

An Analytical Discussion of Works for Oboe, Oboe d'amore, and English horn by Charles  
Koechlin (1867-1950)

By

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of Charles Koechlin's works which feature the oboe, oboe d'amore, and English horn. These works represent a variety of genres: one sonata with piano, two sonatines with chamber orchestra, a chant for English horn and piano, one reed trio, a wind septet, a suite for unaccompanied English horn, and four monodies for all three instruments. Often treating the oboe like a purely pastoral instrument, many of these works appear to have the same characteristics; however, after a closer look, each of these works provide the performer and listener with different aspects of the instrument's capabilities, all while exploiting the instrument's ability to play extremely long phrases and flowing melodies.

Some of Koechlin's works showcasing the oboe have been briefly discussed and analyzed in other dissertations and articles yet no previous research has focused solely on these compositions. In this document, all of these pieces are examined in chronological order based on their date of composition. Not only does this show an evolution of Koechlin's compositional style, but it also allows one to observe how the composer treated these instruments differently as his research into each instruments' capabilities was concluded. These analyses focus mainly on each work's formal and stylistic aspects as well as some of the compositional methods used by Koechlin. Even though these musical works present a variety of genres, a diversity of instrumentation, and several extra-musical associations, each of these pieces feature Koechlin's unique compositional style and character.

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## **Brief Biographical Sketch**

Charles Louis Eugène Koechlin was born in Paris in November of 1867 to a rich and influential family of Alsatian heritage. Biographer Robert Orledge describes Koechlin's personality as one inherited from his ancestors: "an energy, naivety, and an absolute and simple sincerity that lie at the heart of his music and character."<sup>1</sup> Koechlin influenced other composers mainly with his contributions to the theoretical and pedagogical repertoire. He was also active in several French musical societies and the composer's opinions on musical culture and composition were seen in several French journals. Early in life, Koechlin did not intend to become a composer, even though music had been a part of his life. But, while attending the École polytechnique with the intention of serving in the military, Koechlin became ill with tuberculosis and had to be sent away for recovery twice. During his second period abroad, Koechlin began to study music, mainly through a harmonic treatise by François Bazin, and felt an urge to be a composer. After a few months of tutelage, Koechlin entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1890.<sup>2</sup>

While attending the Conservatoire, Koechlin studied different aspects of musical compositions under some influential teachers: composition with Jules Massenet, harmony with Antoine Taudou, counterpoint with André Gedalge, and history with Louis-Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray. Koechlin was also inspired by his colleagues at the Conservatoire which included Florent Schmitt, Max d'Ollone and later, Maurice Ravel. After Massenet resigned from his post in 1896, Koechlin continued his compositional studies with Gabriel Fauré, someone who strongly influenced the composer's compositional method and style. "Throughout his life,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Orledge, "Koechlin, Charles," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 2, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15248>.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Orledge, *Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) His Life and Works* (London: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1989), 3-5.

Koechlin strove to recapture the classic simplicity and nobility of Fauré's style with its balance of liberty and discipline."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Koechlin later assisted with the orchestration of Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.<sup>4</sup>

After leaving the Conservatoire in 1897, Koechlin spent the next several years working on compositions. In 1899, the composer began his process of working on several compositions simultaneously, always working from the melody first. Like Milhaud, who also was a student of Gedalge, Koechlin was taught "the primacy of melody in musical composition and the necessity of strengthening counterpoint."<sup>5</sup> This type of compositional process would be important in all of Koechlin's compositions. Around 1915, due to financial problems caused by World War I, Koechlin was forced to spend less time on composition and focus his energy on writing theoretical treatises and academic articles as well as teaching other composers such as Francis Poulenc, Catherine Urner, Henri Sauguet, and many others. Many theoretical works written during this period were not revolutionary; yet they were impressive in the breadth of their content, such as the four-volume *Traité de l'orchestration* and the three-volume *Traité de l'harmonie*. Koechlin's approach to musicality versus strict observance of rules was common in these works and his teaching process. Also as an advocate of musicality and French music, Koechlin wrote several articles in the defense of musical tradition. For example, in an article entitled "Back to Bach," Koechlin argued against the eradication of Romantic expressivity by neo-classical composers, saying Bach's music was purely academic. Koechlin, who admired Bach greatly, states that Bach was indeed expressive in his works and was not always so

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Orledge, "Charles Koechlin," *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>4</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter, eds., *French Music since Berlioz* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 244.

structured in musical forms.<sup>6</sup> Most people respected Koechlin's opinion and what he had to say. Niall O'Loughlin, in an article on Claude Debussy, mentions Koechlin in this capacity, suggesting that "as a scholar and impartial musician of broad and varied experience, he was able effectively to present an objective assessment of contemporary musical events."<sup>7</sup>

Koechlin took four different trips to the United States in 1918-1937. The first visit was to act as one of seven French intellectuals and academicians to tour the United States with the intention of counteracting the rumors made by German propaganda that the "French race was in physical and intellectual decline."<sup>8</sup> During this visit, Koechlin gave many lectures on French contemporary music which ultimately prompted his subsequent visits. The composer also taught briefly at institutions such as the University of California Berkeley and the University of California San Diego. He was never able to secure a permanent position at the Paris Conservatoire, probably due to his involvement with the battle between the Société Musicale Indépendante, of which he was a member, and the Société Nationale de Musique. Koechlin did, however, act as an examiner at several Conservatoires in Brussels, Rheims, St Étienne and Marseilles. He also for a short time, taught fugue and modal polyphony at the Schola Cantorum.<sup>9</sup>

Koechlin was the recipient of several composition awards, such as the Hollywood Bowl Prize for his symphonic poem *La joie païenne* as well as the Prix Primont and the Prix Lasserre for his chamber music. Being involved in the pedagogical musical world as an analyst and critic, as well as being an advocate of most French music, Koechlin was invited into artistic groups

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Koechlin, "Back to Bach," in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture: An Anthology of Readings on Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Bryan Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 72-82.

<sup>7</sup> Niall O'Loughlin, "Portrait of Debussy 7: Koechlin and Debussy," *The Musical Times* 108, no. 1497 (1967): 993, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/951990>.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Nichols, *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris 1917-1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 11-13.



such as *Les nouveaux jeunes*, later to become *Les six*.<sup>10</sup> Later in life, the composer was appointed as President of the Fédération Musicale Populaire as well as the musical sections of the Association France-URSS and the Société Internationale de Musique Contemporaine.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1940's, the composer's output was still substantial with the composition of several works, multiple journal articles, and biographies on Debussy and Fauré. Even though Koechlin had trouble getting his music performed regularly and acquiring a publisher to publish his works, he took comfort in the fact that many of his fellow composers, Erik Satie, Albert Roussel, Darius Milhaud, Manuel de Falla and Ravel to name a few, respected Koechlin's opinion and voice and placed value on his works.<sup>12</sup> Koechlin passed away in 1950 known better as a theoretical pedagogue than as a composer. Nevertheless, several professional musicians have discovered this composer's oeuvre. With this incited interest, more of his music has been published and recorded, allowing a greater awareness of Koechlin's unique sound.

### **Periods of Composition and Compositional Style**

Koechlin's compositional style, like that of many other composers, changed over time while retaining certain elements. Melody was often the first component in the compositional process and all subsequent writing was based off of this theme. Melodies tend to avoid wide intervals and adornment. M.D. Calvocoressi describes his melodies as "easy in its flow, eloquent and orderly enough...Typical is long, supple melodic themes, whether easily sustained and of unadorned smoothness or consisting of arabesques in perfectly proportioned, though seldom symmetrical balance."<sup>13</sup> Phrases usually rise or fall chromatically and wide intervals are placed between these phrases rather than inside them. Koechlin did not savor the idea of melodic

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<sup>10</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> M.D. Calvocoressi, "Charles Koechlin's Instrumental Works," *Music & Letters* 5, no. 4 (1924): 357-358, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/726926>.

repetition so melodic lines are usually repeated using sequential development. His melodies tend to not be rhythmically intricate and Koechlin often wrote barless music. When the time is measured, there is often not much complexity in terms of patterns; however, there are often moments of rhythmic uncertainty in terms of duple versus triple meter.

Because Koechlin was often unwilling to edit his melodies, harmony was often unconventional in order to comply with the melody. Harmonic progressions do not follow typical rules and cadences are sometimes incomplete or unclear. The harmony commonly shifts from tonal to modal and oftentimes has extended periods of bitonality. Chords have widely spaced textures and employ superposed fourths and fifths. Koechlin was fond of open fifth chords as well as ninth, eleventh, and even thirteenth chords as well as added sixth chords (a basic chord with the sixth degree of the root added to the chord).<sup>14</sup>

In terms of formal design, Koechlin frequently did not use conventional forms. He tended to modify these formal ideas to suit his musical needs. "Form is essential but not the object of music. It is a means of expressing oneself in a logical manner."<sup>15</sup> With formal designs which use repetition, such as in the sonata or rondo, the repetition is often unclear and never exact. In smaller chamber works, Koechlin was fond of ternary forms plus a coda or fugues. The slower movements are usually through-composed rather than having any formal structure.

