human truth' of the author's endeavour. Despite structural problems with Louis Gallet's libretto and the consequences for the music's symphonic development, he still concluded that the subject matter made for excellent literary or theatrical material, irrespective of its status as 'a mediocre lyrical subject'.²⁸ An appreciation of Zola was arguably the key factor in his appropriation of *Messidor*. The publication of the incendiary 'J'accuse!' in 1898 can only have intensified his admiration for Zola's empathy with the human spirit. In addition to his insights into the political prejudice that Dreyfus faced, the composer might also have imagined that he could relate to him in a small way on a personal level. Dukas had served as a soldier in the 1890s too, while a young man he was drafted on a few occasions between 1885 and 1895. Despite coming from a family with a distinguished military history, records from these years categorise the musician as a second-class corporal who, at the age of 25 and unable to swim, lacked the physical aptitude for the role.²⁹ A mental commitment to army life was missing too, as frequent complaints to his brother Adrien about battalion training conditions reveal.³⁰ In light of his distinct aversion to what had been an enduring symbol of the French establishment, this later homage to Zola and the implicit acknowledgment of his provocative politics spell out Dukas's loyalties to the left.

Dukas appropriated *Messidor* both literally and figuratively from the outset. Zola gave his libretto a realistic, contemporary setting and a plot that revolves around the struggles of agricultural labourers in a small village. 'Victory' also depicts a rural scene in which a woman, child and old man go about their daily chores. In the background smoke rises from a distant weapons factory and the noise of aeroplanes roars overhead. Unlike *Messidor* though, which alludes to internal French conflict, 'Victory' evokes battles between the country and external forces. This is accentuated in the last lines of the first scene: 'The old man fought in 1870. He knew defeat. He is doubtful. The woman's son is at the front. She is courageous. She hopes. She has faith.'

The closing recollection of 1870, the start of the Franco-Prussian War, establishes a neat symmetrical link with the Saint-Saëns piece that ushered in

25. See Thomas Cooper: 'Nineteenth-century spectacle', in Richard Langham Smith & Caroline Potter, ed.: *French music since Berlioz* (Aldershot, 2006), p.43. He observes that 'Messidor is notable for the inclusion of symbolism elements'.

26. Paul Dukas: 'L'Attaque du moulin, de Bruneau', in *La Revue hebdomadaire* 81 (December 1893), pp.300-09.

27. Dukas: 'L'Attaque du moulin', p.300. 'La première condition que doit remplir un poème destiné à la musique et à la scène, c'est d'être intéressant, vivant et coloré'.

28. Dukas: 'L'Attaque du moulin', p.308. 'Le sujet de L'Attaque du Moulin peut être un excellent thème littéraire ou même théâtral, mais c'est à coup sûr un médiocre sujet lyrique.'

29. See Carnet W.51: 2-3.

30. See Perret & Ragot: *Paul Dukas*, pp.53-56.

the story. The scene is built on the twin patriotic pillars of French land and faith. The first of these symbols is borrowed from *Messidor* but the second signifies that the composer pledged only a conditional commitment to that opera's ideals. 'Victory' reinforced the 'ancient faith' of Christianity,³¹ whereas Zola rejected it. Rather than abandon one value system for another, Dukas sought to unite a spectrum of beliefs from left and right. Layers of meaning envelope the references to French land. An authorial commentary on *Messidor* was published the morning after its premiere. Zola's libretto had idealised his native soil as 'a place of literally and symbolically luminous sunshine and fertility'.³² Dukas followed suit in many respects: sunrise precipitates the action, darkness is banished by 'victory's brilliance', and the triumph is confirmed by daylight of the following morning. An old man planting wheat at the start, the flowers in the third scene and the pervasive familial theme attest to France's fecundity too. But Dukas subverts Zola's unorthodox idea of a religious alternative by welding the emblem of French land to the conservative symbol of faith at a poignant moment: soldiers are laid to rest in the 'holy ground'.

