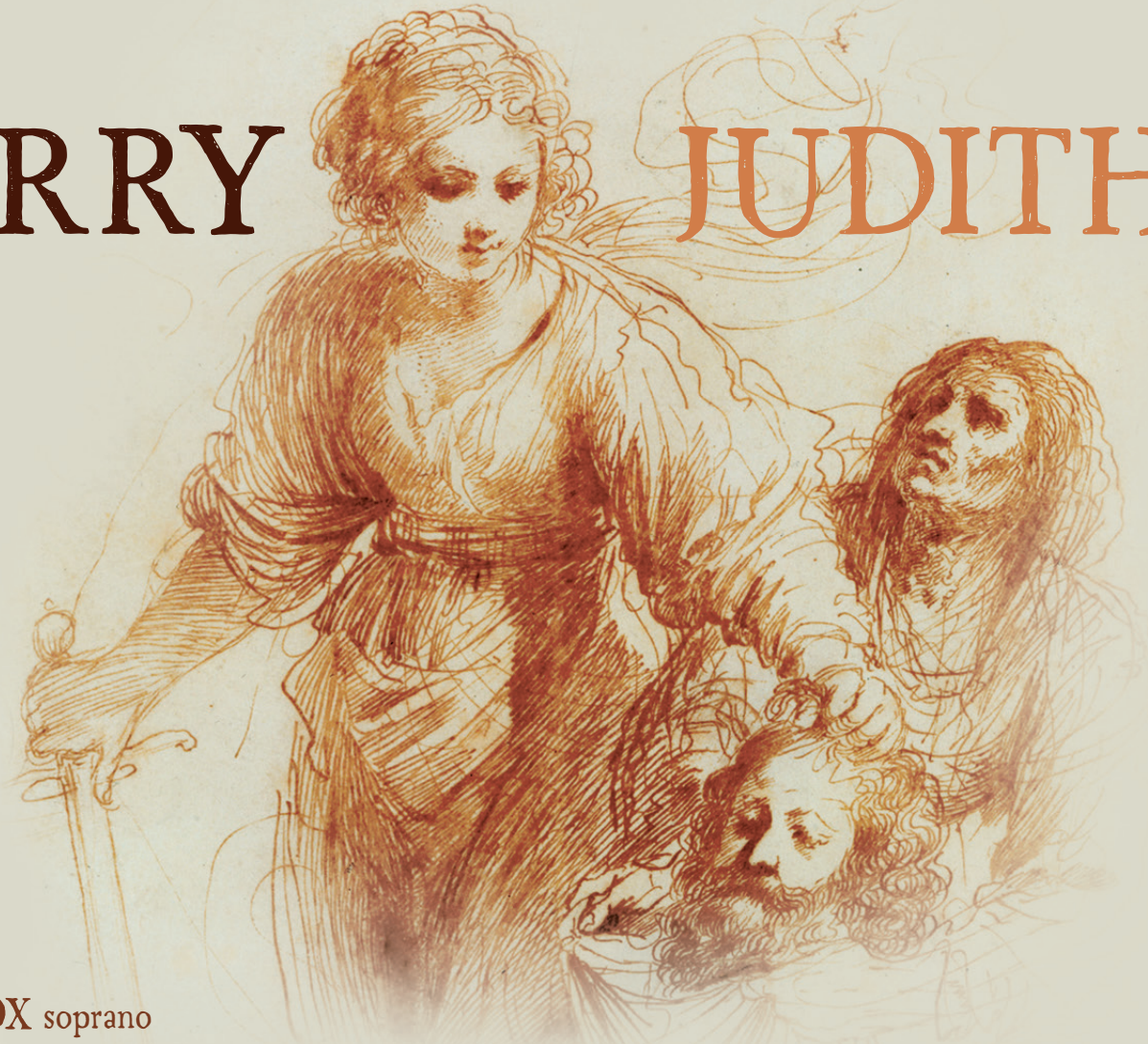
CHANDOS
SUPER AUDIO CD

PARRY JUDITH



SARAH FOX soprano
KATHRYN RUDGE mezzo-soprano
TOBY SPENCE tenor
HENRY WADDINGTON bass-baritone

Crouch End Festival Chorus
London Mozart Players

WILLIAM VANN

By permission of Ian and Kate Russell

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, c.1885

Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848 – 1918)

premiere recording

Judith, or The Regeneration of Manasseh (1888)

An Oratorio in Two Acts with an Introduction and an Intermezzo
for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Soli, Chorus, and Orchestra

On a libretto by the composer with additions from the Apocrypha

Manasseh, King of Israel ..... **Toby Spence** tenor
Meshullemeth, his wife ..... **Kathryn Rudge** mezzo-soprano
His Children ..... **Children's Chorus**
Judith ..... **Sarah Fox** soprano
High Priest of Moloch ..... **Henry Waddington** bass-baritone
Messenger of Holofernes ..... **Henry Waddington** bass-baritone
Chorus of Worshippers and Priests of Moloch, Inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Assyrian Soldiers, Watchmen, etc.

Crouch End Festival Chorus
David Temple MBE musical director
London Mozart Players
Ruth Rogers leader
William Whitehead organ
William Vann

This recording is dedicated
to the memory of Elaine,
13 January 1954 – 13 October 2019

COMPACT DISC ONE

1	**Introduction** Allegro spiritoso – Meno mosso –	**5:10**
	Act I	**[56:30]**
	Scene 1. Moloch	**13:42**
2	Processional Music of Worshippers. Allegro maestoso – Worshippers: 'Hail, Moloch!'. [ ] –	3:14
3	Manasseh: 'Draw near and worship, O my people!'. L'istesso tempo –	1:32
4	Worshippers: 'Have mercy, dread Moloch'. [ ] –	0:41
5	High Priest: 'Hear ye the word of your god!'. Ad libitum sostenuto –	0:53
6	Worshippers: 'Hail! thou art highly favoured, King!'. Animato – Manasseh: 'My children Moloch's!'. Agitato – Animando –	2:13
7	Worshippers: 'Bring now the children!'. Allegro – 'It is the god's decree'. Con spirito – Poco più animato –	2:27
8	High Priest: 'Hearken, O King!'. Lento pomposo –	1:07
9	Worshippers: 'Hail, Moloch, hail!'. Allegro	1:31

Scene 2: The Children 20:43

10 Dialogue. Andante sostenuto –
Children and Meshullemeth: 'O mother, tell us once again'. [ ] –
Agitato. Più mosso – 5:31

11 Ballad. Meshullemeth and Children: 'Long since in Egypt's plenteous land'.
Allegretto semplice – 4:37

12 Chorus of Priests of Moloch, Meshullemeth, and Children:
'Great Queen, the King calls for his children'. Maestoso moderato –
Più mosso – Tranquillo – A tempo più animato – 5:22

13 Judith: 'Lady! thou Queen of Israel!'. Lento – Andante molto sostenuto –
Poco animato – Poco più animato 5:12

	Scene 3. The Sacrifice	**11:40**
14	Chorus of Priests: 'Moloch! Moloch! give ear!'. Allegro comodo – Manasseh: 'My people, see, the holy children come'. [ ] – Chorus of People: 'Crown we the stainless victims'. [ ] –	5:26
15	Judith: 'Stay your hideous mockeries!'. [ ] – Meno mosso –	1:34
16	Judith: 'Now shall the Lord Jehovah visit you'. Alla breve – Sostenuto –	2:13
17	Chorus. Worshippers of Moloch: 'Who is this that raileth at Moloch?'. L'istesso tempo, fieramente –	1:11
18	Messenger: 'O King, give ear!'. L'istesso tempo. Agitato –	0:40
19	Manasseh: 'Fear not, my people'. Sostenuto –	0:33
	Finale. The Coming of the Assyrians	**10:25**
20	Chorus. Worshippers of Moloch: 'The host of Assur is like a swarm of locusts'. Allegro moderato –	1:19
21	Judith: 'Jerusalem was loved of the Lord'. [ ] – Meno mosso – Allegro moderato, marziale –	0:26
22	Chorus. Priests of Moloch: 'Moloch, Moloch, hear us now'. Allegro molto – Chorus. Worshippers of Moloch: 'Rise in might and scatter our foes'. [ ] – Chorus of Assyrians: 'The heroes of Assur'. Allegro spiritoso –	3:24
23	People: 'Fly! Fly! The host of Assur is come on us'. Più moto – Più moto –	3:25
24	People: 'Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations'. Maestoso – Più lento	1:49
		TT 61:40

COMPACT DISC TWO

1 **Intermezzo** **5:23**
Babylon. The Repentance of Manasseh
Lento espressivo –
Manasseh: 'I will bear the indignation of God'. [ ] – Poco più mosso

Act II **[64:09]**
Scene 1. The Return of Manasseh **18:48**

2 Maestoso. Sostenuto espressivo –
Jews of Jerusalem: 'Wail! wail! ye solitary people!'. [ ] 5:51

3 Solo. Meshullemeth: 'The Lord is long-suffering and merciful'.
Lento – Allegro sostenuto – Allegretto semplice – 3:50

4 Jews of Jerusalem: 'Our King is come again from distant lands'.
Allegro al prima moderato, sempre accelerando al vivacissimo Tempo –
Allegro molto – 2:46

5 Manasseh: 'Behold, how great is the mercy of our God'. Meno mosso –
'When we rebelled against the word of the Lord'.
Allegro sostenuto quasi Andante –
Meshullemeth: 'He brought us out of the darkness'. [ ] –
Judith: 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord'. [ ] 6:19

	Scene 2: The Message of Holofernes	**16:38**
6	Messenger: 'Hear ye the words of the captain of the great King'. Allegro maestoso – Allegro – Più mosso – Più mosso. Animando – Tempo I –	3:46
7	Jews of Jerusalem: 'Woe, woe! Our city's walls are broken'. [ ] –	3:06
8	Solo. Judith: 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God'. L'istesso tempo – Più moto –	2:27
9	Judith: 'I pray Thee, O God of my fathers'. Lento – Più lento – Più moto	3:12
10	People: 'The God of our fathers give thee favour'. Allegro con spirito – Meno mosso – Tempo I – Più lento	4:05

	Scene 3. The Exploit of Judith	**19:01**
11	The Walls of Jerusalem. Night. Lento tranquillo – Poco più animato – Chorus of Watchmen on the Walls: 'See ye the campfires of the host of Assur'. Più mosso – Manasseh: 'Jerusalem is a city'. Meno mosso – Chorus of Watchmen: 'Look where the darkness deepens'. Tempo I – Manasseh: 'When Israel transgressed'. Meno mosso – Chorus of Watchmen: 'See, where the pathway windeth'. Animato – Manasseh: 'The night doth pass'. Più animato – Women of Jerusalem, The Watchmen, and Manasseh: 'God succoureth His people!'. [ ] –	8:27
12	Judith: 'Ho! ye upon the walls!'. Con spirito – Allegro – Meno mosso – Allegro – Moderato –	2:43
13	Jews of Jerusalem: 'Arise, O Israel! Smite ye your enemies'. Allegro –	3:43
14	Solo. Manasseh: 'God breaketh the battle'. Allegro con spirito – Animato – Poco meno mosso	4:05
	Finale. Judith and Chorus	**9:42**
15	Allegro maestoso – Judith: 'I will sing unto the Lord'. [ ] – Animandosi – Poco più moto –	4:40
16	Allegro molto – Chorus: 'Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning'. Allegro alla breve – Animato	5:00
		TT 69:32

Tom Medwell

Tom Medwell

Crouch End Festival Chorus

soprano
Naomi Arthey
Rosamund Bell
Rosie Best
Jenny Boyce
Judith Clixby
Helen Collier
Pamela Constantinou
Margaret Ellerby
Ellie Fieldsend
Felicity Ford
Liz Forgan
Tanya Forward
Denise Haddon
Genevieve Helsby
Sheila Holloway
Marianne Johnson
Emma Lindsey
Pinky Millward
Sarah Niblock
Sarah Robinson
Davina Ross-Anderson
Imogen Rush
Roxanne Scott
Kate Screen
Emma Secher
Rachel Seghers
Melanie Servante
Emily Soppet
Julia Taylor
Isabella van Braeckel
Jenny Vernon
Pamela Vernon
Lucy Whitman
Rosemary Zolynski

alto
Catherine Best
Alison Brister
Tina Burnett
Bethany Burrow Atherton
Jo Chapman
Chandrika Chevli
Becky Claye
Katharine Duncan
Natalie Fine
Mary Grove
Sue Heap
Caron Hesketh
Yola Jacobsen
Alice King
Emma Kingsley
Gaenor Kyffin
Marie-Noelle Lamy
Diana Leadbetter
Hannah Leonard
Paula Miller
Lesley Murphy
Annemarie O'Callaghan
Diana Parkinson
Sarah Proudlove
Louise Sarif
Alankar Scheideler
Karen Stead
Nina Weiss
Jenny Weston

tenor
Bob Bishop
James Brown
John Featherstone
Tim Foxon
Matt Griffin
Peter Herbert
Steve James
Colin McIntyre
Frank Norman
Clive Seale
John Vernon
Adrian Warner
David Williams
Paul Winter
Steve Wright

bass
Hugh Bowden
Bruce Boyd
Michael Brookes
Julian Edwards
Robert Gorrie
Robert Hainault
Bryan Hammersley
Paul Harden
Carl Heap
John Mindlin
Daryn Moody
Bryn Popham
John Rayfield
Alistair Scott
Ralph Smith
Stephen Smith
Geoff Walker
Peter West
Christopher Wetherall
Alistair Yates