Koechlin's compositional career can be divided into approximately four different periods. The first period, consisting mainly of vocal works, ended around 1910. During this period, Koechlin was still attending the Conservatoire and was establishing his musical language in terms of style, harmony and form. Entering into the second period, from 1911-1924, Koechlin

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<sup>14</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 88-92.

<sup>15</sup> Rollo Myers, "Charles Koechlin: Some Recollections," *Music & Letters* 46, no. 3 (1965): 220, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/732238>.

felt he was “capable of entering the perilous domain of chamber music.”<sup>16</sup> During this period, Koechlin spent most of his time on several compositions: a set of nine solo sonatas (one each for flute, viola, oboe, horn, violin, cello, bassoon, and two for clarinet) as well as three string quartets and several works for piano. These works employ dense textures, extensive thematic development, expanded forms, and intricate counterpoint. Most biographers view this period as his most complex and indicative of his mature compositional style.<sup>17</sup> The third period, 1924-1933, features a simplification of the previous period’s compositions; formal and contrapuntal procedures are more structured, textures are thinner, and harmonic progressions are more predictable. This period also predicts the melody-oriented and sometimes monodic writing of his final period from 1938-1950. During this final period, his orchestral works tend to be complex in terms of thematic recurrence, overall length, dense textures, and informal design in terms of form and instrumental combinations. His chamber music, on the other hand, employs a simpler and more formalized design.

As mentioned above, the composer was often using several different types of harmony, ranging from conventional harmonic progressions to the use of atonal and polytonal writing. In instrumental works, especially during his final period, Koechlin often fused tonality with modality as well. Modal writing can be seen in the unaccompanied works for solo instruments. These works employ modal passages in conjunction with whole-tone and chromatic melodies to produce interesting melodies. In a letter to Paul Collaer in 1946, Koechlin states: “For me, at present, there are a few elements of novelty that can, I believe, be found in my work.”<sup>18</sup> The composer then goes on to mention monody (specifically referring to the *Suite for English horn*), the use of ancient modes (referring to *Trio d’anches*), polytonality, atonality, and the fugue

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<sup>16</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>18</sup> “Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) Correspondance,” *La Revue Musicale* 3, nos. 348-350 (1982): 148.

writing using the extreme passing notes, appoggiaturas, etc. These musical ideas can all be found in the works to be discussed.

It is also important to note Koechlin's inspiration for most of his works. Orledge points out that several subjects of inspiration can be found in Koechlin's compositions including, but not limited to: mythology, ancient Greek and Roman civilization, nature and the forest, the night and the universe, dreams and fantasy, distance, folksong, and the effects of light.<sup>19</sup> The subjects mentioned above can be found in the works to be discussed in the following section of this document. The earliest work, which features a member of the oboe family, *Au loin*, exemplifies one of these inspirations.

### **Works for Oboe, Oboe d'amore, and English horn**

#### **Opus 20: *Au Loin* from *Deux pièces symphoniques***

The *Deux pièces symphoniques* were composed in 1896, while Koechlin was still studying at the Paris Conservatoire. It included two movements, the first entitled *En rêve* and the second *Au loin*. Both movements were originally composed for piano and English horn and piano respectively before they were orchestrated by Koechlin. Both titles evoke a certain character: *En rêve* translates to "in a dream" and *Au loin* means "in the distance." As mentioned above, Orledge points out that Koechlin had several groups of inspiration for many of his works. The first falls into Koechlin's "dreams and fantasy" group, whereas *Au loin* can be linked to the "yearning for the unattainable and distant shores" section.<sup>20</sup> *Au loin*, subtitled "A Chant for English horn and piano," is a beautiful, somewhat simple composition with a widely-spaced texture and a repetitive melody. In fact, Koechlin later disowned some of his works, including op. 20, saying they were "rudimentary and hardly worthy of survival." Koechlin described the

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<sup>19</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 226-227.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

op. 20 pieces as “soaked in an atmosphere with blurred contours. As a result nothing progresses; it is a dream world, too static.”<sup>21</sup> Even though *Au loin* may not have lived up to Koechlin’s compositional expectations, it still provides a wonderful solo for the English horn. It evokes an idea of a faraway destination almost imperceptible to the human eye. Its melody, repeated several times at soft and loud dynamics, suggests an object too far away for one to completely perceive; it goes in and out of focus until it is too difficult to make out and remains a dream.

*Au loin* begins in the key of E minor and is organized in ternary form. The A section (measures 1-40) presents two repetitions of the main theme followed by an extension of the theme.

Example 1: Charles Koechlin, *Au loin*: mm. 2-16 (English horn only)

The first time the theme and its extension are heard, the piano accompanies the English horn with pedal tones of superposed fourths and fifths resulting in an octave. Before the second repetition of the main theme and its extension, there is a transitional passage during which the English horn mimics the opening of the main theme with repeated perfect fourths (scale degree 5-1). The piano presents a diatonic descent of an octave from C-C leading into the second reiteration of the theme and its extension.

<sup>21</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 81.

Example 2: Charles Koechlin, *Au loin*: mm. 17-20

The musical score shows two staves: E. Hn. (English Horn) and Pno. (Piano). The E. Hn. staff begins with a rest in measure 17, then enters in measure 18 with a melodic line marked *mf*. In measure 19, the dynamic changes to *pp*. The Pno. staff is more active, with both hands playing chords and moving lines, also marked *pp* in measure 19. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

During the second presentation of the theme and its extension, the piano is more active. The second transitional passage, leading into the development, resembles the first transition except the right hand of the piano plays the ascending perfect fourths while the English horn rests.

The B section, beginning in measure 41, features the piano more than the English horn. The piano plays almost constant eighth notes as well as the triplet motive of the main theme. This section is short ending in measure 52 and goes through a couple of different tonal areas. The last four measures include some cross-relations with F and F-sharp in both parts which seem to suggest the Locrian mode. The return of the A section (pickup to measure 53) is not an exact repetition, but the main theme is partially presented in the piano as well as the English horn. The last page of the piece exhibits a different type of texture with the piano outlining triads through eighth notes while the English horn plays primarily sustained notes. In measure 62, the underlying harmony moves back towards the key of E and the transitional material occurs in measures 67-70. The final seven measures are the most distant and ambiguous with the English horn moving closely around the tonic note. The piano line includes several G-sharps insinuating the tonal center is now in E major, yet in the final two measures, only the notes E and B are heard, leaving the mode ambiguous. This ending, with such little movement and uncertain tonal

areas, adds to the mysterious and distant feeling of the work. Koechlin ends several of his movements in this fashion, which can be seen in the next piece to be discussed.

## **Opus 58: Sonata for Oboe and Piano**

The Sonata for Oboe and Piano was composed over the course of five years, from 1911-1916. Koechlin must have had a fondness for this work, because he references it in his *Traité de l'orchestration* often. Furthermore, when speaking to Sauguet of his accomplishments in polytonal counterpoint, he specifically mentioned the Scherzo of this Sonata.<sup>22</sup> In terms of the overall plan, Koechlin structured the work in four movements: Allegro-Scherzo-Andante-Final. The work features long, legato melodies, for which Koechlin was known as well as bitonality, complex counterpoint, widely-spaced textures, and development of themes. Koechlin's specific vision for the work as a whole becomes clear from the subtitles of each movement: the pastoral.

### **I. Allegro Moderato: Pastorale-La terre-Les travaux des champs-Le soir**

The first movement's title evokes the imagery of the land and work at the fields. *Le soir* translates to "the evening" which can be heard in the last few measures of the movement. The first six measures present the main theme in the oboe. Elise Kirk's description of this opening theme evokes the appropriate image: "The opening seems to call to mind a long, flowing shepherd's tune accompanied by simple drone-like chords in the piano reminiscent of an ancient vielle."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 284.

<sup>23</sup> Elise Kirk, "The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)," PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1977, 179.

Example 3: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 1: mm. 1-6 (oboe only-main theme)

The musical score for Example 3 consists of three staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 1-2) is marked *mp* and features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The second staff (measures 3-4) is marked *p* and contains a piano accompaniment with a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff (measures 5-6) is marked *pp* and shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment. A large slur encompasses the entire passage.

This theme is repeated again while being passed back and forth between the oboe and the piano.

