

Satie Notes

These "Satie Notes" are a revised version of a program booklet that I created for the 1991 Summergarden Concert Series of the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. The major typographical revisions bring to the fore an aspect ignored in the original i.e. that these notes represent a three-voiced conversation. *Satie always speaks in italics, and if he himself used italics, we add an underline.* My comments are in normal type. "Everyone else is within quotation marks". A PDF of the original programs is included, as it was my pleasure, great honor and privilege to have worked with all of the many performers.

PZ
June, 2011

Introduction

"A strange voluble little man in his fifties came over to me and led me to one of my paintings. Strange, because he seemed out of place in this gathering of younger men. With a little white beard, an old-fashioned pince-nez, black bowler hat, black overcoat and umbrella, he looked like an undertaker or an employee of some conservative bank. I was tired with the preparations of the opening, the gallery had no heat, I shivered and said in English that I was cold. He replied in English, took my arm, and led me out of the gallery to a corner café, where he ordered hot grogs. Introducing himself as Erik Satie, he relapsed into French, which I informed him I did not understand. With a twinkle in his eye he said it did not matter. We had a couple of additional grogs; I began to feel warm and lightheaded. Leaving the café, we passed a shop where various household utensils were spread out in front. I picked up a flatiron, the kind used on coal stoves, asked Satie to come inside with me, where, with his help, I acquired a box of tacks and a tube of glue. Back at the gallery I glued a row of tacks to the smooth surface of the iron, titled it, The Gift, and added it to the exhibition. This was my first Dada object in France." ¹

ODD CORNERS OF MY LIFE

The origins of the Saties probably go back to ancient times. Oh yes ... I can't confirm anything on this point — but neither can I unconfirm it.

However, I presume that the family was not part of the nobility (nor even the papacy); that its members were good and humble serfs, and that was once an honour and a pleasure (for the serf's overlord, of course). Oh yes ...

I don't know what the Saties did in the Hundred Years War; nor have I any information on their attitude and the part they played in the Thirty Years War (one of our loveliest wars).

Let the memory of my ancient ancestors rest in peace. Oh yes ...

Let us pass on. I shall come back to this subject later.

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As for me, I was born in Honfleur (Calvados), in the Pont-l'Évêque district, on 17 May 1866 ... So that makes me a quinquagenarian, and I might as well be called that as anything else.

Honfleur is a small town watered by the poetic waves of the Seine and — in complicity — the tumultuous ones of the Channel. Its inhabitants (honfleurais) are very polite and very agreeable. Oh yes ...

I remained in that city until I was twelve (1878) and then moved to Paris. ... My childhood and adolescence were undistinguished — nothing happened worth recording in serious writings. So I shall say nothing of them.

Let us pass on. I shall come back to this subject later.

*

I'm burning to give you my description here (enumeration of my physical particulars — the ones I can mention decently, that is): ... Hair and eyebrows dark auburn; eyes grey (probably clouded); hair covering forehead; nose long; mouth medium; chin wide; face oval. Height 1 metre 67 centimetres.

The description on this document dates from 1887, the time when I did military service in the 33rd Infantry Regiment at Arras (Pas-de-Calais). It would not fit me today.

I'm sorry I can't give you my digital (finger) prints. Oh yes. I don't have them on me, and these special reproductions are not good to look at (they look like Vuillermoz and Laloy combined).

Let us pass on. I shall come back to this subject later.

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Following a rather short adolescence, I became an ordinary young man, tolerable but no more. At that moment in my life I began to think and to write music. Oh yes.

Wretched idea! . . . very wretched idea!

It certainly was, for I lost no time in developing an unpleasant (original) originality, irrelevant, anti-French, unnatural, etc....

Then life became so impossible for me that I resolved to retire to my estates and pass the rest of my days in an ivory tower — or one of some other (metallic) metal.

That is why I acquired a taste for misanthropy; why I nurtured hypochondria; why I became the most (leaden-like) miserable of men. It distressed people to look at me — even through half-marked gold eye-glasses. Oh yes. And all this happened to me because of Music. That art has done me more harm than good, really: it has made me quarrel with people of quality, most honourable, more-than-distinguished, terribly genteel people. Let us pass on. I shall come back to this subject later.

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As a person, I am neither good nor bad. I waver between the two, so to speak. So I have never really done harm to anyone — nor good, come to that.

All the same, I have plenty of enemies — loyal enemies, of course. Why? For the most part, it is because they don't know me — or only know me secondhand, in short, through hearsay (lies worse than death).

Man can never be perfect. I bear no grudge against them: they are the main victims of their ignorance and short-sightedness.... Poor folk! ...

So I am sorry for them.

Let us pass on. I shall come back to this subject later. ²

Erik Alfred Leslie Satie died on July 1, 1925. Rollo H. Myers' *Erik Satie*, which is readily available, inexpensive, and enjoyable, provides more extensive biographical and other information, and is a fine introduction to Satie and his music.

As stated, Satie had, and still has, many *loyal enemies*, including *more-than-distinguished* people who should have known much better, but even the greatest of these had to admit to Satie's incredibly and overwhelmingly (original) originality.

"In the *Sarabandes* of 1887 he foreshadowed the lines on which modern harmony was going to be developed by Debussy and other great twentieth-century composers; the nostalgic *Gymnopédies*, written at the same period, but entirely without reference to either Wagner or Franck, point the way to that return to the old French traditions and generally modal style which were exemplified later in the works of Debussy and Ravel; ... in the heyday of Impressionism, about 1912, came the *Préludes Flâques*, which in their linear austerity heralded the 'neo-classic' vogue which was to dominate Western music during the nineteen-twenties... *Parade* (1917) was certainly the precursor of a good deal of the 'mechanistic' music which was a feature of the post-First World War years right up to 1939; while the *Piège de Méduse*, composed in 1913, anticipated Dada by some three years just as surely as the *Heures séculaires et instantanées* of 1914, especially taken in conjunction with their accompanying text, can now be seen to be of purely Surrealist inspiration. *Socrate*, on the other hand, has a quality of timelessness which is no less remarkable. And, of course — perhaps the most significant pointer of all — we must never forget that while the young Debussy was still working on Wagnerian lines on a libretto of Catulle Mendès (*Rodrigue et Chimène*), Erik Satie was already planning his *Princesse Maleine*, only, as he confided to Debussy, 'did not know how to obtain Maeterlinck's permission'. Soon afterwards it was Debussy who had obtained Maeterlinck's permission, and had started to write *Pelléas and Mélisande*. . . . " ³

To these "anticipations" must be added: the notation of non-recitative music without bar lines, time, or key signatures; the extensive use of literal or parodistic quotation of melodies borrowed from classical, popular, and military music; the ennobling of cabaret music; the creation of a prototype "muzak" in works such as *Musique d'Ameublement* (*Furniture Music*), with which we open and close each evening this summer; and the writing of music divorced from any emotional, dramatic or programmatic element.