Children's Chorus

Ravi Badale
William Brady
Jasmine Chauhan
Zachary Gunzi
Grace Gwynne
Zahra Kafian
Rowan Ratcliff
Leo Sellis
Lydia South, soloist
Hannah Stubbings
Maya Stubbings
Emily Wood

Paul Robinson

Crouch End Festival Chorus, recording the St John Passion by Bach at the Church of St Jude-on-the-Hill, 2016

London Mozart Players

violin I
Ruth Rogers
Nicoline Kraamwinkel
Anna De Bruin
Nemanja Ljubinkovic
Imogen East
Edward Bale
Caroline Bishop
Jeff Moore

violin II
Antonia Kesel
Gemma Sharples
Clare Hayes
Jayne Spencer
Lucy Waterhouse
Rosemary Henbest

viola
Meghan Cassidy
Michael Posner
Richard Cookson
Joe Ichinose

cello
Sebastian Comberti
Sarah Butcher
Ben Chappell
Penny Bradshaw

double-bass
Stacey Watton
Ben Daniel-Greep

flute
Anthony Robb
Pavel Mansurov

oboe
Gareth Hulse
Katie Clemmow

clarinet
Andrew Webster
Emma Canavan

bass clarinet
Lewis Graham

bassoon
Sarah Burnett
Emma Harding
Ide Ni Chonnail

contra-bassoon
Rachel Simms

horn
Andrew Littlemore
Caroline O'Connell
Tim Anderson
Chris Larkin

trumpet
Jonathan Clarke
Peter Wright

trombone
Andrew Cole
Jeremy Gough

bass trombone
Ian Fasham

tuba
Martin Knowles

timpani
Scott Bywater

percussion
Joley Cragg

harp
Skaila Kanga

Tom Medwell

Grahame Mellanby

Sarah Fox

Parry:
Judith

Introduction

> For such a possession art is the better and England the richer.
>
> Charles Villiers Stanford

After the rejection of his opera *Guenever* by Carl Rosa in 1886, C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918) was overcome with disappointment, not least because others, such as Stanford, Mackenzie, and Goring Thomas, had enjoyed a modicum of success with their own operatic commissions. Depressed and listless, he found some solace in the premiere, at the Three Choirs Festival of his *Suite moderne* (1886), but a true revival in his fortunes came with the premiere of his choral ode *Blest Pair of Sirens*, written for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bach Choir, in 1887. This was a major turning point in his career, for soon after, Parry received invitations to write choral works for both the Birmingham Music Festival of 1888 and the Leeds Musical Festival of 1889. More importantly, Birmingham wanted a full-scale oratorio from him, in the tradition of those initiated by Mendelssohn at the Birmingham Festival of 1846, when *Elijah* received its first glorious hearing under the composer's direction. Birmingham understandably believed *Elijah* to be its 'property', and the work served as the model of a grand Old-Testament oratorio, one that would occupy a whole morning or evening with an interval between acts; it became a major artistic object of emulation for all aspiring composers, including such names as Julius Benedict (*St Peter*, 1870), Arthur Sullivan (*The Light of the World*, 1873), George Macfarren (*The Resurrection*, 1876), Max Bruch (*Das Lied von der Glocke*, 1879), Charles Gounod (*La Rédemption*, 1882 and *Mors et vita*, 1885), and Stanford (*The Three Holy Children*, 1885).

Parry was much excited to receive his first Birmingham commission but then he was faced with the problem of subject matter. Having rejected the tenets of orthodox Christianity, Parry did not warm to the traditional notion of oratorio and he gave serious thought to topics of a secular kind. Initially he talked the matter over with his mentor, Edward Dannreuther, and considered varying subjects, such as Christopher Columbus, Karl Simrock's *Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie*, the *Edda*, the Parsifal legends, and the Albigensian Crusades. But after discussion with the Birmingham Festival Committee, he was left in no doubt that

a biblical story was what the Committee really favoured. Added to which, Parry had relatively little time to make up his mind. The work was due for performance at the end of August 1888 so he needed to begin work straightaway. After consulting Humphrey Prideaux's *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations*, he chose to combine the stories of Manasseh, the aberrant king of Judah, and Judith, who saves Manasseh's kingdom (see Synopsis, below). Originally, *Judith* was conceived in four acts, but it was eventually condensed to two. A good deal of the libretto, especially much of the dialogue in Act I, was provided by Parry himself. Other parts of the text were taken from Isaiah and from the Psalms, but closer to the end of Act II, Parry drew substantially on the Book of Judith. As the festival approached, the Festival Committee was concerned about the work's length and recommended cuts. Hans Richter, who thought highly of the oratorio, backed Parry's wish to perform the work without cuts of any kind.

Richter conducted the first performance of *Judith*, in Birmingham, on the morning of 29 August 1888. After the performance, Parry wrote in his diary,

> The rule that no applause is allowed after separate numbers is rather trying, as it is hard to tell whether people are liking it or not. But there was a good row after each half, and my dear chorus shouted and waved their pocket-handkerchiefs like mad.

The success of *Judith* undoubtedly consolidated Parry's reputation as a choral composer after the triumph of *Blest Pair of Sirens*, and numerous performances followed, including ones with the Edinburgh Choral Union and two major performances with the Novello Choir, under the direction of Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, at St James's Hall and Crystal Palace, in London, during December. Parry received rapturous letters from friends such as Barclay Squire and Edward Burne-Jones, as well as his pupil Arthur Somervell. Singing in the Novello Choir were a future close friend, Charles Larcom Graves, who would one day write the first biography of Parry, and August Johannes Jaeger, with whom, as a publishing manager for Novello, Parry would develop a close working relationship.

Act I

The robust diatonic opening of the prelude to *Judith* (which has much in common with the opening bars of Parry's Fourth Symphony, of the same year) has Parry's stylistic fingerprints all over it, as does the lyrical response from the wind. Indeed, there must have been an infectious tension in the audience as the energy of the prelude, notable for its rhythmic drive, was unleashed in Birmingham Town Hall, and a sense of pleasure as this energy

was becalmed by contrasting music of a deep lyrical character, referring to the work's heroine, Judith. Act I opens with a sinister processional march in E minor; the chorus sings praises to Moloch and demands a sacrifice of children (by incineration). In a tenor role as the 'anti-hero', the king, Manasseh, acknowledges the impatient mood of his people ('Draw near and worship, O my people!') but is nevertheless horrified to learn that Moloch can only be pacified with the sacrifice of Manasseh's own, royal children. The priests will not be denied and the scene ends with a vigorous fugal chorus in E major ('It is the god's decree') in which Parry demonstrates his fertile contrapuntal powers. A second processional march ('Hail, Moloch, hail!') is also constructed, Purcell-like, on a ground bass.

Scene 2, 'The Children', begins with a dialogue between the condemned children and their mother, Queen Meshullemeth (sung by a mezzo-soprano). It was this scene, Parry commented, that '[seemed] to have affected people most'. The children lament their fate to their mother, who in turn bewails her weak husband's rejection of Yahweh ('My children, He is Israel's God no more!') and the defiling of the temples. At the heart of this section is the most enduring part of the oratorio – Meshullemeth's ballad 'Long since in Egypt's plenteous land' – in which Meshullemeth tells her children how their forefathers came to settle in Israel through God's help. Well known today as the hymn tune 'Repton', set to John Greenleaf Whittier's words 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind', it first appeared in this form in George Gilbert Stocks's *Repton School: Hymns for Use in Chapel* of 1924, before it became more publically accessible in *Songs of Praise* (1931) and the second edition of the *English Hymnal* (1933). In the context of Parry's oratorio, however, we hear it as it was originally conceived: exquisite orchestral 'ritornelli' between the verses, AABA form (with B in the relative minor), and a delicious coda featuring Meshullemeth and her children together in an unaccompanied trio before the ballad concludes with a wonderfully nostalgic clarinet solo supported by muted strings. Inexorably, the Priests of Moloch come to demand the children and lead them away. Meshullemeth protests ('Ye are the priesthood of that monstrous deity'), but they are impervious to her entreaties. At this critical juncture, Judith, a heroic soprano, enters; her aria ('Though into the valley of the shadow of death'), inspired by Psalm 23, reassures Meshullemeth of God's mercy and compassion. An expansive lyrical paragraph, it reveals Parry's fecund gift for long melodic lines, rich harmony, and sonorous orchestration.

For the children's sacrifice (Scene 3), the chorus, divided between the people and the Priests of Moloch, combines with the

conflict-filled acceptance by Manasseh of his offspring's horrible fate, only for Judith to step in ('Stay your hideous mockeries!') and deliver a second powerful monologue to ridicule their subservience. This has the effect of enflaming the people's anger even more, and Judith is fortunate not to be hurled into the furnace herself; but she is saved by the sudden arrival of a messenger who warns that the Assyrian army is about to sack Jerusalem. Manasseh attempts to reassure the people that Moloch will spare them, but all is in vain as the Assyrians attack.

The devastation that follows is represented by the Finale of Act I, an extended dramatic chorus in which the vain cries to Moloch are met with silence; the people's helplessness at this terrible realisation is portrayed by a moving five-part supplication ('In vain we cry to him'), somewhat reminiscent of S.S. Wesley in its use of diatonic dissonance, and by a strikingly elegiac closing gesture for six-part chorus ('Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations, is brought low') as the fate of Manasseh, exile, is determined.

Intermezzo

The 'Intermezzo' between Acts I and II, entitled 'Babylon – The Repentance of Manasseh', was inspired by 'The Prayer of Manasseh' (in Chronicles 2). Parry took his text from the Book of Micah ('I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him') and Psalm 118. For this penitential set piece, the composer looked to one of his most cherished influences, the music of J.S. Bach, and created a poignant neo-baroque passion aria full of contrapuntal ingenuity within an inventive, modified strophic form.

Act II

Act II, Scene 1 ('The Return of Manasseh') opens with one of Parry's finest choruses, a sturdy rondo in the form of a lament at the devastation of Jerusalem ('Wail! wail! ye solitary people!') in B minor, which, again, owes something to Bach. In a recollection of her ballad in Act I, Meshullemeth reminds the people of God's mercy ('The Lord is long-suffering and merciful') and the return of a chastened Manasseh to Jerusalem. To this the chorus responds elatedly with a magnificent contrapuntal set piece ('Our King is come again') in which, to rival the ingenuity of the finale to *Blest Pair of Sirens*, two fugal subjects cleverly combine in a highly imaginative and intricate form. The scene ends with an inspired, euphonious trio in C major for Manasseh, Meshullemeth, and Judith in which they celebrate the people's return to Yahweh ('When we rebelled against the word of the Lord').

Unbeknown to him, Manasseh has been followed to Jerusalem by General Holofernes and his Assyrian army, who demands tribute to

his king. In Scene 2, Holofernes, a forceful role for the solo bass, announces his message: if Manasseh does not yield in three days, the army will destroy the city, giving no quarter ('then will he smite and spare not'). As the people are once again plunged into despair, Judith intervenes and counters their anguish (in C minor) with another uplifting aria (in C major: 'Let us give thanks') to which the chorus reacts in a ternary structure of stirring rhythmic momentum ('The God of our fathers').

Scene 3, 'The Exploit of Judith', which arguably contains some of the oratorio's finest music, begins outside the walls of Jerusalem at night and opens with a rousing slow march of great pathos, depicting Judith's journey to the Assyrian camp. (How the young Edward Elgar – who, as a budding violinist, played the work under Parry's baton – must have been deeply impressed with the power of Parry's muscular theme and full-bodied orchestration!) The Chorus of the Watchmen on the Walls, in the form of quasi-baroque chorale preludes, provides a foil to the march and to Manasseh's supplication to Yahweh ('When Israel transgressed'). As they sing, the Watchmen little suspect, as the night passes peacefully, that Judith has killed Holofernes (in this regard Parry adhered to the Greek principle of carrying out the violence offstage). Advancing herself to the forefront with her high B flat, she presents the Assyrians with the head of Holofernes and exhorts them to leave. Seized with a new courage, the Jewish people pursue the astonished Assyrians and vanquish their enemy in a chorus of swift movement and *élan* ('Arise, O Israel!'), which Stanford considered the finest number in the work. In a gesture of triumph, the style of which Stanford considered closer to Alessandro Scarlatti than to Handel, Manasseh thanks God for Israel's deliverance in an aria ('God breaketh the battle') which looks forward to the neo-baroque sounds of the *'Lady Radnor' Suite* (which Parry produced for the Countess of Radnor's all-women's string orchestra in 1894) and to *An English Suite* (Parry's last significant orchestral work, composed between 1890 and 1918). This proved to be one of the most popular items in the oratorio and was often performed as an individual piece.

The work ends in triumph with a final aria for Judith ('I will sing unto the Lord a new song') from Psalm 96, to which the chorus sublimely responds with a grand tripartite structure ('Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning'). Vigorously fugal in its outer sections, it leaves the impression that Parry himself was offering personal tribute to the great Birmingham tradition of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and to that quintessentially English institution of choral music which delights in the sound and imposing magnificence of grand architecture.

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'Judith' and its reception

There is no doubt that, after its premiere at Birmingham in 1888, *Judith* scored a success with its public. It was widely sung during his lifetime and its popularity almost certainly persuaded the Birmingham Festival to commission from Parry a second oratorio, *King Saul*, in 1894. Stanford, who was at Birmingham to review the work for the *Fortnightly Review*, produced a lengthy, detailed, and carefully considered critique which, Shaw's asinine accusations of nepotism notwithstanding, was an impressively balanced account of positives and negatives. Nevertheless, Stanford, who conducted the oratorio with the London Bach Choir and the Cambridge University Musical Society, was in no doubt that it was 'the offspring not only of a finished musician but of a cultivated thinker'; we also know that Elgar was an admirer of the work, as were Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, Herbert Howells, and Sir David Willcocks. Bernard Shaw, harbouring an ingrained prejudice against the musical establishment and religion, was never likely to be sympathetic to the work, but, owing to his amusing prose and his delight in somewhat superficial controversy, his negative views of *Judith* (not least Meshullemeth's ballad which he lampooned) endured for much of the twentieth century and formed part of the baggage which needed to be cast off in order that Parry's remarkable music might live again.