The second theme, beginning in measure 13 with the piano, is a mainly stepwise melody beginning with a descent.

Example 4: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 1: mm. 13-16 (secondary theme)

The musical score for Example 4 is presented in two systems. The first system shows the Oboe and Piano parts for measures 13-16. The Oboe part is mostly silent, with rests in measures 13 and 14. The Piano part is marked *pp* and features a stepwise descending melody. The second system shows the Oboe and Piano parts for measures 15-16. The Oboe part is marked *pp* and features a stepwise descending melody. The Piano part is marked *p* and features a stepwise descending melody. A large slur encompasses the entire passage.



This theme is soon repeated in the oboe, and after it has been expanded for a few measures, both themes intertwine between the two instruments in an extensive development. In measure 88, the main theme returns in the piano in the original key of G major. It appears this may turn into a recapitulation but, after four measures, the oboe continues to develop the theme sequentially. The rest of the movement keeps utilizing the main theme's opening motives in both voices while the tempo slows and the dynamics become softer. In measure 25, there are instructions by the composer for the piano chords: "*pp* but a little heavy (distant bells in the evening)."<sup>24</sup> This may evoke an aural image of distant bells marking the end of the day as the evening settles into night. The sustained chords in the piano lend a calm, almost serene end to the movement, which contrasts nicely with the next Scherzo movement.

## **II. Scherzo: *Danses de faunes***

The second movement presents a virtuosic component for both instrumentalists, which is somewhat uncommon in Koechlin's music for oboe. The scherzo is long with a total of 262 measures. Each motive introduced is developed extensively, involving the use of complex, yet carefully written, contrapuntal writing. Wilfred Mellers describes this scherzo as "a faun dancing in the forest, a mercurial harlequinade that... transforms Pan into a whirling dervish."<sup>25</sup> Even though each part is extensive and difficult, the character of the movement should be light and the tempo must not drag due to any technical passagework.

The overall movement hints at a tonality of C or E major; the chromaticism present in both voices, along with the parallel movement of chords built on fourths and fifths in the accompaniment, challenges the listener to lock into one single tonality. Most of the movement

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<sup>24</sup> Charles Koechlin, *Sonate pour piano et hautbois* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1981).

<sup>25</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, *Singing in the Wilderness: Music and Ecology in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 59.

appears to be more atonal than tonal until the last section. The oboe line usually moves in small intervals and presents recognizable motives used throughout the movement. The first motives to be utilized are present in the first couple of measures with a slurred sixteenth-note passage moving in half-steps and whole-steps which is then followed by articulated sixteenth-note triplets.

Example 5: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 1-2 (first theme)

The musical score for Example 5 consists of two staves. The top staff is for the Oboe (Ob.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The Oboe part begins with a slurred sixteenth-note passage moving in half-steps and whole-steps, followed by articulated sixteenth-note triplets. The Piano part features a slurred sixteenth-note passage moving in half-steps and whole-steps, followed by articulated sixteenth-note triplets. The dynamic marking for the Oboe is *mp* and for the Piano is *p*.

The second motive of importance occurs in measure 38 with the piano. This motive is still built of sixteenth-note triplets; yet, it is more structured and rhythmic than the opening motives with its upper neighbor patterns and its emphasis on every other beat.

Example 6: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 38-41

The musical score for Example 6 shows the Piano part. The piano part features a slurred sixteenth-note passage moving in half-steps and whole-steps, followed by articulated sixteenth-note triplets. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

The movement does not follow any strict formal design; instead, variations in tempo and the utilization of both motives in different combinations provides contrasting moments throughout the Scherzo.

Interesting compositional aspects can be seen in this movement. For example, most of the movement is felt in triple meter; however, the two voices often move in a hemiola. Also, during most of the movement, the piano often uses repetitive figures in the bass line. These figures tend to be parallel fourths and fifths creating some of the tonal confusion. The chordal accompaniment becomes complex in certain areas such as in measure 57. The accompaniment plays on each of the strong beats but the left hand is playing chords built of superposed fifths whereas the right hand is playing inverted added sixth chords.

Example 7: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 57-60

The musical score for Example 7 shows measures 57-60. The Oboe part (Ob.) is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/8. It features a series of triplets and a final trill. The Piano part (Pno.) is written in a grand staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/8. It features complex chordal accompaniment with superposed fifths in the left hand and inverted added sixth chords in the right hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *f*.

This type of accompaniment, along with the chromatic oboe line, causes a sense of atonality or possibly bitonality throughout the movement; however, a few measures after the cadenza in measure 196, the harmony begins to focus almost entirely on E major. Starting in measure 243, the oboe line only consists of the notes B, E, and A while the piano is still moving between different tonal areas. By measure 248, the note A only exists in the piano and the last fourteen measures of both parts only consists of a whirlwind of the three notes until the trill in the oboe line. The oboe does not trill to an F-sharp but rather to an F-natural before landing on the final chord. The final tonality is still somewhat unclear; nonetheless, E major is still prevalent through the last part of this movement, acting as an introduction to the opening tonality of the Andante.

### III. Andante: *Le soir dans la campagne*

Still following the pastoral vein of the entire work, the title of this movement translates to “night in the countryside.” Its repeated notes, ornamented figures, soft dynamics, and unusual harmonies portray the tranquility and calmness of the evening. The opening figure, which is the basis for the entire movement, begins with a repeated B followed by an ornamental turn. In his notes, Koechlin describes this opening melody as “a pastoral air which arises in the luminous twilight.”<sup>26</sup> As Kirk points out, this opening motive undergoes a lengthy series of modulations through different tonal, whole-tone, and modal areas.<sup>27</sup> As this theme is expanded upon, the piano gradually becomes more complex in its harmonies. Initially, the piano has a tripartite texture with widely spaced chords, often made up of superposed intervals. This harmony goes through a number of different tonal areas before ending up with a long, sustained passage of parallel chords separated by the octave. In measure 27, the harmony is bitonal with simultaneous E-flat major and E major chords. Afterwards, there is a sustained fermata and one measure of silence. This is unusual for a solo work and may represent the stillness of the night. When the instruments reenter, the oboe plays the repeated opening figure while ascending chromatically. The piano moves in polychordal harmony until the climax in measure 32, which rests on a simultaneous E major triad and a C half-diminished triad while the oboe descends in whole tones.<sup>28</sup> The movement quickly calms and the tonality is still a bit unclear with an added F-sharp to the penultimate chord before it rests on an open fifth in E major.

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<sup>26</sup> Kirk, “The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin,” 182.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-185.

Example 8: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 3: mm. 29-32

The musical score for Example 8 consists of two staves: Oboe (Ob.) and Piano (Pno.). The Oboe part is in the treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a melodic line of eighth notes. A forte (*f*) dynamic is introduced in the second measure. The piece concludes with a triplet of sixteenth notes. The Piano part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features a complex accompaniment of chords and moving lines, with dynamics *p* and *f* indicated.

#### IV. Final: *La maison de campagne*

In his notes on this movement, Koechlin states “the overall mood is more familiar and less contemplative than the Andante but progressing later in the movement into bitonality.” The “familiar” which Koechlin refers to can be seen in the first section of the movement; its tonal center is firmly rooted in D major and energized by a type of Alberti bass in the piano accompaniment.<sup>29</sup> The overall structure of the movement consists of five different sections, each utilizing a different theme or a contrasting tempo to the surrounding sections. At measure 11, a sixteenth-note motive makes up the main theme and is extended and developed throughout the movement.

Example 9: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 11-19

The musical score for Example 9 consists of two staves of music. The top staff is in the treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic and a melodic line of sixteenth notes. A piano (*p*) dynamic is indicated at the end of the staff. The bottom staff is in the treble clef with the same key signature and a 4/4 time signature. It begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a melodic line of eighth notes. A pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic is indicated at the end of the staff.

<sup>29</sup> Kirk, “The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin,” 186-187.

The next section, starting at measure 48, recalls the opening motive of the first movement's initial theme; afterwards, this movement's main theme returns. Both of these themes continue to be used in alternation through the rest of this section until measure 92, where the tempo slows. The following tranquil section only lasts for nine measures yet both voices exhibit several instances of bitonality and unfamiliar themes such as a quintuplet in the oboe line. This passage acts as a transition for the next section, beginning in measure 100, which brings a return of the initial tempo and theme. Around measure 125, the oboe line begins moving in whole-tones, while the piano continuously plays the same rhythm with quick harmonic changes. This passage resembles the Scherzo movement with this type of rapid harmony as well as repetitive piano gestures. The thematic motive continues to be developed, moving in and out of different tonal and modal areas, until the climactic *fff* in measure 138. The oboe begins to slow and decrescendo while the accompaniment becomes more harmonically complex. Bitonality is abundant throughout this passage while the oboe meanders through a legato melody full of accidentals and interesting intervals.