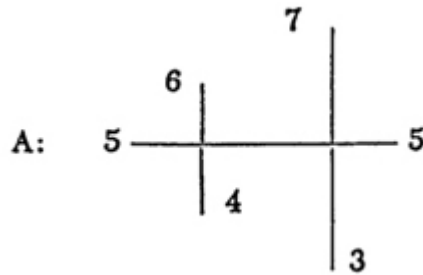
Satie did have strong supporters, including Ravel (who said "that the musician who had had the greatest influence on him was Erik Satie," and who "bracketed Chabrier and Satie together as the two French composers who seemed to him to be the most 'necessary'")⁴, Roussel (who considered Satie to be a "prodigious musician"), Milhaud, and Poulenc. Charles Koechlin compared Satie to "Kipling's 'Cat that walked by Himself', and rightly ascribes to his music all the virtues of the cat — namely: 'its elegant litheness, the sobriety and restraint of its movements, the accuracy of its paw-work when engaged in crafty play, its discreet sensibility which eludes the common man's perception, and finally, and above all, its instinctive and absolute independence...'" ⁵. John Cage has said: "It's not a question of Satie's relevance. He's indispensable." ⁶

Nevertheless, there remained detractors, and of their accusations, four are prominent: that Satie's music is "formless"; that Satie was not able to orchestrate; that the textual remarks embedded throughout Satie's music are meaningless and ridiculous; and that as Satie's only interest was to "Épater (break the feet of) les bourgeois," it was a waste of time to think about him as a serious musician. I shall address each of these points in turn.

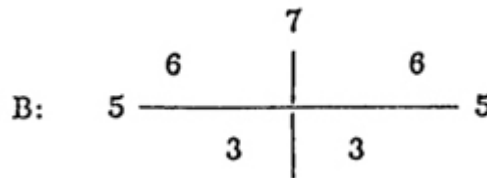
As regards the accusation of "formlessness," the lack of perceived structure in Satie's music has more to do with the perceiver than it has to do with fact. Satie does not use classical musical forms (sonatas of four movements, with first movements in "sonata form," other movements being scherzos, etc.). Neither does he develop works motivically (i.e. think of the Beethoven *Fifth Symphony* for a counter-example), using various wizardry to build a unified structure from an initial motif. There are, however, architectures that do not rely on the concept of a central section with symmetrical wings (in this sense, the first movement "sonata-form" is highly similar to a structure such as the Louvre — before I. M. Pei), and do not relate all things (as much as possible) to one motivic form; therefore, the accusation of lack of "form" holds only if it can be shown that the succession of phrases in Satie's music are essentially random, and that one cannot do. In his early works, there are hints at a

structure based on the proportions of the Golden Section,⁷ and throughout his life Satie used the concept of juxtaposing short phrases whose durations, or number of measures, were related according to a scheme. John Cage defines three of these (see diagram below).

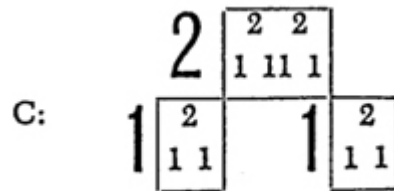
In "A" the piece is "anchored" with equal segments on each side, with phrase expansions and contractions alternating. In "B" and "C" we have mirror symmetry of two different types ("B," and especially "C," begin to partake of sonata form — the previously mentioned center-with-wings structure).



"(numbers are of measures). Symmetry, which itself suggests zero, is here horizontal, whereas in:



it is vertical; and in:



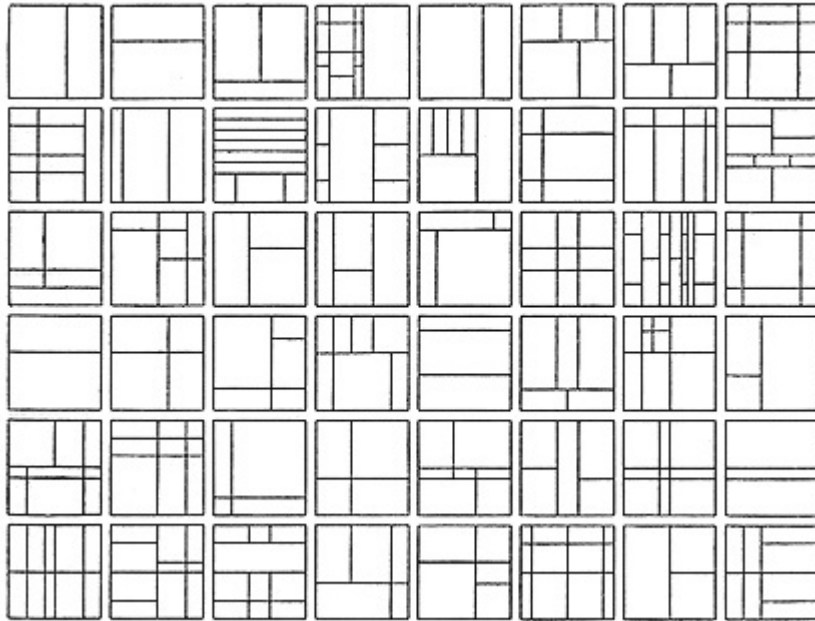
it is geometric (the large numbers are groups of measures)."⁸

Not only does each piece have a structure based on principles such as these but, in many instances, Satie's works consist of a group of three pieces, and the structure (the number of phrases, their lengths, and succession) is the same for all three. Satie's own explanation is *I invent an absolutely new form. The piece I write seems good to me. But might that not just be luck? If I compose a second and a third piece along the same lines but with different melodic ideas, and if these pieces are still good, then the form I have invented is good in itself.*⁹ This statement, while sly, does not indicate either unawareness of form, or lack of interest.