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Libretto and Sources

When he put together his libretto for *Judith*, Parry consulted the work of the churchman and orientalist Humphrey Prideaux (1648 – 1724), one-time Dean of Norwich Cathedral. Prideaux's major biblical study, *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (1715 – 17), focused particularly on the time between the writing of the Old Testament and the New. In this work, Prideaux speculated that the 'exploit of Judith took place during the reign of the Jewish king, Manasseh'. Initially, in fact, Parry had designs on naming his oratorio *The Regeneration of Manasseh* because of the centrality of the king's role in the story but, as Parry commented in the preface to his vocal score, regarding Judith, as the composition of the oratorio's libretto proceeded,

> I was partly carried away by the superior interest of her personality, and partly by the advice of friends in whose sagacity I had confidence, and her share in the action became at least equal to Manasseh's.

Ultimately, Judith won out as the most important focus, though Parry retained *The Regeneration of Manasseh* as a subtitle.

The oratorio begins with the crowd demanding a sacrifice to the god Moloch (by burning a human offering in the furnace). Manasseh, mentioned in 2 Kings (21: 1–18) and 2 Chronicles (32: 33–33: 20), was the King of Judah (697–642 BC), and reigned during the time of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Having restored the polytheistic worship of Baal in the Jewish Temple, and also supported the Assyrian astral cult throughout his kingdom, Manasseh was thought to have sanctioned the sacrifice of children as part of the sacrificial cult of Moloch. In this instance it was his own children who were about to be sacrificed, taken unwillingly from their mother, Meshullemeth, to the Valley of Hinnom to be killed. Judith intervened and tried to prevent the sacrifice, an act which might have led to her own death at the hands of the worshippers, had not the Assyrian army fallen on Jerusalem, sacked the city, and taken Manasseh prisoner to Babylon.

Manasseh's recantation and return to Yahweh, detailed in 2 Chronicles (but which is now thought to be legendary), took place in what is termed the 'Prayer of Manasseh', a penitential prayer in which Manasseh repents and begs for divine forgiveness in captivity. After being permitted to return to Jerusalem, he was followed by Holofernes who demanded submission and payment of a tribute to Nebuchadnezzar (though this, as we now know, was historically impossible). Judith stepped in and exhorted the frightened people to have confidence in Yahweh's help; she vowed to save the city from further destruction. While Manasseh and the Jewish people waited nervously, Judith made her way to the camp of the Assyrians and to the tent of Holofernes at Bethulia. A clever, attractive woman (known for her very feminine appearance), she dazzled Holofernes with her beauty and, taking advantage of his drunkenness, decapitated him during the night. As the Book of Judith recounted:

> Her sandal ravished his eyes: her beauty captivated his mind: and the sword severed his neck. (16: 9)

The scene was the subject of fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century artists such as Gentileschi, Caravaggio, and Mantegna. Having achieved her aim, Judith escaped back to Jerusalem and urged the Jewish army to fall upon the Assyrians bewildered by the loss of their chieftain. Filled with new courage, Manasseh led the army to victory as the Assyrians were scattered leaderless across Judah, and they returned to Jerusalem, praising Yahweh, the God of Israel, for their deliverance.

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Educated at the Giggleswick School, the University of London, and Royal College of Music, the soprano **Sarah Fox** is a winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Award and the John Christie Award, and an Honorary Fellow of Royal Holloway College, the University of London. At The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, her roles have included Micaëla (*Carmen*), Asteria (*Tamerlano*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), and Woglinde (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*). She has sung Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and The Royal Danish Opera, and Mimì (*La bohème*) at Opera North, her repertoire also including Ellen Orford (*Peter Grimes*), Servilia (*La clemenza di Tito*), and Ilia (*Idomeneo*). She has appeared in concert in Denver, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Minneapolis, New York, San Francisco, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo, and on tour throughout the UK and the European continent. She works with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, Colorado Symphony, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg, and Hallé. She is a frequent visitor to the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International Festival, and Three Choirs Festival, and a regular guest with Classical Opera and at the Wigmore Hall, London. She has performed frequently with John Wilson and his Orchestra, is a regular guest on *Friday Night Is Music Night* on BBC Radio 2, and has performed concerts with Rufus Wainwright in Europe and Hong Kong. Sarah Fox has built a substantial discography, which includes recordings of the role of Aminta in Mozart's *Il re pastore*, songs by Poulenc, *The Cole Porter Songbook*, Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Sir Charles Mackerras and

under Lorin Maazel, *That's Entertainment* with the John Wilson Orchestra under John Wilson, *English Lyrics* by Parry, Mozart's Requiem with the London Mozart Players under Malcolm Archer, and Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under Andrew Manze.

Born in Liverpool, the mezzo-soprano **Kathryn Rudge** completed her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music under Susan Roper in 2011. She has been an ENO Young Artist, an artist under the Young Classical Artists Trust (2010 – 13), and a BBC New Generation Artist (until December 2017). She has won numerous prizes and awards, including the Sybil Tutton Award of the Musicians Benevolent Fund and a Susan Chilcott Scholarship, and is a Samling Scholar. Featured as *The Times* Rising Star of Classical Music in 2012, she made her debuts to critical acclaim as Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at English National Opera and Sesto (*La clemenza di Tito*) at Opera North. Operatic roles at venues such as Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Opera North, Garsington Opera, English National Opera, and the Buxton Festival include Cherubino, Annio (*La clemenza di Tito*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), and Nancy (*Albert Herring*). She has appeared in concert with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, and BBC Philharmonic under conductors such as Carl Davis, Paul Daniel, Vasily Petrenko, and John Wilson. She has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall and Bridgewater Hall, and at the Brighton, City of London, and Cheltenham International festivals. She is prominently associated with the world premiere of Michael Nyman's *Hillsborough Symphony*, celebrations of the 175th anniversary of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, performances of Mozart's Requiem for Raymond Gubbay, *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Rheingau Festival and Easter at King's Festival, *A Sea Symphony* and *The Music Makers* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and *Messiah* with the Huddersfield Choral Society. She made her BBC Proms début in 2016 and returned in 2019 for a performance of Mozart's Requiem. Kathryn Rudge released her debut recital album, *Love's Old Sweet Song*, in 2014 and presides over an expanding discography.

Educated at New College, the University of Oxford, and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and recipient of the Singer of the Year award of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 2011, the internationally renowned tenor **Toby Spence** divides his time between the concert platform and the world's leading opera houses. Among others, he has sung with the Berliner and the Wiener Philharmoniker,

Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra, and at the Salzburger Festspiele and Edinburgh International Festival, under conductors such as Christoph von Dohnányi, Sir Simon Rattle, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Antonio Pappano, Valery Gergiev, Sir Colin Davis, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Gustavo Dudamel, Edward Gardner, Sir Roger Norrington, and Sir Charles Mackerras. On concert platforms all over the world he has recently appeared in performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's 'Nelson' Mass, *Die Jahreszeiten*, and *Die Schöpfung*, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, Ninth Symphony, and *Missa solemnis*, Liszt's *Eine Faust-Symphonie*, Dvořák's Stabat Mater, Bruckner's Mass in F minor, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and Britten's *War Requiem*. On the operatic stage Toby Spence has been seen as Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*), Essex (*Gloriana*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ferdinand (*The Tempest*), David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Count Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), and Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Ghandi (*Satyagraha*), Paris (*La Belle Hélène*), Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*), and Gounod's Faust at English National Opera, Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) and Antonio (*The Tempest*) at The Metropolitan Opera, New York, Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) at Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona and Wiener Staatsoper, Anatol (*Vanessa*) at Oper Frankfurt, Henry Morosus (*Die schweigsame Frau*) at Bayerische Staatsoper, and Captain Vere at Teatro Real, Madrid and Opera di Roma.

Having studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, the bass-baritone **Henry Waddington** performs regularly with all the major UK opera companies as well as with Théâtre royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam, Teatro Real, Madrid, and Die Staatstheater Stuttgart. His repertoire includes Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), the title role in Handel's *Saul*, Banquo (*Macbeth*), Colline (*La bohème*), Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Tutor (*Le Comte Ory*), Geronimo (*Il matrimonio segreto*), Publio (*La clemenza di Tito*), Plutone (*Orfeo*), Valens (*Theodora*), Soljony (Peter Eötvös's *Three Sisters*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*), Don Fernando (*Fidelio*), Don Alfonso (*Cosi fan tutte*), Pallante (*Agrippina*), Frère Laurent (*Roméo et Juliette*), as well as Quince and Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). His list of operatic engagements also includes such venues as Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Garsington Opera, The Grange Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Opéra

Comique, Paris, New National Theatre, Tokyo, and Den Norske Opera, Oslo, and roles such as Jupiter (*Castor et Pollux*), Sacristan (*Tosca*), Lieutenant Ratcliffe (*Billy Budd*), Maestro Spinelloccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Dr Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Kothner (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Lodovico (*Otello*), Priest (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Barone di Kelbar (*Un giorno di regno*), the title role in *Falstaff*, Swallow (*Peter Grimes*), Gobbias (Handel's *Belshazzar*), and multiple parts in Martinů's *Julietta*. Henry Waddington has also appeared in concert performances of *Wozzeck* with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Esa-Pekka Salonen, *Messiah* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, and Cleveland Orchestra, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Classical Opera, and *Die Schöpfung* with the Huddersfield Choral Society.

In 2013, **Lydia South** followed her father and brother into the Cathedral Choir at Lincoln, where, now in her seventh year, she is a 'Cope Girl'. At the age of eleven, she sang the aria 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls' in the Cathedral's performance of Bach's St John Passion; in the performance given in 2019 she sang 'Zerfließe, mein Herze'. She has performed the part of the youth in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, with the Beverley Chamber Choir under Jeffrey Makinson, and 'Hear My Prayer', with the Lincoln Chorale under the direction of Mark Wilde. Also in 2019, she performed *Messiah* for the first time, singing 'How Beautiful Are the Feet' with the Lincoln Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Aric Prentice in a packed Lincoln Cathedral and was a finalist in the BBC Young Chorister of the Year competition. Outside choir, Lydia plays flute and piano and enjoys meeting up with friends, reading, shopping, and playing with her cat, Luna.

Founded in 1984, **Crouch End Festival Chorus** (CEFC) has established a reputation as one of the country's leading symphonic choirs, repeatedly commended for its communicative power and versatility. Under David Temple MBE, its musical director and co-founder, the choir gives concerts that illuminate the choral world with imaginative and bold programming, in which established choral works are mixed with commissions of great variety and innovation. The Chorus is much in demand among the top orchestras in the UK and performs regularly for the BBC, most recently participating in the UK premiere of John Luther Adams's work for massed choirs *In the Name of the Earth* at the 2019 BBC Proms. It has appeared in recent concert performances of Prokofiev's *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution* under Vladimir Ashkenazy and Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts* under François-Xavier Roth, among others. In constant demand for recording work and

live promotions, the Chorus has worked with musicians from the rock and pop world and with television and film composers; recent highlights include recording the Grammy-nominated soundtrack for *Rocketman* and the music for the TV series *Good Omens*. It has also enjoyed regular collaborations with Ennio Morricone and Hans Zimmer, both of whom are patrons of the choir. The discography of Crouch End Festival Chorus for Chandos Records includes the first recording for forty-five years of J.S. Bach's St John Passion sung in English, which was released in 2017 and continues to garner critical acclaim. www.cefc.org.uk

Founded in 1949 by Harry Blech to delight audiences with the works of Mozart and Haydn, the **London Mozart Players** celebrated its seventieth anniversary in February 2019 and is thus the longest established chamber orchestra in the UK. It has developed an outstanding reputation for adventurous, ambitious programming, from baroque through to genre-crossing contemporary music, and continues to build on its long history of association with many of the world's finest artists, including Sir James Galway, Jane Glover, Howard Shelley, Nicola Benedetti, John Suchet, and Simon Callow. While it is known for its unmistakable British roots, it enjoys an international reputation, having toured throughout Europe and the Far East, most recently Dubai and Hong Kong, and has developed an extensive discography. The orchestra performs at such prestigious London venues as the Royal Festival Hall, St John's Smith Square, and Cadogan Hall, as well as cathedrals and concert halls across the UK. It has been the resident orchestra at Fairfield Halls in Croydon for thirty years and in September 2019 celebrated the reopening of this venue after refurbishment. Its commitment to the cultural life of Croydon has been consistent: during the refurbishment of the Halls, it relocated its office from Fairfield Halls to St John the Evangelist, Upper Norwood, undertaking an award-winning programme of initiatives within the local community, for example bringing stars such as Nicola Benedetti and Sheku Kanneh-Mason to Upper Norwood in world-class performances. A pioneer of orchestral outreach work, the orchestra has maintained a host of relationships with schools and music hubs across the UK (and recently in Dubai and Hong Kong), working with teachers and heads of music to inspire the next generation of musicians and music lovers. Among the many young musical virtuosi whom the orchestra has championed early in their careers, pursuing a long tradition of promoting young up-and-coming musicians, are Nicola Benedetti, Jacqueline du Pré, and Yan Pascal Tortelier. The London Mozart Players is the only professional

orchestra in the UK to be managed both operationally and artistically by the players, and since 1988 has enjoyed the patronage of HRH The Earl of Wessex.