The movement slows at the end instead of concluding fast and virtuosically like most finales. Eventually, the piano takes over the forward-moving role with continuous sixteenth notes as the oboe slows from constant eighths to quarter notes. From measure 181 until the end of the movement, the piano continues to play its sixteenth-note passages while the oboe slows even further until it has become almost a whisper on high register notes marked at *ppp*. In the final two measures, Koechlin once again uses a technique to cast doubt on the final tonality. The oboe and piano play G-sharp instead of G-natural until the final measure, in which the piano adjusts to G-natural, allowing the movement to end on an open fifth D major chord. The movement ends softly and tranquilly as the pastoral images continue to float in the air.

Example 10: Charles Koechlin, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 188-189

The image shows a musical score for Oboe and Piano. The Oboe part is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The Piano part is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) in the same key and time signature. The score is divided into two measures, 188 and 189. In measure 188, the Oboe plays a melodic line with a slur. The Piano part has a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and ties. In measure 189, the Oboe continues its melodic line. The Piano part has a different rhythmic pattern. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 at the end of measure 189.

After this period of solo sonatas, Koechlin limited his compositional activity and instead focused on a pedagogical career. There was to be a large gap of approximately twenty years between the *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* and the next work to feature the oboe: the *Septet for Wind Instruments*. Beginning in the mid-1930's, there was a definite change in Koechlin's compositional writing, which was probably due to his academic work on several aspects of musical composition. As mentioned above, Koechlin wrote several treatises including the *Traité de l'orchestration*, which includes chapters on various topics such as the characteristics and capabilities of each instrument, balance between multiple combinations of instruments, and diverse sonorities produced with these combinations. The most important for this discussion is the opening chapter of Volume I, which focuses on each instrument's capabilities, sonorities, problem areas, and general character. After this extensive research into each instrument's abilities, as well as the different types of sonorities which could be produced with certain combinations of instruments, Koechlin's compositions for winds changed significantly. This can be seen in the next few works to be discussed, especially in contrast to the previously discussed complexity of the *Oboe Sonata*.

## **Opus 165: *Septuor d'instruments à vent***

The Septet was written during Koechlin's trip to the United States in 1937. Its instrumentation is for flute, clarinet in A, oboe, English horn, alto saxophone, bassoon and horn. As O'Loughlin suggests, this instrumentation is unusual, and this piece is one of few works to use this specific group of instruments.<sup>30</sup> Even in his *Traite de l'orchestration*, Koechlin mentions this as an example of a difficult combination of wind sonorities.<sup>31</sup> Also important concerning this work is the incorporation of fugal movements. During Koechlin's research and teaching, the composer was passionately studying the works of Bach, which strengthened his counterpoint writing. This can be seen in his later works, especially in the fourth and sixth movements of the Septet.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, op. 165 was a work close to Koechlin's heart as the last fugal movement is based on a theme his son Yves used to sing.

### **I. *Monodie***

The opening movement was written as a monody for clarinet in A. In the composer's instructions to Collaer, Koechlin mentions the monody should "evolve with ease (however in time) and calmly without hurrying."<sup>33</sup> With short, legato phrases and lilting patterns which outline major triads, the melody evokes the cheerful mood which is present throughout most of the work and provides an introduction to the second pastoral-themed movement. The overall melody stays in the tonal area of G major until measure 13. At this point, the melody modulates to D-Lydian temporarily until being firmly rooted back in G major for the end of the movement.

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<sup>30</sup> O'Loughlin, "Portrait of Debussy 7," 996.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Koechlin, *Traité de l'Orchestration* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1954), 241-242.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Orledge, "Charles Koechlin," *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>33</sup> Kirk, "The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin," 269.



## II. Pastoral

The *Pastoral* introduces two more instruments to the clarinet: the flute and bassoon. Nevertheless, the majority of the movement still utilizes a soloist with the other two instruments sustaining long pedal-tone harmonies. The movement is in a rounded binary form with the opening and closing sections being slow recitative-like solos.<sup>34</sup> The first section opens with solo flute playing a lyrical melody in the high register. This melody is then imitated in alternation between all three instruments. While each solo melody is being played, the other two instruments sustain pedal tones.

Example 11: Charles Koechlin, *Septuor*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 1-7

The musical score for Example 11 consists of two systems of staves for Flute, Clarinet in A, and Bassoon. The first system covers measures 1-4. In measure 1, the Flute plays a melodic line starting on a high note, marked *p*. The Clarinet in A and Bassoon are silent. In measure 2, the Flute continues its melody, marked *pp*. The Clarinet in A and Bassoon remain silent. In measure 3, the Clarinet in A and Bassoon enter with a sustained pedal tone, marked *pp*. The Flute continues its melody, marked *pp*. In measure 4, the Flute concludes its phrase, marked *pp*. The Clarinet in A and Bassoon continue their pedal tones, marked *pp*. The second system covers measures 5-7. In measure 5, the Flute plays a melodic line, marked *pp*. The Clarinet in A and Bassoon continue their pedal tones, marked *pp*. In measure 6, the Clarinet in A and Bassoon continue their pedal tones, marked *pp*. The Flute continues its melody, marked *p*. In measure 7, the Flute concludes its phrase, marked *pp*. The Clarinet in A and Bassoon continue their pedal tones, marked *pp*.

<sup>34</sup> Keith Young, "The solo and chamber saxophone music of Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)," PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1991, 38.

These melodies, reminiscent of horn calls or a shepherd's tune, evoke the pastoral feeling clearly. The passing of this pastoral melody between the three instruments is similar to the opening of the fifth movement, *Allegretto*, from Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony no. 6 in F Major. The middle section, marked *Allegro moderato*, features all the instruments moving together in contrapuntal texture. The melody is lively and cheerful, perhaps suggesting the day has begun on the countryside. The final section, with the flute playing a solo similar to the beginning, seems to be evoking imagery of the sun setting at the end of the day. This serene setting leads into the following *Intermezzo*.

### **III. *Intermezzo***

The *Intermezzo* is the first instance of the entire ensemble performing; however, the texture is sparse until near the end of the movement. This gradual introduction of the other four instruments allows for a smooth transition from three instruments to the full septet. The movement begins with what Keith Young describes as a "cuckoo" motive which gets passed from voice to voice.<sup>35</sup> Koechlin states the attacks of these notes should be "very clear, without harshness."<sup>36</sup> Descending intervals of thirds and fifths (another instance of the fifth interval) make up this motive, which acts as an ostinato for lyrical passages.

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<sup>35</sup> Young, "The solo and chamber saxophone music of Charles Koechlin," 39.

<sup>36</sup> Kirk, "The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin," 269.

Example 12: Charles Koechlin, *Septuor*, Mvmt. 3: mm. 1-3

The musical score shows the following dynamics for each instrument across the three measures:

- Oboe:** *mp* in measure 1, *pp* in measure 2.
- English Horn:** *mp* in measure 1, *pp* in measure 2.
- Clarinet in A:** *p* in measure 3.
- Alto Sax.:** *p* in measure 3.
- Horn in F:** *mp* in measure 1, *pp* in measure 2.
- Bassoon:** *mp* in measure 1, *pp* in measure 2.

Later in the movement, this motive does stay in one instrument for an extended period of time yet usually accompanies at least one other voice. In the third measure, the flute enters with a lyrical line in the high register; this is then taken over by the clarinet in measure 10.

The *Intermezzo* does not have any clear, defined form yet it clearly builds and climaxes in measure 20 with multiple crescendos. The flute descends from the high register in a series of sixteenth notes and the movement begins to come to a calm, peaceful close. In the last three measures, a pattern of descending sixteenths gets passed around most of the instruments until closing on a unison *ppp* D in three voices. Closing the movement in such a way provides an introduction to the next movement: a flowing, lively fugue.

#### IV. Fugue

The first of two fugal movements uses the entire instrumental group in full force. As the title implies, the movement begins with a fugal exposition; a two-measure subject, introduced by the oboe, begins a series of subject and countersubject entrances.