Given the high degree of similarity in the total duration of many of Satie's works, one has the impression that Satie predetermines a total length of time (denominated either in minutes, or total beats of the same duration) for a movement, and then proceeds to explore how that total length might be parsed. This is opposite to the approach where the total duration of a movement results from adding together arbitrary lengths of components of prefabricated layouts (such as sonata-form etc.). A Schubert (late work) first movement sonata-form is longer than a Haydn sonata-form because Schubert's phrases are more verbose. In other words — one can have big or small Louvres, all based upon a common plan that is scaled, and the size of the building is determined not by having more of the same sized rooms, but rather by having the same number of much larger rooms. In short, classical composers do not care how long or large the edifice becomes as long as the floor plan is preserved. Satie preselects the size of the building, and determines the floor plan by the musical functions he wishes to write.

This preselection of total duration was new to Western music. It has much in common with Le Corbusier's

"Modulor" concept (see figure), which uses the proportions of the Golden Section as a guide to variable parsing of the same space. ¹⁰



The idea is also akin to Louis Sullivan's and Frank Lloyd Wright's saying "form follows function." The common denominator among these three architects and Satie may be the architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-79), whose writings were read by Satie by 1886, and whose statement "a house is a machine for living in" demonstrates a utilitarian approach to space not at odds with Satie's approach to temporal space. In addition, the concept of predetermined total duration is an immediate prerequisite for film scoring (another aspect of music composition where Satie was among the first).

As regards Satie's orchestrations, Satie was not an orchestrator such as, for example, Ravel; yet when he orchestrated in his dance-hall style, as in the late ballets, the orchestrations work with admirable clarity, and with a gift for the proper presentation of the music. The accusation of lack of ability as an orchestrator appears to be based on Satie's attempts to create (in *Fils des Étoiles*, and especially *Uspud*) an orchestration based on contrasting blocks of unblended sounds; e.g. *Uspud* is scored for flutes, harps, and strings, and the three groups hardly ever play together. (Note the crucial presence of the number 3 yet again, indubitably connected with the Trinity.) In addition to this unconventional use of timbre, Satie wrote pitches normally outside the range of some of the instruments. This is not a severe problem as, in the case of *Uspud*, the flutes were played on a harmonium with a flute stop, and one can imagine or wish for a flute timbre or color without regard to range. Indeed, much of the history of the 20th-century, new-instrument invention concerns just this aspect of extending the instrument ranges so that their unique timbres are not restricted (hence the development of computer generated sound, or Carleen Hutchins' Violin Octet, or on a more populist note, Yamaha's DX7, among many). Remember that people live in a world where the new is almost always considered wrong. Satie's orchestrations were wrong according to convention, and therefore had to be made fit for proper society, somewhat like Eliza being taught to speak. In their attempt to fix him up, people other than Satie attempted to orchestrate some of Satie's early music, using either their own style, or Satie's dance-hall style, with results that are remarkably unsuccessful due to two causes. One of these is that the dance-hall style orchestration only works for certain kinds of music, and is incongruous for others, just as a three-piece suit is somewhat incongruous on a beach. The second reason why most of Satie's music is not amenable to orchestration (Debussy's orchestration of *Gymnopédies* is lovely, but the work is no longer Satie) is a more interesting question, and I believe the answer is given in a lecture of Satie's (see notes for July 12 and 13), where he states: *Today ... impressionistic musicians write — 'their orchestral music' — for piano*. In short, Satie comes from a tradition of keyboard composer, as opposed to that of composer for orchestra. There is a long, wonderful, and venerable history of keyboard (virginal, clavichord, and harpsichord) music, that simply does not work orchestrally, and almost does not work when transferred to piano, and this history is far older than that of impressionistic orchestration. The point to be made is that if Satie could create an orchestration absolutely correct for one kind of music, and even more incorrect for another, he may not have known how to orchestrate in the accepted tradition, but he certainly had a sense for what was apposite, which is more than can be said for some of his orchestrators.

Perhaps we should leave the subject of orchestration to Satie himself who proposed scoring a work for:

- 2 Flutes 'à piston' in F sharp,
- 1 Alto Overcoat in C
- 1 Spring-lock in E
- 2 Slide-Clarinets in G minor
- 1 Siphon in C
- 3 Keyboard Trombones in D minor

1 Double-Bass made of Skin in C
Chromatic Tub in B

These instruments belong to the marvelous family of cephalophones, have a compass of thirty octaves, and are absolutely unplayable. An amateur in Vienna (Austria) in 1875 once tried to play the Siphon in C; after executing a trill, the instrument burst, broke his spinal column and scalped him completely. Since then no one has dared to avail themselves of the powerful resources of the cephalophones, and the State had to forbid these instruments to be taught in the Municipal Schools.¹¹

Almost all of Satie's compositions contain textual remarks interspersed throughout the music. Despite their frequent occurrence, which should indicate their importance to Satie, most people consider these remarks to be imbecilic, irrelevant, or both. Musicians are used to seeing statements such as appassionata (passionately), hervortretend (to bring out), or agitato (agitated), but reject and/or resent statements such as *La main sur la conscience* (the hand on your conscience). In short, generalized descriptions of an emotional state (agitated, passionate), or a technical instruction (bring forward, make this louder), are acceptable, whereas statements that attempt to describe (almost pictorially) the specific flavor of a mood are not. Remember that each word-phrase is permanently positioned under a very specific, and I believe appropriate, moment in the music. To my mind, the statement *La main sur la conscience* causes one to play the notes associated with, and following that statement, with the utmost care — almost as if pussy-footing. In the violin part of *Choses Vues à Droite et à Gauche*, the statement *the bones dry and far away* causes me to move the violin bow in a way I would not if, at that same instant in the music, I had been told to play *with tenderness and fatality*, or *with a wink of the eye*, or *with enthusiasm*. What the emotional differences between these four instructions are, or could be, and how they might be achieved physically, are not at issue here. What is imperative to understand is that there are differences between them. In short, Satie's statements are always extremely evocative, and possess the advantage of not being those standard, hackneyed, catch-alls that one finds in all sorts of music, under all sorts of conditions, to such an extent that they long ago ceased to have any individualized, personalized, meaning.