A multiple-prize winning and critically acclaimed conductor and accompanist, equally at home on the podium and at the piano, **William Vann** is the founder and Artistic Director of the London English Song Festival. He is a passionate advocate for neglected works of British music and thrilled to have spearheaded the project of the LESF to revive and record Hubert Parry's oratorio *Judith*, the performance of which, at the Royal Festival Hall, was described by *Seen and Heard International* as 'an unalloyed triumph for William Vann... he had complete command of the score and evident belief in the music'. Born in Bedford, he was a Chorister at King's College, Cambridge and a Music Scholar at Bedford School. He subsequently read law and took up a choral scholarship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was taught the piano by Peter Uppard; at the Royal Academy of Music he studied piano accompaniment with Malcolm Martineau and Colin Stone. He has been awarded many prizes for his piano accompaniment, including the Jean Meikle Prize for a Duo (with Johnny Herford) at the Wigmore Hall Song Competition, Gerald Moore Award, and Accompanists' Award of the Royal Over-Seas League.

William Vann has collaborated throughout the world with a vast array of singers and instrumentalists, among them Sir Thomas Allen CBE, Mary Bevan, Katie Bray, Allan Clayton, James Gilchrist, Thomas Gould, Guy Johnston, Jennifer Johnston, Jack Liebeck, Aoife Miskelly, Ann Murray DBE, Matthew Rose, Brindley Sherratt, Nicky Spence, Andrew Staples, Kitty Whately, Roderick Williams, the Navarra Quartet, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, and London Mozart Players. His discography includes recordings for numerous labels. He is the Director of Music at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, an Associate of the RAM, a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, a Trustee of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, a Samling Artist, a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, a Co-Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea Music Society, Artistic Director of Bedford Music Club, and a regular conductor and vocal coach at the Dartington and Oxenfoord International Summer schools.

Sussie Ahlburg

Kathryn Rudge

© Mitch Jenkins

Toby Spence

Parry:
Judith

Einführung

> Solch ein Besitz hebt das Niveau der Kunst und macht England umso reicher.
>
> Charles Villiers Stanford

Dass C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918) im Jahr 1886 mit seiner Oper *Guenever* bei Carl Rosa keinen Anklang fand, war für ihn eine herbe Enttäuschung, zumal andere Komponisten, wie Stanford, Mackenzie und Goring Thomas, mit ihren eigenen Opernaufträgen bescheidene Erfolge verzeichnet hatten. Deprimiert und apathisch fand er Trost in der Premiere seiner *Suite moderne* (1886) beim Three Choirs Festival jenes Jahres, doch wirkliche Linderung brachte erst die Uraufführung seiner Ode *Blest Pair of Sirens*, die 1887 zum Goldenen Thronjubiläum Königin Viktorias für den Londoner Bach Choir entstanden war. Das Konzert war ein wichtiger Wendepunkt in der Karriere Parrys, denn nun lud man ihn ein, Chorwerke sowohl für das Birmingham Music Festival von 1888 als auch das Leeds Musical Festival von 1889 zu schreiben. Mehr noch: Birmingham erwartete von ihm ein großes Oratorium in der Tradition, die Mendelssohn 1846 beim dortigen Festival eingeleitet hatte, als *Elijah* unter der Leitung des Komponisten seine erste glorreiche Aufführung erlebte. Birmingham betrachtete *Elijah* verständlicherweise als sein "Eigentum", und das Werk diente als Vorbild für ein prachtvolles alttestamentliches Oratorium von morgen- oder abendfüllendem Format mit einer Pause zwischen den Akten. Dieser Anspruch geriet zu einer bedeutenden künstlerischen Herausforderung für alle aufstrebenden Komponisten, wie Julius Benedict (*St. Peter*, 1870), Arthur Sullivan (*The Light of the World*, 1873), George Macfarren (*The Resurrection*, 1876), Max Bruch (*Das Lied von der Glocke*, 1879), Charles Gounod (*La Rédemption*, 1882 und *Mors et vita*, 1885) und Stanford (*The Three Holy Children*, 1885).

Parry war hellbegeistert über seinen ersten Auftrag aus Birmingham, aber nun stand er vor dem Problem der Thematik – denn da er persönlich die Grundsätze des orthodoxen Christentums ablehnte, interessierte ihn das traditionelle Konzept eines Oratoriums wenig; stattdessen hatte er sich mit ernsten weltlichen Themen auseinanderzusetzen. Zunächst zog Parry seinen Mentor Edward Dannreuther zu Rate und erwog diverse Stoffe wie Christoph Kolumbus, Karl Simrocks

Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie, die *Edda*, die Parsifal-Legenden und die albigensischen Kreuzzüge. In einer Aussprache mit dem Birmingham Festival Committee wurde ihm jedoch klar gemacht, dass man von ihm wirklich eine biblische Geschichte erwartete. Zu seinem Leidwesen war er auch noch gezwungen, sich schnell zu entscheiden, denn die Uraufführung war für Ende August 1888 angesetzt, und er musste eigentlich die Arbeit ohne weiteren Verzug aufnehmen. Nachdem er Humphrey Prideauxs *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* konsultiert hatte, beschloss er, die Geschichten von Manasse, dem abtrünnigen König von Juda, und Judit, der Retterin seines Königreichs, zu verknüpfen (siehe Handlung weiter unten). Ursprünglich war *Judith* in vier Akten konzipiert, bevor die Form zweiteilig gestrafft wurde. Einen Großteil des Librettos, insbesondere weite Strecken des Dialogs im Ersten Akt, verfasste Parry selbst. Andere Teile des Textes wurden Jesaja und den Psalmen entnommen, aber gegen Ende des Zweiten Akts stützte sich Parry stark auf das Buch Judit. Während das Festival näher rückte, äußerte das Komitee aber nun Besorgnis über die Länge des Werks und empfahl Kürzungen. Hans Richter, der das Oratorium sehr schätzte, unterstützte Parrys Wunsch, das Werk völlig ungekürzt aufzuführen.

Am Morgen des 29. August 1888 dirigierte Richter in Birmingham die Uraufführung von *Judith*. Nach der Uraufführung schrieb Parry in sein Tagebuch:

> Die Regel, dass nach einzelnen Nummern kein Applaus gestattet ist, belastet die Nerven, da nur schwer zu sagen ist, ob die Leute Gefallen finden oder nicht. Aber auf jede Hälfte folgte schöner Trubel, und mein lieber Chor johlte und schwenkte die Taschentücher wie verrückt.

Nach dem Triumph von *Blest Pair of Sirens* festigte der Erfolg von *Judith* zweifellos Parrys Ruf als Chorkomponist. Viele weitere Aufführungen folgten, so etwa durch die Edinburgh Choral Union, und in London zwei bedeutende Darbietungen durch den Novello Choir unter der Leitung von Alexander Campbell Mackenzie in der St. James's Hall und im Crystal Palace im Dezember. Parry erhielt begeisterte Briefe von Freunden wie Barclay Squire und Edward Burne-Jones sowie von seinem Schüler Arthur Somervell. Im Novello Choir sangen ein zukünftiger enger Freund, Charles Larcom Graves, der eines Tages die erste Biographie von Parry schreiben würde, und der spätere Musikverleger August Johannes Jaeger, mit dem Parry bei Novello enge Arbeitsbeziehungen aufbauen würde.

1. Akt

Die robuste diatonische Eröffnung des Vorspiels zu *Judith* (die viel mit den ersten

Takten von Parrys Vierter aus dem gleichen Jahr verbindet) verdeutlicht ebenso wie die lyrische Reaktion der Holzbläser die stilistischen Eigenheiten des Komponisten. In der Tat muss eine fieberhafte Spannung im Publikum geherrscht haben, als sich die Energie des Vorspiels in der Birmingham Town Hall mit bemerkenswertem rhythmischen Schwung entfesselte – abgelöst von einem Wohlgefühl, als diese Energie durch zutiefst lyrische Kontrastmusik für die Titelheldin gebändigt wurde. Der Erste Akt beginnt mit einem finsteren Prozessionsmarsch in e-Moll; der Chor singt ein Loblied auf Moloch und verlangt eine Opferung von Kindern (durch Feuer). Als "Antiheld" in einer Tenorrolle akzeptiert König Manasse die Ungeduld seines Volkes ("Draw near and worship, O my people!"), erfährt aber dennoch mit Entsetzen, dass Moloch nur durch die Opferung von Manasses eigenen, königlichen Kindern besänftigt werden kann. Die Priester lassen sich nicht verweigern, und die Szene endet mit einem energischen Fugenchor in E-Dur ("It is the god's decree"), in dem Parry seine schöpferischen kontrapunktischen Kräfte demonstriert. Ein zweiter Prozessionsmarsch ("Hail, Moloch, hail!") ist nach dem Vorbild Purcells ebenfalls auf einem Basso ostinato aufgebaut.

Die Zweite Szene, "Die Kinder", beginnt mit einem Dialog zwischen den verdammten Kindern und ihrer Mutter, Königin Meschullemet (gesungen von einer Mezzosopranistin). Diese Szene, so Parry, schien "die Leute am tiefsten berührt zu haben". Die Kinder beklagen ihr Schicksal, woraufhin die Mutter die Lossagung ihres schwachen Ehemanns von Jahweh ("My children, He is Israel's God no more!") und die Entweihung der Tempel bejammert. Im Mittelpunkt dieses Abschnitts steht der nachhaltigste Teil des Oratoriums: Meschullemets Ballade "Long since in Egypt's plenteous land", in der sie ihren Kindern erzählt, wie ihre Vorfahren mit Gottes Hilfe in Israel das gelobte Land fanden. Heute bekannt als die Choralmelodie "Repton" zu John Greenleaf Whittiers Worten "Dear Lord and Father of mankind", erschien das Stück in dieser Form erstmals in dem Schulgesangbuch *Repton School: Hymns for Use in Chapel* (1924) von George Gilbert Stocks, bevor es in *Songs of Praise* (1931) und der zweiten Ausgabe des *English Hymnal* (1933) der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht wurde. Im Kontext von Parrys Oratorium hören wir es jedoch so, wie es ursprünglich gedacht war: exquisite Orchester-Ritornelle zwischen den Versen, AABA-Form (mit B in der relativen Molltonart) und eine bezaubernde Coda mit Meschullemet und ihren Kindern in einem unbegleiteten Trio, bevor die Ballade mit einem wundervoll nostalgischen, von gedämpften Streichern getragenen Klarinettensolo endet. Unaufhaltsam nahen die Priester Molochs, um die Kinder einzuverlangen

und fortzuführen. Meschullemet begehrt auf ("Ye are the priesthood of that monstrous deity"), aber die Priester bleiben erbarmungslos. An diesem kritischen Punkt tritt Judit, eine heldenhafte Sopranistin, ein. Ihre Arie ("Though into the valley of the shadow of death"), inspiriert von Psalm 23, überzeugt Meschullemet von der Barmherzigkeit und dem Mitgefühl Gottes. Dieser expansive lyrische Teil offenbart Parrys unerschöpfliche Begabung für lange melodische Linien, reichhaltige Harmonie und klangvolle Orchestrierung.

Für die Opferung der Kinder (Dritte Szene) verbindet sich der aus dem Volk und den Priestern Molochs bestehende Chor mit Manasses konflikterfüllter Hinnahme des schrecklichen Schicksals seiner Nachkommen, bevor Judit eingreift ("Stay your hideous mockeries!") und in einem zweiten eindringlichen Monolog diese Unterwürfigkeit verspottet. Das Volk wird dadurch noch stärker aufgebracht und fordert zur Vergeltung den Flammentod von Judit selbst. Doch dies wird ihr erspart, als plötzlich ein Bote eintrifft und verkündet, dass die assyrische Armee im Begriff steht, Jerusalem zu plündern. Manasse versucht, dem Volk zu versichern, dass Moloch sie verschonen wird, doch der Angriff der Assyrer ist nicht zu verhindern.

Die folgende Verheerung wird im Finale des Ersten Aktes dargestellt, ein ausgedehnter dramatischer Chor, in dem die verzweifelten Anrufungen Molochs auf Stille stoßen; die Hilflosigkeit des Volkes angesichts dieser schrecklichen Erkenntnis findet Ausdruck in einem ergreifenden, fünfstimmigen Bittgebet ("In vain we cry to him"), das in seiner diatonischen Dissonanz ein wenig an S.S. Wesley erinnert, und in einer bemerkenswert elegischen Abschlusserklärung für sechsstimmigen Chor ("Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations, is brought low"), als das Schicksal Manasses bestimmt wird: Gefangenschaft in Babylon.

Intermezzo

Das "Intermezzo" zwischen den beiden Akten trägt den Titel "Babylon – Die Buße des Manasse" und wurde vom "Gebet des Manasse" (2. Chronik) inspiriert. Parry entnahm seinen Text dem Buch Micha ("Den Zorn des Herrn muss ich tragen, denn ich habe gegen ihn gesündigt") und Psalm 118. Bei diesem Bußstück folgte der Komponist einem seiner höchstgeschätzten Einflüsse, der Musik von J.S. Bach, und schuf eine ergreifende, neobarocke Passionsarie voller kontrapunktischem Einfallsreichtum in einer innovativen, modifizierten Strophenform.