The second scene brings news of peace to the village. Its people celebrate 'the Triumph of Justice, of what is Right; it's France reunified'. The faith motif returns with a 'hymn of thanksgiving'. Understood in the wider context of the country's Catholic background, the alignment of this musical gesture with reconciliation may be read as an act of forgiveness, of Dukas transcending the problems of the past suggested by the allusions to Dreyfusard ideology.

The third scene is the most contemporary. It refers in one unified motion to Richepin's 'L'Aveugle' (1919) and to the prominent official Albert Sarraut. First of all, Dukas acknowledged Richepin's poem as follows: 'A blind man rejoins the wife and son he left four years ago. He takes the child in his arms. He caresses his face. He seeks out the child's features. Victory's brilliance has dazzled his eyes.'

Alongside the passage beginning with 'Un aveugle' and concluding 'l'enfant' Dukas printed Richepin's name. Strong metaphoric resemblances between the poem and 'Victory' resonate, for the last sentence in the above Dukas passage paraphrases Richepin's line: 'En moi flambe un soleil qui m'illumine tout'. Following this line is a parenthetical observation: 'Extract from a speech by Albert Sarraut [*sic*]'. Sarraut (1872–1962) was Governor-General of Indo-China between 1911–13 and 1917–19, and briefly acted as French prime minister in the 1930s. Recognised as the pre-eminent thinker of the interwar period in the long-standing debate about French colonialism, he was a liberal reformist who won the respect of the indigenous people by insisting that the ruling country 'live up to its expressed ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity'.³³ Acknowledging France's wartime debt

31. Ross: 'Messidor', p.120. He reads a socialist agenda into *Messidor*'s theme of replacing the 'ancient faith' with a new way.

32. Ross: 'Messidor', p.118. For more on Zola and the aesthetics of fertility, see Huebner: 'Zola the sower', pp.76–80.

33. Anne Judge: 'French as a tool for colonialism: aims and consequences', in <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ies/> (repository for the Institute of European Studies) (Berkeley, 2005), p.16.

to colonial manpower, he envisioned a new paternalistic relationship.³⁴ Dukas's scenario does not specify the Sarraut speech he had in mind, but the politician famously addressed French authorities on 17 April 1919 and the following words, which remain an often-quoted dictum, are probably those in question: 'France has repudiated the long-standing brutal conception [...] based on the eternal inequality of races and the right of the strongest [...] the only right that it now recognises is the right of the strong to protect the weak.'³⁵

These final words echo the plight of the blind man seeking solace in the bosom of his family. Immediately after the Sarraut remark, Dukas's text elaborates that the man is guided by his child, who 'leads him by the hand'. Beyond the realm of rhetoric, a further parallel can be drawn between Sarraut and Dukas. Entering politics as a radical Dreyfusard, Sarraut became subsumed into centrist-right French government in the 1920s and 1930s. Likewise, the composer's youthful anti-establishment sensibilities did not prevent him from ascending to positions of authority in venerated institutions such as the Paris Conservatoire and the Académie des Beaux-Arts in middle age.

The fourth scene recalls *Messidor* by glorifying the French people. In doing so, it champions Romain Rolland's concept of democratic theatre, which was inspired by Revolutionary ideals whereby plays were written not just about the country's citizens, but also for them.³⁶ In his treatise *The people's theatre* (1903) Rolland suggested the 'social play' and the 'rustic drama' as two possibilities for the public stage.³⁷ As we have seen, Dukas's scenario embraces these models. Fulcher condenses Rolland's vision as being defined by 'broad actions of great characters with general lines vigorously traced and elementary passions throbbing to a single and powerful rhythm.'³⁸ The excerpt below similarly describes how Dukas's characters are stirred by a singular event and united in joy:

Peace has come. They will celebrate it with a meal.
They celebrate work, harmony, family, and love.
The labourer dons his leather apron again.
The peasant returns to his plough.
The poet dreams of his verses.
The painter will take up his brush once more.