Example 13: Charles Koechlin, *Septuor*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 1-4

The image displays two systems of musical notation for measures 1-4 of Charles Koechlin's *Septuor*, Movement 4. The first system shows the Oboe and English Horn parts. The Oboe part begins in measure 1 with a two-measure subject marked *p*. The English Horn part is silent in measures 1 and 2. The second system shows the Oboe and English Horn parts for measures 3 and 4. The Oboe part continues with a countersubject in measure 3, marked *pp*. The English Horn part enters in measure 3 with a countersubject marked *p*. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

Since the oboe and the English horn are the first two instruments to play the subject, these voices include a countersubject; however, the third subject iteration, presented by the saxophone, ends this trend. As the remaining voices play the subject, the other voices continue in a complex counterpoint until the climax at measure 16. The flute continues with a sequential development of the first two beats of the subject until measure 19. At this point, the texture thins, and the instrumental voices slow until the final measure. The tonal area of the last two measures is indistinct with A-naturals in place of A-sharps, implying a tonal area of B-Mixolydian as opposed to the opening key of B major.

## V. *Sérénité*

The fifth movement of the Septet provides a slow, contrasting movement to the lively fugal movements. Orledge describes this movement's character as, "The gem of the Septet... whose phrases starting on a repeated A immediately bring a feeling of stillness and inner peace after the chromatic activity of the previous fugue."<sup>37</sup> The saxophone's initial repeated legato A-naturals are accompanied by slow chordal changes in the lower voices. Through this hazy, dream-like atmosphere, the English horn emerges with a solo melody. This melody, moving mainly in a whole-tone scale, temporarily moves to the saxophone before returning to the English horn. Beginning in measure 15, the oboe and the flute emerge in the higher registers; the tempo then slows and the melody gradually disappears. Koechlin states in his instructions that "this (the *Sérénité*) should sound well if the exact nuances are observed. It is especially important that it be extremely calm and that the saxophone, horn, bassoon play *pp*."<sup>38</sup> If all of these matters are taken into account, the movement can be extremely hypnotic and calming before the final fugal movement.

## VI. *Fugue*

This exuberant Fugue's initial subject is based on a theme which Koechlin's son used to sing. First introduced by the horn, the subject is mainly stepwise with alternating quarter and eighth notes.

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<sup>37</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 178.

<sup>38</sup> Kirk, "The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin," 270.

Example 14: Charles Koechlin, *Septuor*, Mvmt. 6: mm. 1-6

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Alto Saxophone, Horn in F, and Clarinet in A. The score is in 12/8 time and F# major. The first system (measures 1-3) shows the Alto Saxophone and Clarinet in A with rests, while the Horn in F plays a melodic line starting at measure 1, marked *mf*, and reaching *f* by measure 6. The second system (measures 4-6) shows the Alto Saxophone and Horn continuing their melodic lines with dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *mf*.

Koechlin warns that the players should not accent the quarter notes, which would result in a liling pattern.<sup>39</sup> Care should be taken to make the melody as smooth as possible with all the articulation. The subject is presented in each voice at alternating tonic and dominant levels. After the initial statements of the subject, each voice continues with motives introduced in the subject and countersubject until the *animato* section at measure 30. At this point, the clarinet presents an augmented version of the subject while the other voices mimic this new subject as well as the original motives. This texture continues until landing on open fifths at measure 42. The following section, marked *très animé*, is treated like a coda with flourishing lines of continuous eighth notes moving through different voices. The end of the movement includes about two

<sup>39</sup> Charles Koechlin, *Septuor d'instruments à vent* (Paris: Éditions de L'oiseau Lyre, 1947).

measures of descending eighth notes leading towards open fifths of A and E. Once again, the tonal area of the end is ambiguous with D-sharps being added to these descending lines.

The Septet is a wonderful example of Koechlin's chamber music. Its seemingly simplistic sound cannot convey the difficulty of the instrumental parts. Each part is meticulously marked with dynamics, articulation and performance instructions. The work as a whole also features some of Koechlin's masterful counterpoint, multiple timbres and colors, as well as multiple harmonic progressions. The next piece that features the oboe, however, shows a somewhat simpler style of composition in terms of harmonic progressions and formal structures.

### **Opus 179: Quatorze pieces pour hautbois, hautbois d'amour, cor anglais et piano**

Composed in 1942, op. 179 reflects Koechlin's evolution to a simpler style in comparison to the complex writing of the solo sonatas in his earlier period. As mentioned above, after Koechlin's extensive research on all of the instruments, the composer began writing more works for wind instruments and in a more idiomatic style than previously written. Around this time, Koechlin wrote several collections similar to op. 179 including Fourteen Pieces for Clarinet and Piano (op. 178), Fifteen Pieces for Horn and Piano (op. 180), and Fifteen Pieces for Alto Saxophone and Piano (op. 188).<sup>40</sup>

This particular set of pieces for the oboe family seems to be inspired by the moderate tempos, simple melodies, and dance-like qualities of folksong. Some of the movements can be played on oboe d'amore instead of oboe (nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 12) while nos. 13 and 14 are written specifically for English horn. Even though each piece fits well within the complete set, it seems Koechlin did not conceive these pieces as a tightly-knit multi-section work. Because of this, Koechlin was not opposed to the extraction or reordering of these movements.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 207.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

Some of the movements are written in the style of Baroque dances such as the gigue whereas some are slow and lyrical. In the accompaniment, the piano usually provides relatively simple support with the right hand imitating the solo line. In terms of form, most of the movements are through-composed. The main motive or theme introduced within the first couple of measures is usually expanded upon or developed throughout the rest of the movement. The same can be said for the accompaniment; the harmony often expands and moves through several different tonal areas along with the solo line. Since many of the movements contain similar characteristics, and due to the overall length of op. 179, there is not sufficient space in this document to discuss each piece individually. Below is a chart of each of the movements, its instrumentation, main tonal area (if applicable), formal characteristics and overall characteristics of each piece in terms of meter, solo and accompaniment qualities, and overall general musical qualities of the movement.

Table 1: Charles Koechlin, *Quatorze Pieces for Oboe, Oboe d'amore, English horn and piano* (characteristics)

<b>Movement/Title</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Main Tonal Area</b>	<b>Formal Characteristics</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
1. <i>Andante con moto, quasi allegretto moderato</i>	Oboe or Oboe d'amore	G major	Through-composed	Duple meter. Shorter phrases underneath a longer phrase. Harmonic development moves quickly. Repetitions and expansions of theme.
2. <i>Allegretto, pas vite (plutôt andantino)</i>	Oboe or Oboe d'amore	A minor	Through-composed	Triple meter. Light, bouncy character. Not too fast. Sections contrasted by differing articulations.
3. <i>Andante (Presque adagio à la blanche)</i>	Oboe or Oboe d'amore	Mixolydian	Three contrasting sections	Duple meter. Generally same interval patterns moving through different modal areas. Long, legato phrases approximately 7-10 measures each. Superposed fourth and fifth intervals in accompaniment.
4. <i>Allegro, assez animé, gai, solide</i>	Oboe	D major	Through-composed	More active and articulated. First and third sections contain approx. 8-10 beats per measure. Middle section more metrical with 4 beats per measure.
5. <i>Très doux, presque adagio</i>	Oboe or Oboe d'amore	F major	Free/motivic development	Unmeasured. Dance-like quality. Long phrases of continuous eighths. Piano's quarter note to eighth note



				pattern results in a lilting, forward-moving character.
6. <i>Allegretto con moto</i>	Oboe	A major	Binary	Fast, compound meter. In the style of a gigue. Imitation in both sections.
7. <i>Andante Presque adagio</i>	Oboe	G minor	Free/unstructured	Alternating meters. Slow and melodious solo line with phrases lasting up to 10 measures. Compact vs. widely-spaced chordal accomp.
8. <i>Allegretto, assez tranquille, Presque andantino</i>	Oboe	~E minor	Through-composed	Compound triple and duple meter. Forward-motion. First section is a sequential repetition of opening motive. Second section more melodic and thematic.
9. <i>Lent, adagio</i>	Oboe	Not specific	Quasi-fugal/free	Unmetered and barlines only delineate phrases. Quasi-fugal subject with the entrance of four different voices. As voices enter, it becomes more atonal and chromatic.
10. <i>Allegro, très décidé, clair et gai</i>	Oboe	F major	Binary	Compound meter. Reminiscent of a gigue. Harmonically stable. Interplay between oboe and piano lines.
11. <i>Allegretto con moto</i>	Oboe	~B-flat major	Ternary	Sections delineated by double bars. Shifting meters. Lively character. Little more virtuosic than other movements. Unclear tonal center at the end.
12. -----	Oboe or Oboe d'amore	E-flat major	Through-composed	Quadruple meter. Legato melody. Expansion and evolution of melodies.
13. <i>Adagio à la blanche</i>	English horn	F minor	Free	Duple meter. Long, legato phrases (up to nine measures) with no rhythmic complexity. Pedal tones and open fifths in accompaniment.
14. <i>Allegro con moto</i>	English horn	Not specific	Free	Regal and stately. Virtuoso solo line over pedal tones and widely spaced chords in the accomp. Shorter melodic fragments sometimes delineated by fermatas.