Consider the words extracted from the second movement (*sur une lanterne*) of *Descriptions Autmatiques* (program of July 19 and 20):

*Don't light it yet; there's time
You can light it, if you wish
Shine a little in front of you
Your hand in front of the light
Take your hand away and put it in your pocket
Shh! Wait (two beats)
Put out the light*

If the performer reads and considers this with the least degree of seriousness, how can he not be transported to a mood appropriate for the music? If you do not believe this to be so, perform the following experiment: take this movement and substitute seven word-phrases from a different piece by Satie, while preserving the original placement relative to the music. If the words are as irrelevant as they are purported to be, your feel for and about the music should not be affected by the substitution. I put it to you that the probabilities are high that the substitution will make a difference — that is to say, your subjective impression of the work will be entirely different. It is beyond the scope of this étude to determine whether or not the perception of the performance is in fact different, although I believe that it must be.

The last quibble concerns whether or not Satie should be taken seriously both as a musician and as a person. Satie was eccentric, and his outward behavior was contradictory, his composition titles are curious, (but don't forget Couperin — see program notes of July 12 and 13) etc., etc., but perhaps the following will help place this in context.

"Daumier is said to have remarked at a Manet exhibition: 'I'm not a very great admirer of Manet's work, but I find it has this important quality: it is helping to bring art back to the simplicity of playing-cards.'"

"It was inevitable that the younger generation should go back to simple things. How could it have been otherwise? It cannot be said too often that to practice an art, you must begin with the ABC's of that art."

"But, although craftsmanship is the foundation of art, it is not everything. There is another aspect of the art of the ancients which makes it beautiful: it is that serenity one never wearies of, that makes us feel that their work is eternal. Serenity was within themselves; it came not only from the nature of their simple and tranquil lives, but from their religious faith. They were conscious of their frailty, and in their triumphs as well as their failures, they associated the spirit of divinity with all that they did. For them, God was always present; man did not count. With the Greeks it was Apollo or Minerva; the painters of Giotto's time had a heavenly protector too. Their works have that aspect of gentle serenity which gives them their profound charm and makes them immortal. But man, in his modern pride, has chosen to reject this partnership, because it belittles himself in his own eyes. He has driven out God, and, in so doing, he has driven out happiness too."

"In 1877. . . , it was I again who insisted on keeping this name 'Impressionists' which had put us in the limelight. It served to explain our attitude to the layman, and hence nobody was deceived: 'Here is our work. We know you don't like it. If you come in, so much the worse for you; no money refunded.'"

"The Impressionist School itself is a good example of the universal distaste for liberty. No sooner had we laid down the rules for our first exhibitions, and proclaimed that everyone was to paint just as he wanted, than we promptly forbade anyone to exhibit in the official Salon!"

"In a word, Impressionism was a blind alley, as far as I was concerned."

"A painter in those days was a painter pure and simple. He didn't even bother about appropriate titles for his

pictures."

"That reminds me of a canvas of mine called Wash-House. There wasn't even the shadow of a wash-house in the picture. I wrote those words on the back of the canvas because it was painted near a wash-house and I wanted to be sure to remember the spot, and I forgot to scratch it out afterwards."

"As I said before, both Degas and Manet belonged to the respectable Parisian bourgeoisie. But there was another curious element in Manet, a strain of playfulness which made him constantly try to mystify his public."

"They tell how a pompous member of the Institute was introduced to Manet one day and cried, 'Ah, Monsieur Manet, indeed! How interesting! I am preparing an elaborate study of the modern masters, and perhaps you can help me. You knew the great Couture, I believe!'"

"'Why, yes,' Manet replied. 'There was a certain rite very highly thought of in the Master's studio, which particularly impressed me. The pupils had a flute which they were accustomed to play by inserting it in the rear. Whenever a notable visitor would come to the studio, they never failed to inform him that tradition required all those who were admitted to Couture's to blow the flute by this unique method!'"

"Degas liked to mystify people, too. I have seen him amuse himself like a schoolboy by puffing up a great reputation for some artist or other whose fame, in the ordinary course of events, was certain to perish the following week."

"He fooled me badly once. One day I was on the driver's box of an omnibus, and Degas, who was crossing the street, shouted to me through his hands: 'Be sure to go and see Count Lepic's exhibition!'"

"I went. Very conscientiously I looked for something of interest. When I met Degas again, I said: 'What about your Lepic exhibition?'"

"'It's fine, isn't it? A great deal of talent,' Degas replied. 'It's too bad he's such a light weight!'"

"Q: What about the Night Watch [by Rembrandt]?"

A: If that picture were mine, I'd cut out the woman with the chicken, and I'd sell the rest as rubbish."

In the spirit of ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny, I have, in these quotes, attempted to replicate Satie's personal journey, from the "playing-card" surface simplicity of the early music, to the religious, the Impressionist rejection, the funny titles and the sly humor verging on the crude combined with a bourgeois surface, ending with a statement as rejectionist, Futurist, or Dadist that one could want. *You will agree with me, chères mesdames et messieurs*, that, given this context, Satie is no longer so unusual, but is rather an amalgam of the times. Oh yes, I forgot to say — those quotes were not by Satie! The gentleman I have just been quoting is the painter Renoir, a man 25 years Satie's senior and certainly, at that time, far more established than Satie ever was during his own life. ¹² If Renoir made statements such as these ... ? Note that I do not claim influence, especially as Vollard's book dates from after 1919; therefore the influence could run in both directions, and there is the bias of the selector of the quotes. There is, however, little reason to doubt the essence of the statements, which provide evidence of what was in the air.

Satie's music has been divided into "periods" (before 1890, 1890-98, 1898-1914, 1914-25), but somehow they are not at all important. As Cage says:

"Taking the works of Satie chronologically, successive ones often appear as completely new departures. Two pieces will be so different as not to suggest that the same person wrote them. Now and then, on the other hand, works in succession are so alike, sometimes nearly identical, as to bring to mind the annual exhibitions of painters, and to allow musicologists to discern stylistic periods. Students busy themselves with generalized analyses of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic matters with the object of showing that in *Socrate* all these formal principles are found, defined, and reunited in a homogeneous fashion (as befits a masterpiece)." ¹³

"Satie bases everything on structure (the divisibility of a composition into parts, large and small)... It is important with Satie not to be put off by his surface (by turns mystical, cabaretish, Kleeish, Mondrianish; full of mirth, the erotic, the wondrous, all the white emotions, even the heroic, and always tranquility, expressed more often than not by means of cliché-juxtaposition). The basis of his music that no one bothered to imitate was its structure by means of related lengths of time. Think of Satie as interchangeable with Webern (you'll be somewhere near the truth)." ¹⁴

NO BARRACKS

I never attack Debussy. It's only Debussyites that annoy me. THERE IS NO SCHOOL OF SATIE. Satieism could never exist. I would oppose it.