Art and life collide in the above words, inhabiting the same world and embodying Ancient Greek dramatic ideals. Rolland, as did Dukas in articles dating from the 1890s, advocated Greek 'expression and involvement'.³⁹ For the ancient Greeks, Dukas contended in 1894, drama was 'an integral part of the social organism'; it was the 'faithful image of the Hellenic civilisation' itself.⁴⁰ Pointing out the gulf between it and contemporary productions, it is clear that he shared Rolland's goal of a 'social drama': '[Greek drama]

34. Gary Wilder: *The French imperial nation-state: negritude and colonial humanism between the two world wars* (Chicago, 2005), p. 51.

35. Wilder: *The French imperial nation-state*, p. 51.

36. See Ross: 'Messidor', pp. 115–117 for more on Messidor's relation to Rolland's concept of drama.

37. Romain Rolland: *The people's theatre*, trans. Barrett H. Clark (New York, 1918), p. 131.

38. Fulcher: *French cultural politics*, p. 58.

39. Fulcher: *French cultural politics*, p. 58.

40. Dukas: 'L'interprétation du drame lyrique', in *Écrits*, pp. 208–14. See p. 210: 'Le drame [était] considéré comme partie intégrante de l'organisme social. Il est l'image fidèle de la civilisation hellénique.'

was a terribly serious, vital thing, while for us the theatre, no matter how magnificent the staged work is, is only ever a type of distraction, where we demand that the story and characters be as different to us as possible.⁴¹

The 'story and characters' fantasy contradicted the Greek unity of idea, interpretation and context, where the 'object was itself with the spirit of the spectators'.⁴² The closing stage directions in this 'Victory' episode – 'Choir of mothers. Choir of lovers' – epitomise Rolland's vision described above and that which the composer admired most about Greek theatre: the collective representation of human spirit in its real, everyday existence for communal appreciation.

This tribute to socially oriented drama is suitably succeeded by the only instance of dialogue in the scenario. It occurs within this exchange in the fifth scene:

The meal.
Everyone takes their seat.
'What are these empty places at our meal? Who are they for?'
'For these people.'
And a woman enters leading a little boy, a man with his little girl. It is Alsace. It is Lorraine.
'Come,' they say, 'take your rightful place at the family table. We have been waiting for you.'

Invoking Alsace and Lorraine, Dukas plunged back into the remembrance of 1871 first explored in the opening scene. Following France's defeat, these regions were annexed and ruled by Germany until being reclaimed after WWI. The composer's allegiance to the areas proves indicative of his sympathies with those in the French government at the time who prioritised the reunification of the country above all else, including growth via international colonial conquests. As Crowder explains, 'there was division between those who sought expansion elsewhere and those who felt France would be better occupied recovering the "lost provinces".'⁴³ Dukas's language in likening the regions to children should not go unremarked either. The rightwing politician Paul Déroulède advocated the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine above all. There is a curious resemblance – one that seems deliberately calculated – between Déroulède's lament for the two territories and Dukas's evocation of it in the foregoing passage. 'I have lost two children, and you offer me twenty domestic servants' was how, in the 1880s, Déroulède dismissed his country's overseas actions in the face of the more pressing need to reclaim the regions.⁴⁴ In the scenario Dukas symbolically returns the children Alsace and Lorraine to the care of a revitalised France. The marriage of a rightwing voice with a predominantly leftwing text here signals further rapprochement.

In contrast, scene six illustrates how the victory extends beyond France

41. Dukas: 'L'interprétation', p.211. 'C'était une chose terriblement sérieuse, vitale, tandis que pour nous le théâtre, si magnifique que soit l'ouvrage représenté, n'est jamais qu'un lieu de distraction, où nous exigeons que pièce et personnages soient aussi différents de nous qu'il est possible.'

42. Dukas: 'L'interprétation', p.211. 'L'interprétation du drame grec dut être en aussi parfaite harmonie avec son objet, que cet objet l'était lui-même avec l'esprit des spectateurs.'