### Opus 185: Suite pour Cor anglais seul (ou Hautbois d'amour ou Hautbois baryton)

During Koechlin's final period of composition, he wrote several monodic compositions. Monody, as defined here, is a synonym for monophonic writing consisting of a single melodic line with no accompaniment. The term monody was also coined for 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian solo song with light accompaniment. This type of monody consisted of a lyric or dramatic character and

was often based on some type of poetic text. The dramatic monody was less virtuosic than the lyrical and attempted to follow a speech-like style with accentual patterns and a free rhythmic style. The lyrical monody was mostly through-composed and used several devices for text expression such as sequential repetition, chromaticism, and extreme dissonances. Even though Koechlin's monodies were written as unaccompanied solo lines, some of the characteristics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century style of lyric and dramatic monody can be seen in these compositions.

Since Koechlin was always focused on melody above all else, it is not surprising the composer found a musical outlet which focused almost entirely on this aspect. According to Orledge, Koechlin wrote op. 185 as a type of commentary on George Sand's *Les maîtres sonneurs* (1852); however, there is no indication of this on the manuscript.<sup>42</sup> Sand's novel was based on village bagpipe players who lived in the south of Paris and were similar to the Meistersinger guilds.<sup>43</sup> Even though there is no direct link to this in the music, it might be helpful to the performer to channel this idea while playing the slow movements.

All the movements of the Suite are unmeasured and unmetered; the only bar lines which exist are double bars to show the different sections. The overall scheme of movements features a classical organization of slow-fast-slow-fast tempos. Extensive melodic passages moving in whole-tones and chromatic intervals characterize the slow movements while wide melodic intervals and heavily articulated sections make up the fast movements. The entire instrument's capabilities are utilized with a full range of dynamics, extreme registers, long phrases, and periods of extended articulation.

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<sup>42</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 210.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Koechlin, *Chamber Works for Oboe*, CPO 1999, compact disc.

### **I. *Mélopée pour s'évader du réel***

The first movement's title roughly translates as "a chant to escape from reality." Long, legato phrases and slow melodic rhythms provide an almost hypnotic quality. The dynamics move in and out of soft and loud without staying in one area too long. The high register is employed, perhaps to exploit the English horn's timbre in this register. Several passages are marked *tranquille* as well as *calme* so the movement slowly strides along for several minutes. With no clear form or repetition of any kind, the movement remains in a sort of static state and sounds improvisatory. This style clearly contrasts with the more structured approach of the second movement.

### **II. Scherzo: *Danse des faunes***

The themes presented in this movement resemble the themes used in the second movement of the Oboe Sonata. Since Koechlin was known for recycling his own music, this should not be surprising; however, the second movement of the Suite features two themes, which were used in the second movement of Koechlin's Symphony no. 2.<sup>44</sup> In fact, at the bottom of the first page of this movement, Koechlin notes next to the title, "Used for the Scherzo of my Symphony."<sup>45</sup> The overall movement is in ternary form with the repeated A section inverting the theme of the first A section. The B section features more articulation and substantially different themes than those presented in the A sections. The A sections include many large interval jumps under slurs as well as quick dynamic changes. The B section's melodies are more compact with stepwise and chromatic intervals yet include a combination of slurred and articulated passages.

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<sup>44</sup> Cathé, Philippe, Sylvie Douche, and Michel Duchesneau, *Charles Koechlin: Compositeur et humaniste* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2010), 278-282.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Koechlin, *Suite pour cor anglais seul ou hautbois d'amour ou hautbois baryton* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1991).

### **III. *Plainte Nocturne***

The third movement, with *Nocturne* in the title, evokes a sense of the darkness and calmness of the evening. The melody generally stays in the upper register and features long phrases. Between some of these phrases are fermatas followed by moments of rest before the next phrase begins. This provides some mystery and tension to the overall mood. The dynamics stay soft until the movement builds to *ff* and the melody resides in the highest register for an extended period of time. Leading up to this point, the overall line is ascending. Afterwards, the line slowly descends from the high register and the dynamics become softer until two fermatas at the end at *ppp*. Once again, this movement ends peacefully before the virtuosic finale.

### **IV. Final: *L'âme libre et fantasque***

The title of this movement represents a free and whimsical spirit. It is also the title of the second movement of Koechlin's Second Symphony. This movement, like the Scherzo, also generates themes and combinations of motives used in the Symphony.<sup>46</sup> Without any clear form, the themes and motives are developed extensively. Typical motives are slurred, long phrases of alternating intervals of seconds and thirds, passages of articulated large intervals, as well as several short, thematic phrases in succession. Interestingly, in the middle of this chaos is an *Andante* section which only lasts for a line before moving back to the original tempo. Another *Andante* section occurs near the end before moving to an even slower *Lento* section. As is typical of Koechlin's solo works, the *Lento* actually closes the entire Suite on the lowest note of the instrument at a dynamic of *pp*. This is perhaps anti-climactic after the virtuosity of the preceding passages; however, as we have seen previously, this was a common practice of Koechlin and would not be much different in his Sonatines for Oboe d'amore.

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<sup>46</sup> Cathé, *Charles Koechlin: Compositeur et humaniste*, 278-282.

## Opus 194: Deux sonatines pour hautbois d'amour et orchestra de chambre

The two sonatines for oboe d'amore were written 1942-1943. All the movements originated as nine pieces to be performed together; however, Koechlin later formed two different sonatines from these movements resulting in numbers 1, 2, 7, 5 and 4 forming the *Première sonatine* while numbers 8, 3, 6 and 9 formed the *Deuxième sonatine*. The instrumentation for these two works, in addition to the oboe d'amore solo, includes a string sextet (2 violins, 2 violas and 2 cellos) as well as the occasional addition of flute, clarinet and clavecin. Due to the instrumentation changes, as well as all movements being conceived as a large work initially, it would seem understandable to reorder or combine movements from both sonatines depending on the performer's interpretation and instrumentation needs. The two tables below show the movement/title of each of the sonatines as well as the instrumentation, main tonal area, formal characteristics, and general characteristics for each movement.

Table 2: Charles Koechlin, *Première sonatine* (characteristics for each movement)

### Opus 194: Première sonatine

Movement/Title	Instrumentation	Main Tonal Area	Formal Characteristics	Characteristics
<i>Andante quasi adagio</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet	E-flat minor	Through-composed	Muted strings producing pedal chords and cello string tuned to B-flat. Accompaniment composed of chords produced by superposed fifths, and stacked thirds to produce ninth chords. Theme is continuously developed.
<i>Andantino con moto (Presque allegretto)</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet, flute, clarinet, clavecin	E-flat major	Ternary form	Dance-like. Main thematic area is repeated six times in first section at different keys. After a development, the theme returns briefly. Melody feels duple yet accompaniment in triple.
<i>Andantino assez allant</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet, flute, clarinet, clavecin	G-flat major	Through-composed	Flowing lines. Theme is developed throughout different tonal areas. Imitative counterpoint between two instruments along with oboe d'amore. Limited sustained harmonic accompaniment.
<i>Andante con moto (Presque allegro)</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet	G major	Through-composed	Theme is repeated and varies each time. Phrases up to eight measures

<i>moderato</i> )				long. Movement is mostly in intervals of seconds and thirds. Light string accompaniment.
<i>Allegro moderato</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet, flute, clarinet, clavecin	A minor	Through-composed	Frequent meter shifts. Light, forward-moving melody which continues to be developed. Use of harmonics and polytonality in strings. Flute and clarinet tend to fill in while the oboe d'amore is sustained.

Table 3: Charles Koechlin, *Deuxieme sonatine* (characteristics for each movement)**Opus 194: Deuxième sonatine**

Movement/Title	Instrumentation	Main Tonal Area	Formal Characteristics	Characteristics
<i>Andante très calme, Presque adagio (Mysterieux, lointain)</i>	Ob. d'amore, strings (violas, cellos), flute, clarinet, clavecin	A-flat minor	Rounded binary form	Frequent meter shifts. Quartet texture with flute, clarinet and viola used to imitate the opening theme. The opening theme returns later in the movement before it is developed further.
<i>Andante con moto</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet	F major	Binary form	Duple meter. Accompaniment uses only strings playing primarily sustained harmonies. The theme, mostly stepwise, returns a second time and is developed further than the first entrance.
<i>Presque adagio</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet, flute, clavecin	No clear tonal center	Binary form	Use of accidentals makes the tonal center unclear and lends a modal flavor to the melody. Counterpoint in the strings. The theme is a canon between the oboe d'amore and the flute. Unclear tonal ending.
<i>Final: Allegro</i>	Ob. d'amore, string sextet, flute, clarinet, clavecin	A major	Rounded binary form	Fastest of all movements including the Première sonatine. Theme is highly active and often accentuates the offbeats. Lively and upbeat with primarily pizzicato strings as accompaniment.