There must be no slavery in art. I have always tried to throw followers off the scent by both the form and content of each new work. It's the only way, for an artist, to avoid becoming the head of a 'school' — that is to say a pundit. ¹⁵

Given this statement, I have chosen to avoid the obvious comparisons of Satie with Debussy, or Ravel, Poulenc, Milhaud, etc. (that is, anyone Satie strongly influenced). Rather, I have given space to other figures who better fill in the background. Koechlin (1867-1950) (July 26 and 27), a very underrated composer, is the person responsible for sending Satie a number of the students who eventually formed "Les Six," (the composers Auric, Durey, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, and Tailleferre) and who taught them to, in Satie's words, *gambol in the land of sound*. Savinio (real name Andrea de Chirico, 1891-1952) was considered to be the future of surrealistic music, a cause with which Satie was somewhat associated in the late ballets. Then there is the problem of German music, represented here by Schoenberg, (whom Satie said should be played, and who programmed Satie in his Vienna concert series). Here I have tried to show that perhaps there is more of a common ground

between these two, especially in their use of popular forms and content, than one might normally suspect. Of course, the outward styles give the lie to that idea, but after all, a waltz is a valse, is a Tanzscene (Dancescene). Cage (1912-) is too tightly bound to Satie not to acknowledge the relationship.

The scrapbook of program notes will hopefully help provide the swirl and flavor of the epoch. Of the programs themselves, and among this summer's rarities, I point to a complete performance of *Les Fils des Étoiles*, Cage's rare two-piano version of *Socrate*, as well as a performance of *Uspud*, orchestrated as Satie indicated. On our last concert, we will perform *Parade*, with its "realistic sounds" of a typewriter, lottery wheel, sonorous puddle, tuned bottles, fog-horn, horses hoofs, sirens, and revolver, as well as *Relâche*, with *Cinema*, at which performance Satie, Picabia, Man Ray, Duchamp and others, will honor us with their presence. By summer's end, I hope that we will no longer only think of Satie as the composer of little tripartite piano pieces, as that is a gross misconception, and to do so belittles and devalues the importance of this extraordinary creator and composer, whose 125th birthday we celebrate.

P.S. The help of the Fondation Erik Satie, Paris, and its directrice, Mme. Omella Volta, in obtaining rare materials, is gratefully acknowledged.

Program Notes

JULY 5 and 6

What I Am

Everyone will tell you that I am not a musician. That is correct.

From the very beginning of my career I classed myself as a phonometrographer. My work is completely phonometrical. Take my Fils des Étoiles [this evening's program], or my Morceaux en Forme de Poire [program of August 23 and 24], my En habit de Cheval [August 23 and 24] or my Sarabandes [this evening's program] — it is evident that musical ideas played no part whatsoever in their composition. Science is the dominating factor.

Besides, I enjoy measuring a sound much more than hearing it. With my phonometer in my hand, I work happily and with confidence.

What haven't I weighed or measured? I've done all Beethoven, all Verdi, etc. It's fascinating.

The first time I used a phonoscope, I examined a B flat of medium size. I can assure you that I have never seen anything so revolting. I called in my man to show it to him.

On my phono-scales a common or garden F sharp registered 93 kilos. It came out of a fat tenor whom I also weighed.

Do you know how to clean sounds? It's a filthy business. Stretching them out is cleaner; indexing them is a meticulous task and needs good eyesight. Here, we are in the realm of phonotechnique.

On the question of sound explosions, which can often be so unpleasant, some cotton-wool in the ears can deaden their effect quite satisfactorily. Here, we are in the realm of pyrophony.

To write my Pièces Froides [program of July 12 and 13], I used a caleidophone recorder. It took seven minutes. I called in my man to let him hear them.

I think I can say that phonology is superior to music. There's more variety in it. The financial return is greater, too. I owe my fortune to it.

At all events, with a motodynamophone, even a rather inexperienced phonometrologist can easily note down more sounds than the most skilled musician in the same time, using the same amount of effort. This is how I have been able to write so much.

And so the future lies with philophony.¹⁶

"What I Am"

"Everyone will tell you that I am not a painter. That is true. At the beginning of my career, I at once classed myself among the photometrographers. My works are purely photometric. Take Revolving Doors or Seguidilla, Le Beau Temps or the Shakespearean Equations, you will notice that no plastic idea entered into the creation of these works. It is scientific thought which dominates."

"Besides, I take greater pleasure in measuring a color than looking at it. Holding a photometer I work joyfully and surely."

"What have I not weighed or measured? All Uccello, all Leonardo, etc. It is very strange."

"The first time I used a photoscope I examined a pear of medium size. I assure you I have never seen anything more repulsive. I called my servant and showed it to her"

"On the photoscale a common ordinary nude weighed two hundred pounds. She was sent by a very fat painter whom I weighed also."

"Are you familiar with the cleaning of colors? It is quite filthy."

"Spinning is cleaner. Knowing how to classify them is very delicate and requires good sight. Here we enter phototechnology."

"As for color explosions so often disagreeable, cotton wool placed on the eyes will attenuate them suitably for one. Here we arrive at pyrophotology."

"To draw my Mains Libres I used a caleidophoto-recorder. This took seven minutes. I called my servant and showed it to her."

"I think I may say that photology is superior to painting. It is more varied. The pecuniary yield is greater. I owe

to it my fortune."

"Anyhow, with a monodynamophote, a barely trained photo-measurer can record in the same time and with the same effort more colors than the most adept painter. It is thanks to this that I have painted so much."

"The future belongs to philophotology."¹⁷

JULY 12 and 13

In January 17-31, 1922, the pianist Marcelle Meyer (with various guest artists) presented three concerts in Paris. The composers performed on the first concert were Bach, Gluck, Monteverdi, Mozart, Rameau, Byrd, Couperin, D. Scarlatti, Pergolèse, and Satie; on the second Ravel, Debussy, Satie, and Chabrier; and on the third Tailleferre, Satie (the premiere of *Sports & Divertissements*), Auric, Honegger, Stravinsky, Poulenc, and.. Milhaud. Each of the three concerts was preceded by *preambles* spoken, respectively, by Satie, Auric, and Cocteau. Whether it was, or was not, Mme. Meyer's intention to highlight Satie in the three different settings of the parents, the siblings, and the progeny, is not known, nor is it germane. Her programming succeeded in doing so, and doing so very well.