43. Michael Crowder: *Colonial West Africa* (New York, 1978), p.39.

44. Michael W. Doyle: *Empires* (Cornell, 1986), p.310.

to the wider world. Dukas never became chauvinistic about his country.

A soldier recalls the story of the victory, they talk of pilots, they talk of Paris, etc.
The Allies enter.

They are returning to their people. Their Task is accomplished. Before leaving,
they wanted to say their goodbyes.

They celebrate the Belgian who saved the world, the Englishman, then also the
Italian, the Serb, the Romanian, the Japanese and the American who freed the
world from the slavery that threatened it.

The Allies entrust the care of their children's graves to France. They will rest in
this holy ground. France will watch over them as she watches over her own sons.

Having refocused his eye on the present, we are reminded of Dukas's endeavours to create a work relevant to the modern age. With his previous efforts at stage compositions having been inspired by remote legends, as *Ariane*, *La péri* and unfinished scores demonstrate, the 'Victory' scenario marks a clear change of direction. One concern that remained steadfast for Dukas from *Ariane* through to 'Victory', however, was the concept of personal freedom. Commenting on his opera in 1910, Dukas claimed it showed that 'nobody wants to be liberated'.⁴⁵ In the excerpt above, however, people salute the soldiers whose success means that they are no longer doomed to slavery.

In the penultimate scene night descends, but the illuminated cathedrals, especially Strasbourg Cathedral in Alsace, dramatically pierce the shadows with actual and symbolic light: 'The sky opens. They see Jerusalem; they see the Crosses'. For Dukas, the light of redemption appears to reside in traditional French Catholicism, as the 'religious chants' in the background of this scene tells us too. Nostalgia momentarily reigns in a text otherwise permeated with references to technological, political and cultural innovation.

In the final moments Dukas reverts to a worldview of the situation: he alludes to the symbolism of light again by describing the return of the Allies and their proud display of national flags in daylight. The scenario closes exactly a day after it opens, but all is profoundly changed. The darkness of the past has given way to a bright future, even if, like the blind man in Richepin's poem whose experience functions as a microcosm of this text, one must stumble uncertainly but faithfully into an unknown world.

Conclusion

Following 'Victory', the last page of Dukas's four is Richepin's 'L'Aveugle', published in 1919 as part of the 24-part collection *Poèmes durant la guerre (1914-1918)*. In utilising so recent a text for his scenario, Dukas emphasised his revised approach to contemporary culture. The war radically altered

45. Dukas: 'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue (Moralité dans la façon des contes de Perrault)', in *Ecrits*, pp.623. 'Personne ne veut être délivré.'

his perspective on what constituted worthy musico-dramatic material. The composer's previous preoccupation with the distant past, typically expressed through a fascination with mythical subjects, fell out of favour as the reality of social change played out in front of his eyes. For this cautiously patriotic Frenchman, the pursuit of victory in the present tense depended upon the remembrance of recent history and lessons learned for the future. The theme of resolved conflict is mirrored by the way in which the scenario maps out contrasting cultural landmarks of nostalgia and innovation. A proud military march, a leftwing opera, rightwing political propaganda from the past, liberal contemporary views and a modern poem are all assimilated into a single script. It testifies to Dukas's renewed sense of purpose immediately after WWI. Furthermore, the manuscript suggests that prior similar symbolism in *Ariane* – the references to the light of truth, the commentary on the promise of the future, the quotation of a *Pelléas* motif – was merely the beginning of a quest to define his identity as a French composer in the early 20th century. In short, the cultural, historical and political resonances emanating from the 'Victory' source present us with a new template for assessing Dukas, especially in the later years.

Appendix: translation of scenario

Overture. Saint-Saëns's Heroic March.

The curtain rises on a rural scene. It is French country.

The sun begins to rise. (Bruneau's *Messidor* Prelude)

A woman pushes the plough. A child leads the horse. An old man sows the wheat.