2. Akt

Die Erste Szene ("Die Rückkehr Manasses") beginnt mit einem von Parrys schönsten Chören, einem kraftvollen Rondo in Form einer Klage über die Verheerung Jerusalems ("Wail!

wail! ye solitary people!") in h-Moll, bei dem abermals Bach anklingt. In Anlehnung an ihre Ballade im Ersten Akt erinnert Meschullemet das Volk an die Barmherzigkeit Gottes ("The Lord is long-suffering and merciful") und an die Rückkehr eines geläuterten Manasse nach Jerusalem. Darauf reagiert der Chor mit einem großartigen kontrapunktischen Versatzstück ("Our King is come again"), bei dem – nicht weniger erfinderisch als das Finale von *Blest Pair of Sirens* – zwei Fugenthemen geschickt in einer äußerst einfallsreichen und komplizierten Form kombiniert werden. Die Szene endet mit einem genialen, wohlklingenden Trio in C-Dur für Manasse, Meschullemet und Judit, um die Rückbesinnung des Volkes auf Jahwe zu feiern ("When we rebelled against the word of the Lord").

Der assyrische General Holofernes ist mit seiner Armee Manasse ohne dessen Wissen nach Jerusalem gefolgt, um Tribut an seinen König zu fordern. In der Zweiten Szene verkündet Holofernes, eine kraftvolle Rolle für den Solobass, seine Botschaft: Wenn sich Manasse nicht innerhalb von drei Tagen fügt, wird die Armee die Stadt schonungslos in Schutt und Asche legen ("then will he smite and spare not"). Die Einwohner werden abermals von Verzweiflung überwältigt, aber Judit greift ein und begegnet ihrer Angst (in c-Moll) mit einer weiteren erhebenden Arie (in C-Dur: "Let us give thanks"), auf die der Chor in einer dreiteiligen Struktur voll rhythmischem Schwung reagiert ("The God of our fathers").

Die Dritte Szene unter dem Titel "Die Heldentat von Judit" zeichnet sich durch einige der schönsten Stücke des Oratoriums aus und beginnt zu nächtlicher Stunde vor den Mauern Jerusalems mit einem mitreißenden langsamen Marsch, der stimmungsvoll den Weg Judits zum Lager der Assyrer darstellt. (Wie die Mächtigkeit des sehnigen Themas und die lebhafte Orchestrierung den jungen Edward Elgar, der als angehender Geiger unter der Leitung Parrys das Werk spielte, beeindruckt haben muss!) Der Chor der Wachen auf den Mauern, in Gestalt quasi-barocker Choralvorspiele, liefert ein Gegenstück zu dem Marsch und zu Manasses Bittgebet an Jahwe ("When Israel transgressed"). In der friedlich scheinenden Nacht ahnen die Wachen bei ihrem Gesang nicht, dass Judit gerade Holofernes ermordet hat (in dieser Hinsicht folgte Parry dem griechischen Prinzip, Gewaltakte von der Bühne fernzuhalten). Mit einem hohen B tritt Judit hervor, überreicht den Assyrern das Haupt des Holofernes und fordert sie auf abzurücken. Mit neuem Mut verfolgt das jüdische Volk die fassungslosen Assyrer und bezwingt den Feind in einem Chor aus schneller Bewegung und Elan ("Arise, O Israel!"), den Stanford als die beste Nummer des Werkes betrachtete. In einer Geste des Triumphs, deren stilistische Verwandtschaft Stanford eher bei Alessandro

Scarlatti als bei Händel sah, dankt Manasse Gott für die Befreiung Israels ("God breaketh the battle"). Die Arie – ein Vorbote der neobarocken Klänge der *"Lady Radnor" Suite* (die Parry 1894 für das Damenstreichorchester der Gräfin von Radnor komponierte) und *An English Suite* (das letzte bedeutende Orchesterwerk Parrys, entstanden zwischen 1890 und 1918) – erwies sich als eine der Zugnummern des Oratoriums und wurde oft als Einzelstück aufgeführt.

Das Werk endet triumphal mit einer letzten Arie für Judit ("I will sing unto the Lord a new song") aus Psalm 96, die der Chor erhaben mit einer großartigen dreiteiligen Struktur ("Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning") erwidert. Mit ihren energisch fugierten äußeren Abschnitten hinterlässt die Arie den Eindruck, dass Parry hier eine persönliche Stellungnahme abgab: eine Ehrerbietung gegenüber der großen Tradition von Mendelssohns *Elijah* in Birmingham und der typisch englischen Institution von Chormusik, die sich am Klang und der imposanten Pracht großartiger Architektur erfreut.

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Übersetzung: Andreas Klatt

"Judith" in der Rezeption

Es besteht kein Zweifel, dass mit der Uraufführung von *Judith* in Birmingham 1888 ein langer Erfolgszug des Oratoriums begann. Es wurde noch zu Lebzeiten des Komponisten landauf und landab aufgeführt, und seine Popularität bewog das Birmingham Festival mit ziemlicher Sicherheit dazu, 1894 bei Parry ein zweites Oratorium, *King Saul*, in Auftrag zu geben. Stanford, der nach Birmingham gereist war, um *Judith* für die Zeitschrift *Fortnightly Review* zu rezensieren, schrieb eine längere, detaillierte und sorgfältig durchdachte Besprechung, die im Gegensatz zu den idiotischen Nepotismusbehauptungen George Bernard Shaws eine eindrucksvoll ausgewogene Bestandsaufnahme von Positiven und Negativen darstellte. Dennoch sah Stanford, der später das Werk mit dem Londoner Bach Choir und der Cambridge University Musical Society aufführte, darin mit fester Überzeugung "das Produkt nicht nur eines vollendeten Musikers, sondern auch eines kultivierten Denkers". Wir wissen auch, dass Elgar das Werk bewunderte, desgleichen Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, Herbert Howells und Sir David Willcocks. Shaw hingegen pflegte eine tief verwurzelte Abneigung gegen das musikalische Establishment und die organisierte Religion und wäre wahrscheinlich nie mit dem Werk einverstanden gewesen, aber dank seiner amüsanten Prosa und seinem Vergnügen an etwas oberflächlichen Kontroversen überdauerte seine Kritik an *Judith* (nicht zuletzt Meschullemets Ballade, die er

verspottete) den größten Teil des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts und war Teil des Gepäcks, das abgeworfen werden musste, damit Parrys erstaunliche Musik wieder lebendig werden konnte.

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Libretto und Quellen

Als er sein Libretto für *Judith* zusammenstellte, konsultierte Parry das Werk des anglikanischen Geistlichen und Orientalisten Humphrey Prideaux (1648 – 1724), der nach seiner Amtszeit als Dean of Norwich eine bedeutende biblische Studie veröffentlicht hatte. Unter dem Titel *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (1715 – 1717) konzentrierte sich dieses Werk insbesondere auf die Zeit zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament. Prideaux kam zu der Mutmaßung, dass die "Heldentat von Judit in die Regierungszeit des jüdischen Königs Manasse einzuordnen" war. Tatsächlich hatte Parry anfangs geplant, sein Oratorium *The Regeneration of Manasseh* zu betiteln, weil die Rolle des Königs in der Geschichte von zentraler Bedeutung war, aber im Vorwort zu seiner Vokalpartitur bemerkte Parry, dass er mit zunehmender Entwicklung des Librettos seine Haltung zu Judit revidierte:

> Zum einen war ihre Persönlichkeit interessanter und zum anderen folgte ich dem Ratschlag von Freunden, denen ich in ihrer Weisheit vertraute, sodass die Rolle von Judit zumindest ebenso große Bedeutung erlangte wie die von Manasse.

Letztendlich setzte sich Judit als eigentliche Schlüsselfigur durch, obwohl Parry *The Regeneration of Manasseh* als Untertitel beibehielt.

Das Oratorium beginnt damit, dass die Menge ein Opfer für den Gott Moloch fordert (durch menschlichen Feuertod). Manasse, in 2. Könige (21: 1 – 18) und 2. Chronik (32: 33 – 33: 20) erwähnt, herrschte zu Zeiten von Sanherib, dem König von Assyrien, über Juda (697 – 642 v. Chr.). Manasse hatte die polytheistische Verehrung des Baal im jüdischen Tempel wiedereingeführt und auch den assyrischen Astralkult im gesamten Königreich unterstützt; zugleich soll er die Opferung von Kindern als Teil des Opferkults um Moloch sanktioniert haben. Hier allerdings waren es seine eigenen Kinder, die gegen den Widerstand ihrer Mutter Meschullemet in das Tal von Hinnom gebracht wurden, um dort geopfert zu werden. Judit intervenierte und versuchte, das Opfer zu verhindern, was die Anbeter weiter anstachelte und frenetische Rufe nach ihrer eigenen Opferung auslöste. Wie der Zufall es wollte, fiel jedoch die assyrische Armee in Jerusalem ein, plünderte

die Stadt und führte Manasse nach Babylon in die Gefangenschaft.

Manasses Widerrufung und Rückkehr zu Jahwe (in 2. Chronik beschrieben, aber heute als legendär betrachtet) äußern sich im sogenannten "Gebet des Manasse", einem Bußgebet, in dem er um göttliche Vergebung in Gefangenschaft bittet. Er durfte nach Jerusalem zurückkehren, doch folgte ihm Holofernes, der Unterwerfung und die Zahlung eines Tributs an König Nebukadnezar forderte (obwohl dies, wie wir heute wissen, historisch unmöglich war). Judit griff ein und ermahnte das bange Volk, auf Jahwes Hilfe zu vertrauen; sie gelobte, die Stadt vor weiterem Unheil zu bewahren. Während Manasse und das jüdische Volk verängstigt warteten, begab sich Judit in das Lager der Assyrer und das Zelt von Holofernes in Bethulia. Als findige, attraktive Frau (bekannt für ihre reizvoll weibliche Erscheinung) blendete sie Holofernes mit ihrer Schönheit und enthauptete den trunkenen Heerführer des Nachts. Wie das Buch Judit erzählte:

> Ihre Sandalen bezauberten sein Auge. So schlug ihre Schönheit sein Herz in Bann. Das Schwert traf seinen Nacken mit Wucht. (16: 9)

Die Szene inspirierte im fünfzehnten, sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert Künstler wie Gentileschi, Caravaggio und Mantegna. Nachdem Judit ihren Plan ausgeführt hatte, floh sie zurück nach Jerusalem und forderte die jüdische Armee auf, sich auf die nun durch den Verlust ihres Oberbefehlshabers verunsicherten Assyrer zu stürzen. Mit neuem Mut führte Manasse seine Streitkräfte zum Sieg über den führerlos über Juda versprengten Feind. In Jerusalem gipfelte die Geschichte in einem Dankgesang aller an Jahwe, den Gott Israels, für ihre Befreiung.

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Dank

Bei der aktuellen Wiederaufnahme von *Judith* haben wir vielfachen Dank auszusprechen: an Stephanie Martin, Norman Martin, Pax Christi, ein Team von Doktoranden der York University in Toronto, die Brock University in St. Catharines (Ontario) für ihre Forschungsunterstützung und Professor Jeremy Dibble von der Durham University für deren Initiierung eines Projekts zur Bearbeitung von Parrys am Royal College of Music in London archivierten Autographs für die nordamerikanische Erstaufführung von *Judith* am 3. Mai 2015 in der Koerner Hall des Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Die Verfügbarkeit der Partitur und der Aufführungsmaterialien ermöglichten die Wiederaufnahme des Werks in London, wo es am 3. April 2019 in der Royal Festival Hall mit

den London Mozart Players, dem Crouch End Festival Chorus, Sarah Fox (Judit), Kathryn Rudge (Meschullemet), Toby Spence (Manasse) und Henry Waddington (Hohepriester Molochs und Holofernes) unter der Leitung des bahnbrechenden jungen Dirigenten William Vann zu Gehör kam.

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Gerard Collett

Henry Waddington

Parry:
Judith

Introduction

> Avec une telle possession, l'art est meilleur et l'Angleterre plus riche.
>
> Charles Villiers Stanford

Après le rejet de son opéra *Guenever* par Carl Rosa en 1886, C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918) fut submergé par la déception, notamment parce que d'autres compositeurs, tels que Stanford, Mackenzie et Goring Thomas, avaient connu un petit succès avec leurs propres opéras. Déprimé et apathique, il trouva un certain réconfort grâce à la première de sa *Suite moderne* (1886) donnée au Three Choirs Festival, mais la véritable renaissance de sa fortune vint avec la création de son ode chorale *Blest Pair of Sirens*, composée pour les célébrations du Bach Choir du Jubilé d'or en 1887. Ce fut un tournant décisif dans sa carrière car peu de temps après, Parry reçut des commandes d'œuvres chorales pour le Festival de musique de Birmingham de 1888 et pour le Festival de musique de Leeds de 1889. Plus important encore, Birmingham lui demanda d'écrire un grand oratorio dans la tradition de ceux initiés par Mendelssohn pour le Festival de Birmingham de 1846, date où *Elijah* reçut sa première audition glorieuse sous la direction du compositeur. Tout naturellement, Birmingham estimait qu'*Elijah* était sa "propriété", et l'œuvre devint le modèle du grand oratorio Ancien Testament, occupant toute une matinée ou une soirée avec un entracte. Il devint un objet d'émulation artistique majeur pour tous les compositeurs en herbe, notamment Julius Benedict (*St Peter*, 1870), Arthur Sullivan (*The Light of the World*, 1873), George Macfarren (*The Resurrection*, 1876), Max Bruch (*Das Lied von der Glocke*, 1879), Charles Gounod (*La Rédemption*, 1882 et *Mors et vita*, 1885) et Stanford (*The Three Holy Children*, 1885).