**Opus 206: Trio d'anches (pour hautbois, clarinette et bassoon)**

Op. 206 was written in 1945. In a letter to Collaer, Koechlin described this work as “a continuation in a series of more accessible chamber works” begun with his earlier woodwind

Trio, the *Primavera* Quintet and the *Septuor*.<sup>47</sup> The Trio is set in a traditional slow-fast-slow-fast movement structure and its overall character is reminiscent of a 17<sup>th</sup> century style of composition. Each movement is carefully structured and is less contrapuntally complex than the previous Septet; however, this by no means lessens this work's merit. Instead, Koechlin melds precise counterpoint, fugal forms, and balanced phrases with his development of themes, modal inflections and an expansive Finale utilizing three different themes in conjunction with one another through several different sections.

### **I. Choral**

The first movement of the trio is set in the form of a chorale and is harmonically stable in the key of A minor. Typical of a chorale setting, the tempo is slow and the counterpoint is carefully structured throughout all three voices. The counterpoint often features parallel motion in thirds between two of the voices with contrary motion in the third voice. Continuous motion is achieved throughout all of the voices except for the four main cadential points. Phrases are often balanced and the melodies are in stepwise motion. The final section, which is labeled *quite calm*, moves towards the final measure of an open fifth at *ppp*. This solemn opening movement provides an introduction to the following fugal movement.

### **II. Fugue**

The Fugue features a ternary form with the A sections presenting the main subject. A twelve-measure subject with its repetitions makes up the entire A section. The subject itself has memorable motives of alternating eighth and sixteenth note groupings including an introductory measure outlining the dominant.

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<sup>47</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 211.

Example 15: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 1-12

Bassoon

mf mp mf

5 f mp

9 mf f

Bassoon introduces the subject in its entirety and is then repeated by the flute and the clarinet with minimal accompaniment. The B section begins with each instrument playing a two-measure countersubject followed by a subsequent section of two voices moving in parallel thirds.

Example 16: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 2: mm. 37-42

Oboe

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Bassoon

p

4

Ob.

B $\flat$  Cl.

Bsn.

p



The flute, added as a third voice, uses motives from the main subject until the clarinet plays the countersubject as a solo. The two-measure countersubject provides an introduction to the second A section. In staggered entrances, the A section includes the beginning of the main subject in each voice, yet quickly veers off path. In a flourish of activity, all the voices frequently reiterate the motives of the main subject as well as the countersubject while each voice moves independently of each other. The introductory measure of the main subject is used later in a sequential development, allowing the modulation from G-Lydian to G-Mixolydian.<sup>48</sup> The final three measures do not even bring all three voices to a close together as the introductory measure is repeated one last time in alternation.

### **III. *Andante***

The third movement, marked simply as *Andante*, features Koechlin's monodic writing once again as the movement opens with an oboe solo for the first 25 measures. This opening solo is in the key of D major; however, with chromatic alterations of C-natural and C-sharp as well as G-natural and G-sharp, the melody is tinged with Lydian and Mixolydian inflections.<sup>49</sup> The rhythm and length of phrases is also reminiscent of a Baroque sarabande with a dotted note on the second beat and phrase lengths of 4-8 measures. After four measures of clarinet and bassoon, the oboe reenters with a second melody while the clarinet and bassoon provide accompaniment. This melody resembles the first with its rhythm and overall structure; however, the lines tend to rise and fall much further than the previous. At measure 57, the bassoon enters with the initial oboe melody in almost an exact repetition. After a few measures, the clarinet enters with imitative counterpoint while the bassoon continues the melody in its entirety. Once this melody has finished, the oboe reenters as the solo line with a repetition of the second melody transposed

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<sup>48</sup> Kirk, "The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin," 304.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

a third down from the original. The melody ends only two measures earlier than the original and the next few measures all voices outline a dominant to tonic motion. The last eight measures function as a coda as the movement closes quietly.

#### IV. Final

The finale of the trio is lively and extensive with the use of several themes throughout multiple sections of the work. There are approximately thirteen sections of varying lengths featuring different combinations of three themes, which are developed and modified. Theme A, theme B, theme B with a counterpoint theme B2, and theme C are cited in the examples below.

Example 17: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 1-2 (Theme A)

Example 17 shows the first two measures of Theme A. The Oboe part is mostly rests. The Clarinet in B $\flat$  part starts with a melody in the first measure, followed by a rest in the second measure. The Bassoon part has a melodic line in the first measure, a rest in the second measure, and a melodic line in the third measure. The dynamic marking *f* is present below the Clarinet and Bassoon staves.

Example 18: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 4: m. 8 (Theme B)

Example 18 shows the eighth measure of Theme B. The Oboe part starts with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by rests. The Clarinet in B $\flat$  part is mostly rests. The Bassoon part has a melodic line in the first measure, followed by rests. The dynamic marking *p* is present below the Oboe staff, and *mp* is present below the Bassoon staff.

Example 19: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 24-26 (Theme B with B2)

Example 20: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 4: mm. 66-69 (Theme C)

The complexity of the movement is caused by multiple tempo changes, variations of the themes, and contrapuntal movement. Reiterations of the themes, sometimes buried within a thick texture, must be brought to the forefront; however, sometimes these themes have been developed so extensively they may be hard to recognize. The table below represents the different sections, their location within the movement, and what themes are used.

Table 4: Charles Koechlin, *Trio d'anches*, Mvmt. 4: Sections and Themes used

Section	Measures	Motives	Section	Measures	Motives	Section	Measures	Motives
1	1-17	A	6	37-42	B/B2	11	100-114	B/C
2	8-17	B	7	43-65	“A”/”B”	12	115-121	B/B2
3	18-23	A	8	66-79	C	13	122-124	B/”A”
4	24-27	B/B2	9	80-91	B/B2/A			
5	28-36	A	10	92-99	A/C			

### **Opus 213: 2 monodies for oboe from 12 monodies for wind instruments**

The four following movements from two works (op. 213 and op. 216) represent extensive monodic writing from the composer. Each of the pieces have similarities, yet, like most of his works, can be distinguished from one another by the musical character. From 1947-1948, when op. 213 was written, Koechlin was an examiner at the St. Etienne Conservatory. While in residence, the Conservatory commissioned some sight-reading pieces for their examinations which Koechlin then added to his existing oeuvre. Op. 213 includes two monodies each for flute, clarinet, bassoon, oboe, and one monody each for alto saxophone, trombone, trumpet, and horn. The third and fourth monodies of this collection are specifically for oboe and Koechlin writes that the second monody is more difficult than the first. This probably referred more to the sight-reading difficulty than to any musical or technical problems.<sup>50</sup>

The first monody is “in the character of a minuet.”<sup>51</sup> It is also clearly in a ternary form with a repeat of the A section after a contrasting *Scherzando* section. The A section begins in G minor. The first eight measures are in a balanced sentence form with a four-measure antecedent phrase followed by a four-measure consequent phrase. Following this, a similar motive undergoes sequential development ending in the key of C minor. The B section, or *Scherzando*, has a lighter character beginning in F major. The key quickly modulates and ends the section in C major. The repeat of the A section begins with the exact repetition of the opening eight measure sentence in G minor; however, the following sequential measures modulate to D-Phrygian rather than C minor. Since D-Phrygian has the same notes as G minor, the coda in the last twelve measures moves seamlessly back to G minor at the close of the monody.

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<sup>50</sup> Charles Koechlin, *2 Monodies extradites des 12 monodies pour instruments a vent opus 213 pour hautbois* (Paris: Gerard Billaudot Editeur, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

The second monody sounds more improvisatory, yet is marked without rubato and the tempo should be strict. Each rhythm is precise with quintuplets, sextuplets, and septuplets clearly written out. Instead of a structured form, like the first monody, this monody is more free-flowing with a fantasia-like melody, ebbing and flowing throughout all registers of the oboe. The range covers the conventional span of the oboe from B-flat to G with often more than an octave span under slurs. This movement clearly establishes a tonal center of C minor with its minor triad being outlined within the first four measures. Throughout the work, the melody stays closely related to C minor; however, it quickly moves in and out of modal melodies such as C-Dorian and G-Aeolian. This can be seen with a tonal center of C still present with A-naturals and a tonal center of G with A-flats being absent. After the complex rhythms and virtuosity of the middle section, the movement begins to slow and finally lands back in the realm of C minor within the last three measures.