This week, we present excerpts from Mme. Meyer's first program, so that we may deal with the question of Satie's roots. The point being made is that Satie continues the tradition of Clavicinist — a composer for keyboard in the old style, and Satie's notes reinforce that impression.

The Bach, Mozart, Rameau, Byrd, Couperin, and Scarlatti presented tonight were all programmed on the 1922 concert, but the program also included vocal works by Bach, Gluck, Monteverdi, and Pergolèse, and contrasted these with the first movement of Satie's *Socrate* (program of August 2 and 3). Mme. Meyer also performed the first Bach Partita, as well as two additional Scarlatti Sonatas. (Programs were much longer in those days!) Mme. Meyer programmed four works of Satie (the first *Gymnopédie*, the *Menuet*, a *Nocturne*, and the *Sonatine Bureaucratique*). As the *Nocturne* and *Gymnopédie* are programmed elsewhere in this series (I saved the latter bon-bon for the last program — after the spinach, as it were), I have substituted two early works, whose piano technique is in keeping with the idea behind this program. The *Sonatine Bureaucratique* is modeled after a Clementi Sonatina, therefore, the comparison.

Préambule

Mesdames

Mesdemoiselles, . . .

Messieurs —

The classical works, . . . which are present on this program,
. . . belong to the 16th, . . 17, . . . & 18th centuries. . . .

. Byrd wrote his "Volta" — just toward the end of his
life

. . . He was close to 70 years old. . . .

. . . . This musician was born in 1542 — in the middle of the 16th century . . .

. . . . He is the oldest of these musicians.

. . . Scarlatti & Rameau were born the same year — 1683 —
one in Naples; . . . the other, in Dijon: . . .

. . . This fact proves that they are not "twins", . . If I may say so

. . . Bach — who is always called the "old" Bach, . . .
was still young when he died: . . .

. . . he was only 65 — which is not old, . . . all things considered

. . . . Byrd & Rameau — **they** — died in the grip of old age: . . .

. . . . They were 81 years old —
— "each", . . . of course

. . . In point of view of the instrumental technique, . . . the
difference is minimal, . . . narrow, . . . between these masters

. . . On the whole, . . . it is piano written for the harpsicord

. . . Today, . . . the impressionist musicians write — their orchestral music
— for piano

Which brings us to reflect that everything passes, . . .

. . . . that everything changes

. . . . & that everything gets tiring

. . . Curiously enough.... the "Volta" by Byrd — of which I spoke earlier on

Perhaps he may get a raise without having to be promoted
He intends to move next quarter
He has his eye on a flat
If only the raise or the promotion comes off
Renewed contemplation of his prospects.

Vivache

He hums an old Peruvian tune which he has collected
in Lower Brittany with the aid of a deaf-and-dumb.
A neighboring pianist is playing Clementi
How sad it is.
He dares to waltz! (he, not the piano)
All that is very sad.
The piano renews its labour
Our friend interrogates himself benevolently.
The cold Peruvian air gets into his head.
The piano goes on.
Alas, it is time to leave his office, — his dear office.
'Courage, let's be off' says he.

Next week we will present twelve works of Satie, which, taken together, appear in succession not dissimilar from the Ordres of Couperin, or the Pièces de Clavecin of Rameau. You may find the Satie titles curious. So as to not traumatize anyone, I suggest you consider Couperin's titles for part of his Thirteenth Ordre. "The French Follies, or The Dominoes. 1. Virginity (in the invisible-colored domino), 2. Modesty (in the pink domino), 3. Ardor (in the flesh-colored domino), 4. Hope (in the green domino), 5. Fidelity (in the blue domino), 6. Perseverance (in the flax-gray domino), 7. Languor (in the violet domino), 8. Coquetry (in various dominoes), 9. Old Gallants and the Faded Wives of Treasurers (in the purple and yellow-brown dominoes), 10. Benevolent Cuckoos or Complacent Cuckolds (in yellow dominoes), 11. Taciturn Jealousy (in the dark-gray domino), 12. Frenzy, or Despair (in the black domino)." Perhaps you might prefer: "The Pageant of the Great and Ancient Mxnstrxndxsx... Disorder and Rout of the Whole Troupe, Caused by the Drunkards, the Monkeys, and the Bears. Or for those of you allergic to seafood (Embryons Desséchés) L'Anguille (the eel)?"

The more things change, the more they remain the same!

JULY 19 and 20

These are prefatory statements by Satie. They are not samples of musically embedded text.

Embryons desséchés (1913) **(Dried Up Embryoes)**

d'Holothurie

(Of the Holothurian)

"Illiterates call it the 'sea cucumber'.

The Holothurian ordinarily climbs on stones or on parts of rock.

Like the cat, this sea animal. puffs, and, what's more, he emits a disgusting looking thread.

Light seems to bother him.

I observed an Holothurian in the Saint-Malo Bay.

d'Edriophthalma

(Of the Edriophthalma)

"Crustaceans with fixed eyes, that is to say, without stalks and immobile. Very sad by nature, these crustaceans live, withdrawn from the world, in holes dug out of the cliff."

de Podophthalma

(Of the Podophthalma)

"Crustaceans with eyes on movable stalks. They are skillful, tireless hunters. They are found in every sea. The meat of the Podophthalma is a delicacy."

Chapitres tournés en tous sens (1913) **(Matters Thoroughly Discussed)**

Le porteur de grosses pierres

(The rock carrier)

"He carries them on his back. He is sly and self-confident.

His strength astonishes little children.

We see him carrying an enormous rock,
a hundred times his size. (It's a pumice
stone.)"

Vieux sequins et vieilles cuirasses (1913)
(Antique Gold and Ancient Armor)

La Défaite des Cimbres (Cauchemar)
(The defeat of the Cimbres [Nightmare])

"A little child sleeps in his little bed. Everyday his very
old grandfather gives him a kind of strange, short course
in General History, drawn from his vague memories.

He often speaks of the famous King Dagobert, of The
Honorable Duke of Marlborough, and of the great Roman
General Marius.

In his dreams, the little child sees his heroes fighting the
Cimbres at the Battle of Mons-en-Puelle (1304)."