There is no young man.

In the fields, some distance away, is a factory whose fires glow in the morning light, whose chimneys smoke. The hammers can be heard beating a steady rhythm. It's there that the arms for defence are forged.

The noise of an aeroplane passing through the air.

The old man fought in 1870. He knew defeat. He is doubtful. The woman's son is at the front. She is courageous. She hopes. She has faith.

Cries of joy from afar. The cries are getting closer. A group of old men, women, children bring a messenger to the scene.

The messenger announces the good news:

It's victory, it's peace, it's the Triumph of Justice, of what is Right; it's France reunified.

Hymn of thanksgiving.

Return of the heroes. They are covered in flowers.
They are the sons, they are the husbands, they are the fathers.
(Crossed out: An amputee offers his sacrifice to the motherland)
A convalescing soldier. A nurse talks to him.
A blind man rejoins the wife and son he left four years ago. He takes the
child in his arms. He caresses his face. He seeks out the child's features.
Victory's brilliance has dazzled his eyes (Extract from a speech by Albert
Sarrault [*sic*].) The child leads him by the hand
Arrival of prisoners.
(Crossed out: Some nurses.
They talk of those who will never return.)

Peace has come. They will celebrate it with a meal.
They celebrate work, harmony, family, and love.
The labourer dons his leather apron again.
The peasant returns to his plough.
The poet dreams of his verses.
The painter will take up his brush once more.
Choir of mothers.
Choir of lovers.

The meal.
Everyone takes their seat.
'What are these empty places at our meal? Who are they for?'
'For these people.'
And a woman enters leading a little boy, a man with his little girl. It is
Alsace. It is Lorraine.
'Come,' they say, 'take your rightful place at the family table. We have been
waiting for you.'

They sit down in silence and the meal begins.
It will be a long time before there is space for the poems, the songs which
the poets and composers want to write. Now is the time for being together.
A soldier recalls the story of the victory, they talk of pilots, they talk of
Paris, etc.
The Allies enter.
They are returning to their people. Their Task is accomplished. Before
leaving, they wanted to say their goodbyes.
They celebrate the Belgian who saved the world, the Englishman, then also
the Italian, the Serb, the Romanian, the Japanese and the American who freed

the world from the slavery that threatened it.

The Allies entrust the care of their children's graves to France. They will rest in this holy ground. France will watch over them as she watches over her own sons.

Bells.

In the clouds, on the horizon, they recognise liberated cathedrals and, in their midst, Strasbourg Cathedral which lights up just as the day draws to a close.

Night falls.

Religious chants.

The sky opens.

They see Jerusalem. They see the Crosses. Te Deum.

A crescent moon illuminates the Holy City which soon disappears while the Cross of Calvary shines brightly.

Daylight returns.

Each of the Allies has displayed their national flag. A song of triumph.

S C E N A R I O

Ouverture. Marche héroïque de St Saëns.

Le rideau se lève sur un décor champêtre. C'est la terre de France.

Le soleil commence à se lever. (prélude de Messidor de Bruneau)

Une femme pousse la charrue. Un enfant mène le cheval. Un vieillard sème le blé.

Il n'y a pas d'homme.

Dans la plaine, à quelque distance, est une usine dont les feux brillent dans le petit jour, dont les cheminées fument. On entend les marteaux qui frappent en cadence. C'est là que l'on forge les armes de la défense.

Bruit d'avion passant dans les airs.

Le vieillard s'est battu en 1870. Il a connu la défaite. Il doute. La femme a son fils sur le front. Elle est vaillante. Elle espère. Elle a la foi.

Cris de joie au loin. Les cris se rapprochent. Groupe de vieillards de femmes, d'enfants, amenant en scène un messager.

Le messager annonce la bonne nouvelle :

C'est la victoire, c'est la paix, c'est le Triomphe de la Justice, du Droit, c'est la France reconstituée.

Hymne d'actions de grâce.

Retour des héros. Ils sont couverts de fleurs.