### **Opus 216: 11 Monodies pour instruments à vent (Nos. 10 and 11)**

Op. 216 is primarily written for clarinet in A (numbers 1-8). Numbers 9, 10 and 11 are written for clarinet in B-flat, oboe d'amore (or soprano saxophone or clarinet in A), and English horn respectively. Most of the movements presented in this collection of monodies have a title suggesting the ideas of the pastoral or nature; for example, *Le faune*, *La mer aux bruits innombrables*, and *La chasse d'Artemis*. Three of the works do not have a title, including number 11, the Monody for English horn. In standing with the pastoral theme of op. 216, it should not be surprising the oboe d'amore monody is entitled *Le repos de Tityre* (The Rest of Tityrus).

**No. 10: *Le repos de Tityre (pour hautbois d'amour, soprano saxophone ou clarinet)***

This work represents another group of inspiration that Orledge mentioned in his biography: ancient Roman civilization, especially as portrayed in the poetry of Virgil.<sup>52</sup>

According to a letter by Koechlin's son Yves, the programmatic title was inspired by the pastoral song written by Virgil in his *Eclogues*.<sup>53</sup> In the first couple of verses, Melibœus, who has left his homeland to go to Rome, addresses Tityrus, who is still peacefully residing in their rural homeland:

**Melibœus:**

O Tityrus, at ease recumbent laid, Beneath the spreading beech's cooling shade,  
You pour sweet strains from your melodious pipe, And charm the ear with rapturous delight.  
We leave our country, our enchanting fields, And with them everything that pleasure yields,  
While you, inspired with love's delightful flame, Make woods resound fair Amaryllis' name.

**Tityrus:**

A God, O Melibœus, grants this rest, For he will prove a God when I'm distressed.  
A tender lamb shall off his altar slain: 'Tis he permits my flocks to roam the plain,  
And me to play at ease my moral strain.<sup>54</sup>

The opening theme evokes an image of this peaceful, pastoral setting with Tityrus playing his pipe. Its sounds like a simple melody to begin with, outlining the notes of a triad, yet afterwards begins to sound improvisatory with its long, flowing descent in the Mixolydian mode.

Example 21: Charles Koechlin, *Le repos de Tityre*: main theme



Throughout the movement, the theme is heard periodically at different modal centers. Outside of the theme, the melody is presented in long phrases in mostly stepwise motion. Sequential

<sup>52</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 226.

<sup>53</sup> Young, "The solo and chamber saxophone music of Charles Koechlin," 79-80.

<sup>54</sup> Virgil, *The pastoral songs of P. Virgil Maro. To which are added, poems sentimental and descriptive*, by John Miller Russell, A.M. Published according to act of Congress. Boston, 1799. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Kansas Libraries. 15 Apr. 2015.

[http://find.galegroup.com/www2.lib.ku.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=kss+tate\\_ukans&tabID=T001&docId=CB127047587&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com/www2.lib.ku.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=kss+tate_ukans&tabID=T001&docId=CB127047587&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE).

developments in triadic movement aid in the transitions of tonal areas. Overall, the dynamics are subdued until the melody prepares to enter the high range. In his treatise, Koechlin mentions the higher range of the oboe d'amore, especially after the high C, tends to be the least stable of notes on the instrument; however, he also describes this sonority as "rather put out and anxious (and) may have its use in more than once case." He goes on to say the oboe, in this range, would be much too clear and piercing. This is of course in the context of orchestration doubling; yet Koechlin was aware of this instrument's sonority in all its registers and wrote for it appropriately.<sup>55</sup>

### **No. 11: *Monodie pour Cor Anglais***

The last movement of op. 216 is a monody for English horn with no descriptive title; however, Koechlin had a specific idea about the English horn's characteristics and this chromatic, modally-infused melody is full of mystery and anxiety. In his *Traité de l'orchestration*, Koechlin describes the English horn: "The English horn's character does not have as much diversity as the oboe. It is almost always nostalgic; its veiled timbre almost irresistibly suggests distant mist and dream landscapes, or mysterious apparitions." He then goes on to reference the English horn solos of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and *Le damnation de Faust*, Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and Debussy's *Nocturnes*.<sup>56</sup>

This monody for English horn conveys the instrument's character as described by Koechlin. The instructions at the beginning of the work translates to "almost adagio, very expressive." There is no set form and the melodic phrases often span four or five measures at a time. The melody ascends and descends chromatically with interval leaps usually spanning a fourth, fifth or octave. Moving through a series of modes, the melody begins and ends in G-

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<sup>55</sup> Koechlin, *Traité de l'orchestration*. 21-27.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-29.

Phrygian with several different modulations occurring in the middle. Often, these modulations are obscured by the use of an accidental changing frequently on one note. Koechlin utilizes the entire range of the English horn throughout this work; however, most of the time, the melody is in the upper register. The lowest register is usually reserved for points of arrival.

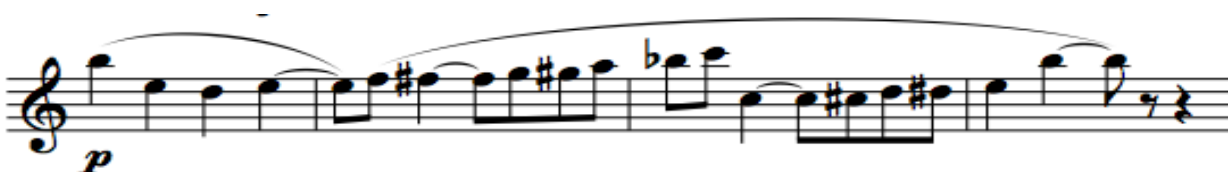
Two different themes occur throughout this work. The first appears at the beginning and goes through measure 4.

Example 22: Charles Koechlin, *Monody for English horn*: mm. 1-4 (Theme)



Example 23: Charles Koechlin, *Monody for English horn*: mm. 13-16 (Theme inverted)

This theme occurs again at measure 13 yet it is inverted and is difficult to hear.



The second theme is represented by sequential passages of quarter notes (often during modal modulations) such as in measure 25. It is also used as a way to smoothly move from the upper to lower register and usually prepares a low register arrival on the tonic note. Both the *Monody for English horn* and *Le repos de Tityre* present different characters and images for the musician and audience. While *Le repos de Tityre* provides a lyrical, calm, and melodious pastoral setting, the *Monody* provides darkness, mystery, and a sense of anguish with several instances of tension and release.

These two monodies are some of Koechlin's last compositions featuring instruments of the oboe family. The last work to feature the oboe was the *Oboe Septet*, op. 221. Unfortunately,



the score or manuscript was unavailable for consultation because it has not been published.

Koechlin also began to write a quartet named *Hommage au Canard* for oboe, oboe d'amore, English horn, and baritone oboe; unfortunately, the work remained incomplete before Koechlin died.

## **Conclusion**

Koechlin has become more recognized as a composer with the more recent publications of his work, mainly by Eschig Editions. Most of the works discussed above have been published; however, some have been discontinued from publication or are unavailable outside of manuscript form. Some of Koechlin's works featuring the oboe have been recorded by professional oboists such as Lajos Lencses (*Charles Koechlin: Oeuvres pour Hautbois, Hautbois d'amour, Cor Anglais; Musique de Nuit; Charles Koechlin: Chamber Works for Oboe*) Jeffrey Rathbun (*Color Factory*), and Matthias Arter (*Charles Koechlin: Complete Music for Oboe*).

This document should assist the oboist in recognizing the musicality and accessibility of these works as well as the different genres in which Koechlin wrote for the oboe family. Future research on these works will hopefully provide a more in-depth theoretical analysis of the composer's unique compositional approach. A performer's guide to each individual work will assist the performer in musical choices and interpretations. A comparative study of Koechlin's manuscripts along with each work's available publications may reveal some discrepancies in terms of tempo and markings. For example, in the end of the first movement of the Sonata for Oboe and Piano, there are several indications for the tempo to slow; yet, there are no specific instructions as to how much this tempo should fluctuate. In all of these works, the breath marks are also unclear as to whether they are actually intended for breathing or for the separation of

phrases. Perhaps a study of the composer's manuscripts and other works will aid the performer in deciphering the unclear instructions and markings.

Koechlin's compositional style was original in numerous ways and his view of music being from a truly personal and artistic perspective, rather than for any convention's sake, makes his music somewhat introspective and difficult to understand on the first listen. After studying and listening to each of these works, one can see the composer's compositional point of view, unconventional as it is, and his undying devotion to his music. As Koechlin once remarked:

The life of an artist who dreams above all of beauty, is one of the most enviable in existence. Above all, it leaves us free and permits us to elevate ourselves towards the ideal. This freedom is to be oneself, to write for oneself in one's ivory tower, from which light radiates far and wide over the world like a beacon.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 18.

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