Heures séculaires & instantanées(1914)
(Times of Day, Then and Now)

"To sir William Grant-Plumot I sincerely dedicate this
collection. Until now, two characters amazed me: Louis XI &
sir William: the first by the oddness of his good nature;
the second by his unchanging immobility.

For me, it is an honor to here pronounce the names of Louis
XI & of sir William Grant-Plumot."

"To whom it may concern:

I forbid anyone to read the text aloud during the performance.
Ignorance of my instructions will bring my righteous
indignation against the audacious culprit.

No exceptions will be allowed."

Les Trois Valses distinguées du précieux dégoûté(1914)
(Three distinguished waltzes of a Jaded Dandy)

Sa taille
(His figure)

"Those wits who would harm the reputation or
the well-being of others rather than forego a bon
mot deserve a degrading punishment.

This has not been said, and I dare to say it.
(LA BRUYÈRE: "Les Caractères" or The Mores
Of This Century, after the edition of Messrs.
G. SERVOIS and A. REBELLIAU)"

Son binocle
(His monocle)

"A young man was forbidden by our ancient mores
to appear naked in the bath, and modesty began to
take root in the soul of the people.

(CICERO: "On the Republic" translated by Victor POUPIN)."

Ses jambes
(His legs)

"The master's first duty, upon arriving at his
estate, should be to prostrate himself before the
household gods; then, if he has some time, let
him make the rounds of his domain; inspecting
the fields, seeing which works have been completed
and which remain to be completed.

(CATO: "On the country life", translated by
A. JEANROY and A. PUECH)"

JULY 26 and 27

Charles Koechlin's **Les Heures Persanes** was stimulated by **Vers Ispahan (towards Ispahan)**, by Pierre Loti (1850-1923), the French novelist, orientalist, and naval officer. I have chosen not to extract from Loti's version of a journey to the east, but rather from someone else's, whose connection to Satie is more piquant. When assessing and comparing the perfume of the extract with our present day perception of the writer, keep in mind that the extract dates from 1911. The Satie quotes date from 1922.

"Night has fallen. I am a little giddy. Is it I who dreams, or is it my narrator carried away by his imagination? His hoarse voice rasps. His big, drunkard's eyes are moist and sparkling beneath their heavy gay eyebrows. The night is yellow and trickles with gold. All the marble statuary of all the palaces of Byzantium is there, as well as all the treasures of the sultans and all the gems of the Seraglios! A solid gold Venus and a Ceres stand at the head of the Phanal, the stairway of Justinian's palace, leading down to the water. Lying in the sand at the promontory of the Seraglio are bronze cannons decorated in gold and big solid gold rings like those that they — the divine, thrilling odalisques — used to wear around their naked ankles and arms like serpents. Loaded with gold, their nails painted in vermillion, they suffocated from waiting so long in their magnificent cages at the apex of this hill which juts out into the sea and breaks the waves before Stamboul. And for having failed to please once, they were slid into a sack, dropped all the way down making a 'plop' in the water, and little fish nibbled away their flesh. Papa Bonnal claims that their finery is all there, left behind to bear witness. Eurythmics of marble rise out of the sea and reflect in the water as they advance along the shores. Countless lilies planted everywhere prove that the marbles are gilded by the incessant sun; they spread their heavy, suffocating fragrance over polished flagstones of prophyry, malachite, verde antique, and jade, amid the sparkle of inlaid mother-of-pearl. SHE — I don't know who — I suppose some Theodora, but what does it matter as long as she wears her Ravenna finery and as long as her eyes, enlarged by a black outline, gnaw her cheeks; SHE is waiting in some exedra for the lunar blue to absorb the light of day. When she leans over the edge of the wavelapped stairs, her jewels seem to multiply, the gems taking on a hard luster that the exulting water casts back in her face. Rays of sunshine play on the wisteria hanging on the porticos and whiffs of perfume drift above the water. The sky makes a pool of fire as in an icon, and sanctifies the madness of the hour. The waves coming from the Sweet Waters, of Europe follow a delicate curve. No, it's no illusion: the banks that hold them are curved like an enormous cornucopia emptying itself into the sea across Asia, whose mountains are spread out like the placid horizontal smile of a Buddha in the shadow of a sanctuary, covered by a golden luster...."

"If I were to tell you more about those dear little hidden treasures, I would have to make it up. Because here we are in the realm of the inaccessible, even for so handsome a giaour as Theophile Gautier, but not so for Mr. Loti: for a person who wears a French officer's braids, lives at Tarabya, and commands a frigate, it is altogether possible that someone would be impressed with him!"¹⁹

**

At the 'Two Purists' . . . next time, it will be a painting by Jeanneret that will get slashed.... Everyone must take his turn, . . . ch? ... Not always the same one, . . . huh?

*

Sly and crafty: ... Yes, Ozenfant is the more mischievous of the two, but only just; ... don't go thinking that the 'Other' is stupid — with his short sight.

... In any case, the One is just as 'purist' as the Other — or even more so.

*

It was Ozenfant who had the idea of using a pen-knife; Jeanneret, for his part, talked of using a long sabre (as long as that).... It's easy to see how young he is! — the dear Friend....

*

Something terrible has happened: ... My subscription to L'Esprit Nouveau has just expired, . . . yesterday ... Yes. . . I'm 'all of a dither' about it."²⁰

**

Charles-Eduard Jeanneret is the real name of the painter, and later, architect, Le Corbusier. He, and Amédée Ozenfant, founded Purism. Both were editors of the periodical **L'Esprit Nouveau**. Ozenfant is reputed to have slashed one of his own paintings at an exhibition of the Purists. For the personal voyage of how one man moves from the voluptuousness of the extract from **Journey to the East** to an almost Satien purity (without the wit and simplicity), read the Confession at the end of Le Corbusier's **The Decorative Art of Today** (MIT Press).

AUGUST 2 and 3

Socrate

"I love all of Satie's music and the music of Socrate especially.