Ce sont les fils, ce sont les époux, ce sont les pères.

Un amputé offre à la Patrie son sacrifice.

Un blanc convalescent, une infirmière dialogue

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André Un aveugle retrouve sa femme et son fils qu'il a quittés voilà quatre années. Il le prend ^{l'enfant} dans ses bras. Il caresse sa figure. Il cherche les traits de l'enfant.

C'est le rayonnement de la victoire qui a ébloui ses yeux (Extrait d'un discours d'Albert Sarraut). L'enfant le conduit par la main.

Arrivée des prisonniers.

~~Quelques infirmières.~~

~~On parle de ceux qui ne reviendront plus.~~

C'est la paix. On la fêtera par un repas.

On fête le travail, la concorde, la famille, l'amour.

L'ouvrier reprend son tablier de cuir.

Le paysan retrouve sa charrue.

Le poète rêve à ses vers.

Le peintre reprendra son pinceau.

Chœur des mères.

Chœur des amoureuses.

Le repas.

Tout le monde prend place.

--Quelles sont ces places toujours vides à nos repas ? Pour qui sont-elles ?

--Four ceux-ci :

Et l'on voit entrer une femme menant un petit garçon, un homme avec sa fillette. C'est l'Alsace. C'est la Lorraine.

--Venez reprendre, leur dit-on, votre place à la table de famille. Nous vous attendions.

2

Ils s'assoient en silence à la table et le repas commence.

C'est ici que trouveront place les poésies, les chants, que poètes et compositeurs voudront introduire dans le sujet. C'est la partie de Concert.

Un soldat raconte la victoire, on parle des aviateurs, on parle de Paris, etc.

Entrée des Alliés.

Ils s'en retournent chez eux. Leur Tâche est accomplie. Avant de partir ils ont voulu faire leurs adieux.

On fête le Belge qui sauva le monde, l'Anglais, puis aussi l'Italien, le Serbe, le Roumain, le Japonais et l'Américain qui délivra la terre de l'esclavage dont elle était menacée.

Les Alliés confient à la France la garde des tombes de leurs enfants. Ils reposeront dans cette terre sainte. La France veillera sur eux comme sur ses propres fils.

Cloches.

Dans les nuages, à l'horizon, on reconnaît les cathédrales déli-
vrées et, au milieu d'elles, la cathédrale de Strasbourg qui s'illumine
tandis que le jour tombe.

La nuit vient.

Chants religieux.

Le ciel s'ouvre.

On voit Jérusalem. On voit les Croisés. Te Deum.

Un croissant de lune éclaire la Ville Sainte qui bientôt disparaît
tandis que resplendit la Croix du Calvaire.

Le jour revient.

Chacun des Alliés a développé le drapeau de sa nation. Chant de triomphe.



J'AVEUGLE

Il presse contre lui sa femme et son fils, palpe leurs visages et y dépose des baisers que mouillent leurs larmes.)

Toi.. Toi, ma chère femme!... Et toi, mon petit gars!...

Oh! je les reconnais, avec mes doigts, vos faces.

Laissez, que mes baisers y retrouvent leurs places...

Comme quand j'y voyais... Non, non, ne pleurez pas!

Ne pleurez pas, puisqu'on est là, tous trois, ensemble ...

On s'aimait tant! On va s'aimer encore, et mieux.

J'y verrai clair quand même, y voyant par vos yeux ...

Ce n'est pas de charin que ra pauvre main tremble...

C'est de joie, à sentir que toujours vous m'aimez...

Et c'est d'un noble orgueil aussi, qui m'emplit l'âme!

Je ne veux plus savoir quelle hideuse flamme

Fit à jamais la nuit dans mes regards fermés.

Plus radieux que les beaux soleils de naguère,

En moi flambe un soleil qui m'illumine tout.

Ma vie en restera splendide jusqu'au bout.

Vivent ceux dont la mort aura tué la guerre!

Jean RICHÉPIE.

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