Parry était très enthousiaste à l'idée de recevoir sa première commande de Birmingham, mais il fut ensuite confronté au problème posé par le choix du sujet. Ayant rejeté les dogmes de l'orthodoxie chrétienne, Parry était peu attiré par la notion traditionnelle d'oratorio, et il songea sérieusement à des sujets profanes. Il en discuta au départ avec son mentor, Edward Dannreuther, et considéra plusieurs sujets tels que Christophe Colomb, le *Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie* de Karl Simrock, les *Eddas*, les légendes de Parsifal

et les Croisades albigeoises. Mais après discussion avec le comité du Festival de Birmingham, il comprit qu'une histoire biblique était ce que le comité préférait vraiment. En outre, Parry avait relativement peu de temps pour se décider. L'œuvre devait être exécutée à la fin du mois d'août 1888, et il devait donc se mettre immédiatement au travail. Après avoir consulté *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* d'Humphrey Prideaux, Parry décida de combiner les histoires de Manassé, le roi de Judée au comportement aberrant, et Judith, qui sauva le royaume de Manassé (voir le Synopsis ci-dessous). *Judith* avait été conçu en quatre actes à l'origine, mais l'ouvrage fut finalement réduit à deux actes. Une grande partie du livret, en particulier l'essentiel des dialogues de l'Acte I, fut écrite par Parry lui-même. D'autres textes proviennent du Livre d'Isaïe et des Psaumes, mais plus près de la fin de l'Acte II, Parry s'inspira largement du Livre de Judith. À l'approche du festival, le comité du Festival commença à s'inquiéter de la longueur de l'œuvre et recommanda des coupures. Hans Richter, qui avait une haute estime de l'oratorio, soutint le souhait de Parry de jouer l'œuvre sans aucune coupure.

Richter dirigea la création de *Judith* à Birmingham le matin du 29 août 1888. Après le concert, Parry nota dans son journal:

> La règle interdisant des applaudissements après les numéros séparés est plutôt fâcheuse, car il est difficile de dire si les gens les aiment ou non. Mais il y a eu un bon vacarme après chaque moitié, et les membres de ma chère chorale criaient et agitaient leur mouchoirs comme des fous.

Après le triomphe remporté par *Blest Pair of Sirens*, il est incontestable que le succès de *Judith* consolida la réputation de Parry comme compositeur de musique chorale, et de nombreuses exécutions suivirent, notamment avec l'Edinburgh Choral Union et deux exécutions importantes avec le Novello Choir sous la direction d'Alexander Campbell Mackenzie à Londres au St James's Hall et au Crystal Palace pendant le mois de décembre [1888]. Parry reçut des lettres enthousiastes d'amis tels que Barclay Squire et Edward Burne-Jones, ainsi que de son élève Arthur Somervell. Un de ses futurs amis proches, Charles Larcom Graves – qui allait écrire un jour la première biographie du compositeur – chantait dans le Novello Choir, ainsi qu'August Johannes Jaeger avec qui, en sa qualité de directeur des publications chez Novello, Parry établira une étroite relation de travail.

Acte I

La robuste ouverture diatonique du prélude de *Judith* (qui possède de nombreux points communs avec les premières mesures de la

Quatrième Symphonie de Parry composée la même année) porte l'empreinte stylistique du compositeur, tout comme la réponse lyrique des vents. En effet, une tension contagieuse a dû se propager dans le public quand l'énergie du prélude, remarquable par sa force rythmique, fut libérée dans le Town Hall de Birmingham, et une sensation de plaisir tandis que cette énergie se trouva apaisée par une musique contrastée d'un caractère profondément lyrique, se référant à l'héroïne de l'œuvre, Judith. L'Acte I débute par une sinistre marche processionnelle en mi mineur; le chœur chante des louanges à Moloch, et demande un sacrifice d'enfants (par incinération). Dans un rôle de ténor d'"anti-héros", le roi Manassé reconnaît l'humeur impatiente de son peuple ("Draw near and worship, O my people!"), mais il est horrifié d'apprendre que c'est seulement avec le sacrifice de ses propres enfants royaux que Moloch pourra être pacifié. Les prêtres ne seront pas contestés et la scène se termine par un vigoureux chœur fugué en mi majeur ("It is the god's decree") dans lequel Parry démontre sa puissante invention contrapuntique. Une deuxième marche processionnelle ("Hail, Moloch, hail!") est également construite, à la manière de Purcell, sur une basse contrainte.

Scène 2, "The Children", commence par un dialogue entre les enfants condamnés et leur mère, la reine Meshullemeth (chantée par une mezzo-soprano). C'est cette scène, dira Parry, qui "[semble] avoir touché le plus les gens". Les enfants pleurent sur leur sort, et Meshullemeth à son tour déplore que son faible mari ait rejeté Yahvé ("My children, He is Israel's God no more!") et la profanation des temples. Au cœur de cette section se trouve le passage le plus durable de l'oratorio – la ballade de Meshullemeth "Long since in Egypt's plenteous land" – dans laquelle elle raconte à ses enfants comment leurs ancêtres sont venus s'installer en Israël avec l'aide de Dieu. Bien connue aujourd'hui dans le monde anglo-saxon comme mélodie de cantique portant le nom de "Repton" avec les paroles de John Greenleaf Whittier "Dear Lord and Father of mankind", cette mélodie parut pour la première fois sous cette forme dans le *Repton School: Hymns for Use in Chapel* de George Gilbert Stocks en 1924, avant de devenir plus accessible au public dans *Songs of Praise* (1931) et dans la deuxième édition de l'*English Hymnal* (1933). Toutefois, dans le contexte de l'oratorio de Parry, nous l'entendons telle qu'elle a été conçue à l'origine: des "ritornelli" orchestrales exquises entre les versets, une forme AABA (avec B dans le relatif mineur), et une délicieuse coda mettant en scène Meshullemeth avec ses enfants dans un trio non accompagné avant que la ballade se termine par un solo de clarinette merveilleusement nostalgique soutenu par les cordes en sourdine. Inexorablement, les Prêtres de Moloch viennent réclamer les enfants

et les emmènent. Meshullemeth proteste ("Ye are the priesthood of that monstrous deity"), mais ils demeurent insensibles à ses supplications. À ce moment critique, Judith (une soprano héroïque) fait son entrée: son aria "Though into the valley of the shadow of death", s'inspirant du Psaume 23, réconforte Meshullemeth en l'assurant de la miséricorde et de la compassion de Dieu. Paragraphe lyrique et étendu, cette aria révèle le don fécond de Parry pour les longues lignes mélodiques, une harmonie riche et une orchestration sonore.

Pour le sacrifice des enfants (Scène 3), le chœur, partagé entre le peuple et les Prêtres de Moloch, se combine avec l'acceptation conflictuelle de Manassé devant le destin horrible de ses enfants, mais Judith intervient ("Stay your hideous mockeries!") et délivre un puissant second monologue se moquant de leur soumission. Cela a pour effet d'enflammer encore davantage la colère du peuple, et Judith a de la chance de ne pas être jetée elle-même dans la fournaise. Elle est sauvée par l'arrivée soudaine d'un messager qui les prévient que l'armée assyrienne est sur le point de mettre à sac Jérusalem. Manassé tente de rassurer le peuple en leur disant que Moloch les épargnera, mais c'est en vain car les Assyriens attaquent.

La dévastation qui suit est représentée dans le Finale de l'Acte I par un chœur dramatique prolongé dans lequel les vains appels à Moloch sont accueillis par le silence. L'impuissance du peuple devant cette terrible réalisation est dépeinte par une émouvante supplication à cinq voix ("In vain we cry to him"), qui rappelle quelque peu S.S. Wesley dans son utilisation de la dissonance diatonique, et par un geste de clôture saisissant et élégiaque à six voix ("Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations, is brought low") alors que le sort de Manassé, c'est-à-dire l'exil, est déterminé.

Intermezzo

L'"Intermezzo" entre les Actes I et II, intitulé "Babylon – The Repentance of Manasseh", s'inspire de la "Prière de Manassé" (Deuxième Livre des Chroniques). Parry tira son texte du Livre de Michée ("I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him") et du Psaume 118. Pour cette pièce pénitentielle, Parry se tourna vers l'une de ses influences les plus chères, la musique de J.S. Bach, pour créer une émouvante aria de passion néo-baroque pleine d'ingéniosité contrapuntique au sein d'une forme strophique modifiée.

Acte II

La Scène 1 de l'Acte II ("The Return of Manasseh") s'ouvre par l'un des chœurs les plus remarquables de Parry: un vigoureux rondo en forme de lamentation sur la dévastation de Jérusalem ("Wail! wail! ye solitary people!") en si mineur qui de nouveau

doit quelque chose à Bach. Se souvenant de sa ballade de l'Acte I, Meshullemeth rappelle au peuple la miséricorde de Dieu ("The Lord is long-suffering and merciful") et le retour à Jérusalem d'un Manassé repentant. À cela le chœur répond avec joie par une magnifique page contrapuntique ("Our King is come again") dans laquelle, afin de rivaliser avec l'ingéniosité du finale de *Blest Pair of Sirens*, deux sujets de fugue se combinent adroitement en une forme extrêmement imaginative et complexe. La scène se termine par un trio harmonieux et inspiré en ut majeur pour Manassé, Meshullemeth et Judith, dans lequel ils célèbrent le retour du peuple vers Yahvé ("When we rebelled against the word of the Lord").

Sans qu'il le sache, Manassé a été suivi à Jérusalem par le général Holopherne et son armée assyrienne, qui exige un tribut pour son roi. Dans la Scène 2, Holopherne, un puissant rôle de basse, annonce son message: si Manassé ne se rend pas dans les trois jours, l'armé détruira la ville et n'épargnera personne ("then will he smite and spare not"). Alors que le peuple est de nouveau plongé dans le désespoir, Judith intervient et calme leur angoisse (en ut mineur) avec une autre aria exaltante (en ut majeur: "Let us give thanks") à laquelle le chœur réagit par une structure ternaire d'un puissant élan rythmique ("The God of our fathers").

La Scène 3, "The Exploit of Judith", qui contient sans doute quelques-unes des plus belles pages de l'oratorio, commence à l'extérieur des murs de Jérusalem pendant la nuit, et s'ouvre par une exaltante marche lente pleine de pathos, dépeignant Judith se rendant dans le camp assyrien. (Le jeune Edward Elgar – qui, en tant que violoniste en herbe, joua l'œuvre sous la direction de Parry – a dû être très profondément impressionné par la puissance de ce thème musclé et par la riche orchestration de Parry!) "The Chorus of the Watchmen on the Walls", sous la forme des préludes de choral quasi baroques, fournit un contraste à la marche et à la prière à Yahvé de Manassé ("When Israel transgressed"). Pendant qu'ils chantent, les Veilleurs ne se doutent pas que pendant cette nuit paisible Judith a tué Holopherne (à cet égard, Parry adhère au principe des tragédies grecques dans lesquelles la violence se déroule hors scène). S'avançant en avant en chantant son si bémol aigu, Judith montre la tête décapitée d'Holopherne aux Assyriens et les exhorte à partir. Saisi d'un nouveau courage, le peuple juif poursuit les Assyriens stupéfaits et les écrase avec un chœur au mouvement rapide et plein d'élan ("Arise, O Israel!"), que Stanford considérait comme le plus remarquable numéro de l'oratorio. Dans un geste de triomphe, qui selon Stanford est d'un style plus proche d'Alessandro Scarlatti que de Haendel, Manassé remercie Dieu pour la libération d'Israël dans une aria

("God breaketh the battle") qui anticipe les sonorités néo-baroques de la *"Lady Radnor" Suite* (que Parry composa pour l'orchestre à cordes entièrement féminin de la comtesse de Radnor en 1894), ainsi que *An English Suite* (la dernière pièce orchestrale importante de Parry, à laquelle il travailla entre 1890 et 1918). Cette aria devint l'un des numéros les plus populaires de l'oratorio et fut souvent exécutée comme pièce indépendante.

L'œuvre se termine triomphalement avec une dernière aria pour Judith ("I will sing unto the Lord a new song") d'après le Psaume 96, à laquelle le chœur répond de manière sublime avec une grande structure tripartite ("Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning"). Vigoureusement fuguée au début et à la fin, elle donne l'impression que Parry voulait rendre un hommage personnel à la grande tradition établie à Birmingham avec l'*Elijah* de Mendelssohn, et à cette institution typiquement anglaise de musique chorale qui enchante dans l'acoustique et la magnificence imposante d'une grande architecture.

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"Judith" et sa réception

Il en fait aucun doute que *Judith* remporta un franc succès auprès du public à la suite de sa création à Birmingham en 1888. L'ouvrage fut souvent chanté du vivant du compositeur, et il est presque certain que sa popularité persuada le comité du Festival de Birmingham de commander à Parry un second oratorio, *King Saul*, en 1894. Stanford, qui était venu à Birmingham avec pour mission d'écrire une critique pour la *Fortnightly Review*, produisit un long compte rendu détaillé et soignement pesé qui, malgré les sottes accusations de népotisme proférées par George Bernard Shaw, présente une analyse des aspects positifs et négatifs avec une équité particulièrement remarquable. Stanford, qui dirigea *Judith* avec le London Bach Choir et la Cambridge University Musical Society, ne doutait cependant pas que l'oratorio était "le travail non seulement d'un musicien accompli, mais également d'un penseur cultivé". Par ailleurs, nous savons qu'Elgar admirait l'œuvre, ainsi que Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, Herbert Howells et Sir David Willcocks. Shaw, qui nourissait un préjugé enraciné contre l'establishment musical et contre la religion, avait peu de chance de jamais sympathiser avec une telle œuvre, mais en raison de sa prose amusante et de son goût pour la controverse quelque peu superficielle, son jugement négatif de *Judith* (en particulier sa satire contre la ballade de Meshullemeth) perdura pendant une grande partie du vingtième siècle, et fit partie du fardeau dont il

fallait se débarrasser pour que la remarquable musique de Parry puisse revivre.

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Livret et sources

Lorsqu'il rédigea son livret pour *Judith*, Parry consulta l'ouvrage de l'ecclésiatique et orientaliste Humphrey Prideaux (1648 – 1724), qui fut le doyen de la cathédrale de Norwich. L'étude biblique la plus importante de Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (1715 – 1717), porte en particulier sur la période écoulée entre la rédaction de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament. Dans son ouvrage, Prideaux pense que "l'exploit de Judith eut lieu sous le règne du roi juif Manassé". Au départ, Parry avait songé donner à son oratorio le titre *The Regeneration of Manasseh* en raison du rôle central de ce roi dans l'histoire, mais comme il l'indique dans la préface de sa partition vocale, concernant Judith, alors qu'il avançait dans la composition du livret,

> Je fus en partie transporté par l'intérêt supérieur de sa personnalité, et en partie par les conseils avisés d'amis en qui j'avais confiance, et sa part dans l'action devint au moins égale à celle de Manassé.

Finalement, Judith devint le personnage le plus important, même si Parry conserva *The Regeneration of Manasseh* comme sous-titre.

L'oratorio commence avec la foule qui demande un sacrifice au dieu Moloch (en brûlant une offrande humaine dans la fournaise). Manassé, mentionné dans le Deuxième Livre des Rois (21: 1 – 18) et dans le Deuxième Livre des Chroniques (32: 33 – 33: 20) était le roi de Judée (697 – 642 av. J.-C.), et régna pendant le temps de Sennakérib, roi d'Assyrie. Ayant restauré le culte polythéiste de Baal dans le temple juif, et soutenu le culte astral assyrien dans tout son royaume, Manassé aurait sanctionné le sacrifice d'enfants dans le cadre du culte sacrificiel de Moloch. Dans le cas présent, il s'agissait de ses propres enfants qui étaient sur le point d'être immolés, enlevés de force à leur mère, Meshullemeth, et conduits dans la vallée de Hinnom pour y être tués. Judith intervint et tenta d'empêcher le sacrifice, un acte qui aurait pu la conduire à sa mort aux mains des fidèles si l'armée assyrienne n'était pas tombée sur Jérusalem, mettant la ville à sac et prenant Manassé comme prisonnier à Babylone.

Le reniement de Manassé et son retour vers Yahvé, détaillés dans le Deuxième Livre des Chroniques (mais qui sont maintenant considérés comme légendaires), se trouvent dans ce que l'on appelle la "Prière de

Manassé", un acte pénitentiel dans lequel Manassé se repent, et implore le pardon divin en captivité. Après avoir été autorisé à rentrer à Jérusalem, il fut suivi par Holopherne qui demanda la soumission et le paiement d'un tribut à Nabuchodonosor (bien que cela, comme nous le savons maintenant, ait été impossible historiquement). Judith intervint et exhorta le peuple effrayé à avoir confiance en l'aide de Yahvé; elle jura de sauver la ville de la destruction. Tandis que Manassé et le peuple juif attendaient nerveusement, Judith se rendit dans le camp des Assyriens et dans la tente d'Holopherne à Béthulie. Femme intelligente et séduisante (célèbre pour son apparence très féminine), elle éblouit Holopherne par sa beauté et, profitant de son ivresse, le décapita pendant la nuit. Comme le Livre de Judith le raconte:

> Sa sandale ravit son regard, sa beauté captiva son âme, et l'épée lui trencha la gorge. (16: 9)

Cette scène a été un sujet traité par des peintres du quinzième, seizième et dix-septième siècles tels que Gentileschi, Caravaggio et Mantegna. Ayant atteint son objectif, Judith se réfugia à Jérusalem, et exhorta l'armée juive à se jeter sur les Assyriens désemparés par la perte de leur chef. Rempli d'un nouveau courage, Manassé conduisit l'armée vers la victoire tandis que les Assyriens se dispersèrent sans chef à travers la Judée, et ils rentrèrent à Jérusalem, louant Yahvé, le Dieu d'Israël, pour leur délivrance.

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Judith

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 **Introduction**

Act I
Scene 1. Moloch
In the valley of Hinnom; the image of the god surrounded by Priests and Worshippers

Chorus of Worshippers
2 Hail, Moloch! Hail, awful god!
Before whose frown the nations tremble.
To thee we bring fresh offerings,
To thee in dread amazement,
With trembling limbs and head bowed low we come.

Thy mouth a ruddy furnace glows,
Of roaring flame thy breath;
The smoke curls black about thy brow,
The awful pledge of Death!
With arms outspread and open hand
Thou awaitest the offspring of our land.
Hear us! Hear us!

Thy rites are set,
Thy priests are met,
For good or ill
Unfold thy will.
Inspire us with thy fire divine
And make us wholly thine!

Manasseh
3 Draw near and worship, O my people!

Your god makes known his dread command.
Behold his priests, the bearers of his word, at hand.
A noble sacrifice they claim,
That he his dreaded wrath may spare.
His favour may ye gladly share,
Nor grudge your dearest to his flame.

Terrors surround him: earthquake and tempest.
Deadly his breath is: plague and desolation.
He turneth the day into darkness; he blotteth the sun out of heaven,
And marreth the beauty of man with fell disease.

Chorus of Worshippers
4 Have mercy, dread Moloch; destroy us not!
O lay aside thy terrors and withhold thine anger;
Behold us with favour,
Look kindly on thy faithful worshippers.

High Priest
5 Hear ye the word of your god!
No holocausts nor blood of senseless beasts he needs.
No offspring of the common herd of men;
None but those may enter into union with the god,
Within whose veins flows the blood of your King.

Worshippers
6 Hail! thou art highly favoured, King!
Our god hath spoken and declared his will;
We hail his choice with joy.

Manasseh
My children Moloch's!
How should that be?
O, mighty one, have pity,
Spare him at least
Who, hereafter enthroned,
O'er Judah should hold sway.

Worshippers
The god demands
The children of the King;
His priests proclaim it,
Who shall deny him?
No other sacrifice avails!

Manasseh
No other sacrifice!
O bitter doom!
Must I part from them, my life's joy,
Who at my knees so often played,
In whose dear eyes were looks of love!
Is it thus I must condemn them, mine own dear innocents?
Is Moloch wroth with me:
Wherein have I angered him,
That thus his hand should smite me
And take my loved ones from me?
What dread my soul possesses!
What helpless fear and anguish!

Priests
In vain thou seekest to keep them,
The god will not forego them,
His rites must be performed,
The sacrifice accomplished;
Beware his wrath!
His fury awaketh,
Shall Israel perish?

Manasseh
O horror! Despair!
How shall I turn to meet them?

Worshippers
7 Bring now the children!
Haste ye! Delay not!
It is the god's decree,
He by his priests hath spoken.
His wrath and terrors will he put away.
And visit us no more with pestilence and famine.

High Priest
8 Hearken, O King!
The god thine offspring claims
For Israel's good and thine.

We, his commands obeying,
Seek now thy palace,
And thence with solemn festal rites
Thy children here will bring.
The god will take them to himself, and Jerusalem in his great might
Henceforth secure shall stand.

Worshippers
9 Hail, Moloch, hail!
Thy dread commands with trembling joy we hear!

Protect us! In thee alone we put our trust;
Thy favour is our comfort, thy power alone our stay.
All hail, great Moloch, god of flame!
Thy solemn rites shall be performed!

Scene 2. The Children
In the Palace of the King. Meshullemeth and the King's Children

Dialogue
Children
10 O mother, tell us once again
The story of our people:
How God brought Israel forth
From Egypt's bonds of old,
And led them to this land.

Meshullemeth
My children, He is Israel's God no more!
His courts are desolate and still,
His altars are profaned;
His people seek Him not.

Children
Yet are there some that still serve Him,
And trust in His love and mercy,
And, if we entreat Him, will He not pardon
For the sake of our fathers, whom He so loved.

Meshullemeth
Alas! my children, great cause hath He for anger.
His temples have they defiled;
His word have they contemned;
The deeds that He did for them have they forgotten,
And requited His love with scorn.

Yet once again will I tell to you
The old familiar story,
So, when I pass away,
Ye too shall tell unto your children
The lovingkindness of our God.

Ballad
Meshullemeth
11 Long since in Egypt's plenteous land
Our fathers were oppressed;
But God, whose chosen folk they were,
Smote those who long enslaved them there,
And all their woes redressed.

The Red Sea stayed them not at all,
Nor depths of liquid green;
On either hand a mighty wall
Of waters clear rose high at His call,
And they passed through between.

In deserts wild they wandered long,
They sinned and went astray;
But yet His arm to help was strong,
He pardoned them, though they did wrong,
And brought them on their way.

At last to this good land they came,
With fruitful plenty blest;
Here glorious men won endless fame,
Here God made holy Zion's name,
And here He gave them rest.

Children
O may we ne'er forget what He hath done,
Nor prove unmindful of His love,
That, like the constant sun,
On Israel hath shone,
And sent down blessings from above.

(*Enter Priests of Moloch.*)

Priests
12 Great Queen, the King calls for his children,
Their presence he awaits
Where throng the hosts of Israel,
In worship lowly bowed before their god.
Moloch awaits you! Come!

Meshullemeth
What mean ye, ominous messengers?
Too well your emblems I know:
Ye are of the priesthood of that monstrous deity
Whose roaring throat devours our people's
offspring.

Priests
We are the ministers of that dread god
Before whose might all Israel trembles.
The god demands a sacrifice,
The King wills that his children witness it,
And they must come anon.

Children
Let us obey our father's word,
No ill can come to us when he is nigh.
He loves us well, and we will trust ourselves
to him
And to our God, who never faileth them that
look to Him.

Meshullemeth
Alas, my children! My heart is full of fear for you!
May the God of our fathers watch over you
And bring you safely to my arms again.

Priests
Behold, thou helper of Israel!
Behold, O flame-breathing Moloch!
Thy priests thy dread will obey.
Right worthy sacrifice to thee we bring.

(*Exeunt Priests, with Children.*)
(*Enter Judith.*)

Judith
13 Lady! thou Queen of Israel! Lift up thine head!
Forget thou not that the Eternal dwelleth in the
heavens!
Though into the valley of the shadow of
death our helpless feet have wandered, though
we should fall into the gaping jaws of hell, yet
shall we not fear, nor shall our spirits be moved.
For He will not fail us; He forsaketh not them
that seek Him, nor shall He leave those who in
His word have trusted to find no rest but in the
grave.
The strength of Israel is not a man that he
should lie, nor the son of man that he should
repent.

Hath He not said? shall not He make it good? When He hath spoken doth it not come to pass?

Thus saith the Lord who created thee, O Jacob, He that formed thee, O Israel:

Fear not! for I have called thee, thou are mine! When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; though thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned.

For I am the Lord thy God; the Holy One; thy Saviour!

Scene 3. The Sacrifice

In the Valley of Hinnom, the image of the god flaming. Manasseh and Worshippers assembled. Priests approach, leading the King's Children.

Priests

14 Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Manasseh

My people, see, the holy children come,
Greet them with joyous songs;
And raise your voices to the mighty lord
Who takes their stainless sweetness to himself.
He alone is god!

Worshippers

Crown we the stainless victims
With flowers and garlands meet,
With graceful dance their path attend
And music soft and sweet!
Moloch, Israel's god and king,
Accepts the sacrifice we bring!

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Manasseh

His holy priests, with grave and solemn rites,
Meet them in circling row;
And raise their hands towards that awful form,
From whose dread will our ills and blessings flow.
He alone is lord!

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Worshippers

Lead them with gentle steps and slow,
And low-breathed reverent song,
Where waits the altar of our god,
To whom their souls belong.
Moloch, Israel's god and king,
Accepts the sacrifice we bring.

Manasseh

O awful god, behold our upmost gift;
What can we offer more?
What most we cherish we yield to thee,
To thee we yield our dearest heart's delight.
To thee we bring our children,
At thy command we offer them;
Behold thy suppliants and receive our prayer.

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Worshippers
Place them aloft in his right hand,
Where bright the flame doth glow,
That when it wraps them in its flood
Their souls to him may go.
Hail, great god! All hail!

Priests
Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

(*Enter Judith.*)

Judith
15 Stay your hideous mockeries!
Too long your monstrous idol has been a curse
to Israel!
Thou weak and faithless King,
Deserted of God,
How art thou abased,
How fallen low;
Thy high and kingly office
Degraded and shamed,
The charge of God's people
Disgraced and defamed!
For this empty idol
That maddens you with fear;
To this will you sacrifice
All that you most hold dear?
(*to the people*)
16 Now shall the Lord Jehovah visit you,
The Lord ye have forsaken;
Now shall He smite you with a rod of iron.
The host of Assur shall be your scourge,
And lay Jerusalem in the dust.
The sound of arms is in the air,
The gleam of swords and spears is flashing in
the sun.
They come! they come! and will not spare,
Till the vengeance of the Lord of Hosts be done.

The God whom your fathers worshipped,
Jehovah, shall fight against you;
And ye have none to help you
Nor answer your prayer,
But this black, hideous mass of stone
That ye yourselves have carven.

Call to your Moloch!
Hurl in your children!
Cut yourselves and howl,
He shall not hear!
Tear your hair and wail!
He shall not perceive it.
His worshippers shall perish,
His priests shall be slain;
And they that trust in him
Shall call upon his name in vain!

Worshippers
17 Who is this that raileth at Moloch?
Jehovah is gone, His terrors are nought;
None e'er beheld His semblance;
His temples are empty,
His courts are deserted,
And them that serve Him shall Moloch devour.

Cast her in the furnace!
She hath defied great Moloch!
Let her be sacrificed!

(*Enter Messenger.*)

Messenger
18 O King, give ear!
From Zion's hills a sight is seen!
A host of warriors winding down the ways;
They fill the valleys far and near,
Like waters of a sweeping flood.
Behind them all the land is waste,
The people fly from them, and none withstand them.
All Israel is scattered on the hills
As a flock whose shepherd slumbers.

Manasseh
19 Fear not, my people;
Your god his power shall now make plain!
The fierceness of his flame shall consume them,
And ye shall look for them in vain!

Finale. The Coming of the Assyrians

Worshippers of Moloch
20 The host of Assur is like a swarm of locusts; the land may not be seen for the multitude of them.
The wrath of Moloch is like a mighty whirlwind; he shall but breathe on them and they shall be no more.

Judith
21 Jerusalem was loved of the Lord as a spouse is loved of her husband. But she betrayed Him, and now shall the vengeance of her God be accomplished.

(*The march of the Assyrians is heard.*)

Priests of Moloch
22 Moloch, Moloch, hear us now,
Who should deliver us but thou?
See, with bended knees we bow;
Hear thy helpless worshippers!

Worshippers (Women)
Have we not unceasing sought thee?
Have we not all honour wrought thee?
Have we not our offspring brought thee?
Hear thy helpless worshippers!

Here in Hinnom's awful vale,
Where the sun on high looks pale,
Where our hearts with terror fail;
Hear thy helpless worshippers!

Priests and Worshippers
Rise in might and scatter our foes,
Wither them in mortal throes,
By thy breath of flame that glows,
Help thy faithful worshippers!

Assyrian Soldiers
The heroes of Assur are like to a host of lions,
They faint not, they falter not, though thousands of foes withstand them.

Their spears are like the stars of heaven,
Their swords are like a sunlit flood,
Their shields are like the ocean waves,
That cannot be numbered nor withstood;
Their shout is 'Victory!'

People
23 Fly! Fly!
The host of Assur is come on us,
They sweep our warriors before them.
Is Moloch dumb?
Will he not smite them?
He slumbers,
His priests must waken him!

Assyrians
Slay them! slay them!
Smite them hip and thigh!
Pursue them! destroy them!
Hurl them from on high!

People
What cry is rising from our homes?
What shout of horror and of pain?
What flame goes roaring up to heaven?
What crash of walls, what din resounds?
That shakes the earth and darkens the air
And fills our souls with uttermost despair.
Moloch, Moloch, hear us now!
Moloch stirs not!
Moloch, Moloch, succour now.
Moloch hears not, he hears not, he heeds not.
Moloch, help us,
Who shall help if thou forsake us.
Who should deliver us but thou?
In vain ye call him.
Despair! He heedeth not!
Help, Moloch, help!
In vain we cry to him.
We fall, we die!
No help comes nigh.
Death only mocks
Our piteous cry.
24 Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations, is
brought low; Her glory is gone.
Her children are captives, her heroes slain.
Thus hath the Lord her God requited her
iniquities.

End of Act I

COMPACT DISC ONE

Intermezzo. Babylon. The Repentance of Manasseh

Manasseh
1 I will bear the indignation of God; because I have sinned against Him.

The Lord hath sore corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death.

I will wait for the salvation of God; for He will hear and deliver me.

He shall bring me forth into the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.

Then will I praise Him all the days of my life; even as the heavens do praise Him, whose glory shall be for evermore.

Act II
Scene 1. The Return of Manasseh

The Jews in desolate Jerusalem
2 Wail! wail! ye solitary people!
Your land is wasted;
Gone are your heroes,
Your women are widows,
Your children are slain.
No more the vine its clusters bears,
No more the cornfields shine with grain;
In far-off lands our King a captive mourns,
And calls on Israel's God in vain.

Wail! Wail! ye solitary people!
Jerusalem the holy
Lieth in ashes;
The walls are broken,
The roofs are gone!
Where children played reigns silence unbroken,
The streets where they wandered with grass
are o'ergrown;
Deserted are the well-loved homes of men,
The courts of God are still and lone!

Meshullemeth
3 The Lord is long-suffering and merciful; He
keepeth not His anger for ever.
He looked on our affliction and pain, and hath
forgiven us all our sins.
Even now, unto your mourning city, He bringeth
home your King.
No more the voice of the oppressor shall ye fear;
No more a shameful tribute shall ye pay.
The Lord Himself will fight for you; His arm shall
overthrow your enemies;
And Jerusalem from her stain shall be cleansed,
And shine as a bride in the morning of her bridal.
Your streets again shall echo with your
children's voices,
Your folds shall be full again with your bleating
flocks;
Your fields shall also stand so thick with
ripening corn
That they shall laugh and sing.

Chorus of Jews
4 Our King is come again from distant lands,
Where he has long been held in bitter bondage;
With joyful song let us greet him, and thank
our God,
Who answers thus our hope and trust in Him.

(*Enter Manasseh.*)

Manasseh
5 Behold, how great is the mercy of our God
towards them that seek Him. He hath brought us
again to the land that He gave to our forefathers.
When we rebelled against the word of the
Lord, and contemned the counsel of the Most
High,
He brought down our hearts with heaviness;
we fell, and there was none to help us.
Then cried we unto the Lord in our trouble,
and He delivered us from our distresses.

Meshullemeth
He brought us out of the darkness and out of the shadow of death.

He breaketh the gates of brass, and smiteth the bars of iron asunder.

Judith
O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men.

Judith, Meshullemeth, and Manasseh
That they would offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out His works with gladness.

Scene 2. The Message of Holofernes

Messenger
6 Hear ye the words of the captain of the great King, whose power o'ershadows the world!

Let not your King with subtle words deceive you, nor the God ye have trusted in mislead you to your hurt.

To Assur's lord ye shall bow; to him your tribute is due.

From him ye may yet find mercy; or, if ye offend him, death.

In three days if ye yield your city ye shall find grace and favour;

But if the third day be o'er-passed, and still ye reject his offers, then will he smite and spare not.

Your city shall be razed to the ground, no stone thereof shall stand upon another.

The mountains shall be drunken with your blood, the fields shall be full of your dead bodies, your footsteps nowhere shall be found.

Thus saith the chieftain who leads the great King's armies; none of his words shall be in vain.

Chorus of Jews
7 Woe, woe!
Our city's walls are broken,
The gates are shattered,
Nor shields nor spears have we
Nor men to wield them.
The enemy triumpheth,
And there is none to help us.
Doth the God of Israel sleep?
Or hath He cast us off for ever?
Will He be no more entreated?

Judith
8 Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God, who trieth us as He hath tried our fathers. These things He surely does to prove us, for He hath power to defend us, even today, if it please Him.

His power standeth not in multitude, nor in the might of men's hands.

His arm alone can bring us salvation, His righteousness sustain us.

Hear me now, and I will do a thing which shall go throughout all generations to the glory of the God of Israel.

Ye shall stand this night at the gate, and I will go forth with my maiden, and within those days that ye are summoned to yield your city our God shall visit Israel by my hand.

9 I pray thee, O God of my fathers, thou God of the inheritance of Israel, hear Thou my prayer!

Thou art the God of the afflicted, the helper of the oppressed, the protector of the forlorn, the saviour of them that are without hope.

We pray Thee to make every nation and tribe acknowledge that Thou art the God of all power and might, and that there is none that protecteth Thy people but Thou.

(*to the people*)

Command the gates of the city to be opened unto me, that I may go forth and accomplish those things whereof we have spoken.

Chorus of People

10 The God of our fathers give thee favour and accomplish thine enterprise to the glory of Israel. So shall His name be exalted, and Jerusalem in His strength shall find safety.

Scene 3. The Exploit of Judith

The walls of Jerusalem. Night. Manasseh and the Watchmen looking toward the camp of the Assyrians

Watchmen

11 See ye the campfires of the host of Assur:
Doth any stir?
Hear ye the measured pacing of their
watchmen:
Doth any cry?
The night is still, the stars look down from
Heaven,
God watcheth o'er His people.

Manasseh

Jerusalem is a city
Held in the hand of God,
He brought our people from far
And planted them herein.
Though wasted now by war
And ruined for her sin,
Yet will He look on her in pity
And raise her from the sod.

Watchmen

Look where the darkness deepens close beside
the hills:
Is any flash of arms?
Look where the mountain's outline standeth out
against the sky:
Is any form of man?
The night is still, the stars look down from
Heaven,
God watcheth o'er His people.

Manasseh

When Israel transgressed
And wandered from God's way,
He left them to fall before their foes
And broke their rebel pride.
But chastened now by woes
They seek once more their Guide;
He fails not the oppressed,
His arm shall be their stay!

Watchmen
See, where the pathway windeth deep along
the valley:
Doth any come?
See, where it leadeth close below the walls of
the city:
Who draweth nigh?

Watchmen and Manasseh
The night doth pass, the sunlight groweth
eastward,

Women, Watchmen, and Manasseh
God succoureth His people!

(*Enter Judith.*)

Judith
12 Ho! ye upon the walls! Open to me! The Lord hath worked wonders by my hand, and brought to nought the enemies of His people.

Take now this head, and hang it on the highest place before your walls; and as soon as the morning shall appear and the sun come forth upon the earth, take ye every man his weapons and go forth from the city.

And when the Assyrians shall go to the tent of Holofernes, and shall find naught but his dead body, fear shall fall upon them; and they shall flee before you through all the coasts of Israel, and ye shall smite them with the edge of the sword till there be not one of them left.

Chorus of Jews
13 Arise, O Israel! Smite ye your enemies, for the
Lord hath delivered them into your hands!
He shall dip His foot in the blood of His enemies,
He shall dash them in pieces like a vessel of
clay.
By the breath of His mouth shall they be
consumed,
In the fire of His fury shall they melt away.

Manasseh
14 God breaketh the battle. From the midst of mine enemies hath He delivered me, and out of the hands of them that persecuted me.

Assur came out of the mountains of the north; he came with ten thousands of his army. The multitude thereof stopped the torrents, his horsemen covered the hills.

He boasted that he would burn up all my borders and dash the suckling children against the ground. But the Almighty Lord hath disappointed him and overthrown him by a woman's hand.

The mighty one did not fall by the young men; neither did the sons of the Titans smite him.

Judith, the daughter of Merari, weakened him by the beauty of her countenance. She put off the garments of her widowhood for them that were oppressed in Zion. Her sandals ravished his eyes, her beauty took his mind prisoner. The falchion passed through his neck.

Then my afflicted shouted; my weak ones cried aloud for joy. Our foes were astonished; they lifted up their voices. The sons of the damsels pierced them through; they perished by the battle of the Lord.

Finale. Judith and Chorus

Judith

15 I will sing unto the Lord a new song.

O Lord, Thou art glorious, wonderful in strength. Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Let all creatures serve Thee. Thou spakest, and they were made; Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit and created them; there is none that can resist Thy voice.

The mountains shall be moved from their foundations in the waters; the rocks shall melt like wax at Thy presence. The foundations of the earth shall shake. They shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, when the Lord is come to execute judgement.

Yet is He merciful to them that seek Him; and they that trust Him shall be even as Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.

For even as the mountains stand about Jerusalem, so standeth the Lord about His people from this time forth for evermore.

Break forth, break forth into singing, for the Lord hath delivered His people Israel!

Chorus

16 Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning, put on the comeliness of glory that cometh of God for ever.

For He will show thy brightness unto every nation under heaven. Thy name shall be called the peace of righteousness, the glory of God's worship.

He bringeth thy people, exalted with glory, rejoicing in the remembrance of God.

And He shall lead Israel with joy in the light of His glory, with mercy and righteousness that cometh from Him.

End of Act II

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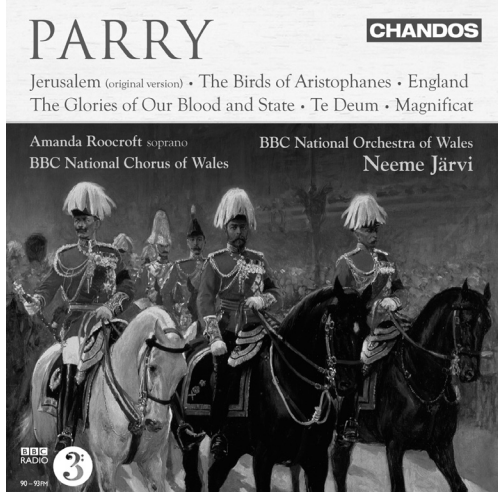

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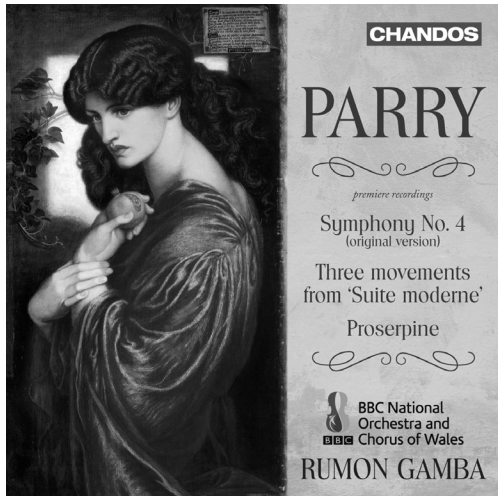

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All concert photographs taken at the performace of Parry's *Judith* at the Royal Festival Hall, London on 3 April 2019

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