"It seems to me that even though the words he chose are profoundly meaningful and touching that like the delightful and poetic remarks included in his other shorter pieces, all of which in performances Satie himself suppressed, the texts of Socrate may be omitted, bringing about, as I hope to show with this arrangement, an

enjoyment of the music itself alone, the beauty of which is so constantly clear and extraordinary." – John Cage

*

John Cage's Four³ may be thought of as "variations" and "ornaments" on Satie's piano piece *Vexations*. *Vexations* is the second of three *Pages Mystiques*, composed between 1893-35. *Vexations* consists of a *cantus firmus* thirteen quarter-notes long, plus two similar harmonizations of the cantus, the only difference between them being the voicing of the chords. The *note of the author* states: *In order to play this motive 840 times in succession, one must prepare well, in utmost silence, and with serious immobility.*

Obviously, 840 repetitions is somewhat unusual, and *Vexations* is normally dismissed as another one of Satie's curiosities, but that is too simple for two reasons. The first is that the *Danses Gothiques* of 1893 (programmed August 30 and 31), are "part and parcel" of the same musical cloth as *Vexations*; i.e. the harmonies and rhythmic motion are too similar to be merely coincidental. If I am correct, *Vexations* is therefore not just an isolated sketch. The second reason concerns the number of repetitions. No one seems to know why Satie chose 840 repetitions, and the number is usually considered arbitrary — i.e. any large number would do, and yet 840 has some very unusual properties. Most importantly, it is the number under 1,000 with the greatest number of divisors (32), as 840 is four times the product of the first four primes - i.e. $4(2 \times 3 \times 5 \times 7)$. Of its 32 divisors, 21 are either triangular, pentagonal, octagonal, tetrahedral, fourth dimension tetrahedral numbers, or some combination thereof. The series of divisors include abundant, highly composite, perfect, multiply perfect, and catalan numbers. It also includes the smallest weird number (70), the magic constant of the smallest magic cube (42), and various other oddities. In short, 840 is no slouch of a number, and this presents two interesting questions, and gives rise to a protest (*J'accuse!*):

1) If Satie was interested only in some large number, is it just happenstance that he chose the number (under 1,000) with the most divisors, and with such interesting properties (800 has many divisors, but they are not that varied of type, and therefore not as interesting)?

2) If the suggestion of Satie dividing equal times in different ways is true, (see the introduction), could the choice of 840 be deliberate — i.e. Satie chose a number which demonstrated structural properties that interested him in his music?

3) I should like to protest on behalf of poor, little 840. Had Satie chosen 839, or 853, someone, surely, would have screamed prime number! And yet, other than for their primeness, and their distribution in the series of integers, prime numbers are not all that rewarding. It is a sad commentary on the world that, just because a number is duple, and ends in a zero, it is dismissed as not worthy of consideration.

Satie could have chosen a large number with fewer divisors. He could have chosen a prime number (a number divisible only by 1 or itself). The choice of a number with the largest number of divisors leads to speculation about Satie's knowledge of and/or interest in number theory,²¹ and to a conclusion that the choice of 840 is probably deliberate. As regards repeating something many, many times, I point out to you the instruction at the end of Couperin's Les Tambourins (July 12 and 13): "One plays these two airs alternately, and repeats them as often as wished, but always ends with the first." Francois might have thought 840 repeats excessive, but one must not forget habituation and 180 years of inflation!

Cage's Four³ (the third piece in a recent series of works for four players) consists of "four activities for the four players that interpenetrate within the given time brackets:

"1. Silence (each player may do nothing) within a single bracket.

"2. The sound of a rainstick non-agitated simply tilted (each player has three rainsticks). Extensions of one tilt by that of another on the same stick should be virtually imperceptible.

"3. One of the players has either the means to express a sine wave in the neighborhood of c"" or to play in that frequency area, non vibrato, a violin harmonic with imperceptible bowing, very quietly.

"4. Excerpts (any length less than twelve quavers) from Extended Lullaby 1-6 and 7-12 (chance determined variations of the cantus firmus and the counterpoints of *Vexations*, Erik Satie) very slowly and quietly played on one or two widely separated pianos (one "in" the auditorium, the other "outside." Two pianos playing at the same time must not be in the same tempo, nor as though playing together."

AUGUST 9 and 10

"New Music"

"People who have followed and participated in today's heroic art movements make a very clear distinction between the adjectives modern and new; and I hasten to say that only the latter is used in speaking of an artist whose work is genuinely new and daring, stunning and powerful.

"We know of a few painters and a small number of poets who in our time deserve to be called new; but we had gradually become used to considering music as an outmoded, practically stagnating art. Everything in it was dark, empty, lifeless, immobile — it was a slave to aesthetics and beauty, two abstractions to which we no longer attach any importance.

"Today's music is so impoverished and the role it plays among the other arts is so slight that I have often

heard people say it was more the fault of music itself than of the musicians.

"A young musician and composer, M. Alberto Savinio, has sought to discover the role of music among the modern arts, and his works can henceforth be considered examples of a new music, fragments of which will be heard for the first time this coming Sunday, May 24, at the offices of Les Soirées de Paris.

"M. Savinio performs his own works on the piano, but it will not be long before he has an orchestra to do it for him.

"Those who have the honor and the privilege of attending this first concert of new music will be astonished to see how roughly the young musician treats his instrument.

"This is an indication of the tremendous energy that propels our artist.

"To see him play the piano is an experience. There he sits in shirtsleeves, a monocle in his eye, screaming and throwing himself about while his instrument struggles to attain his own pitch of enthusiasm.

"Admittedly, Savinio has not brought about a renewal of music, or at least not yet; we should note, however, that he has never indulged in those orgies of good taste to which our so-called modern composers have accustomed us and which put the most advanced of them on a level comparable, in literature, to the artistry of M. Maurice Rostand [sic] and, in painting, to that of the exhibitors at the Nationale.

"Naturally, I am not referring to composers like Erik Satie or William Molnard, who, although they have blazed no new trails, have at least helped to discredit in the minds of young people that melancholy good taste whose effects were so disastrous.

"Having begun to compose while still very young, Alberto Savinio has already produced several works, but he has kept only those few that he wrote during the past two years.

"These are: an opera bouffe in three acts, Le Trésor de Ramsésnit, based on an ancient Egyptian legend, with lyrics by M. M.-D. Calvocoressi; two ballets — Deux Amours dans la nuit, in two acts (six scenes), by M. M.-D. Calvocoressi and A. Savinio, and Persée, in three acts, by Michel Fokine — which were commissioned by M. Fokine himself, and which will probably be given during one of the coming seasons of the Ballets Russes; Niobé, ballet in one act by M. M.-D. Calvocoressi; and Les Chants de la mi-mort, music composed for a series of dramatic poems written by M. Savinio himself.

"As he explained in his recent article, M. Savinio wants to give a wholly new orientation to music composed for the theater. His temperament is eminently dramatic, and he hopes and intends to bring to the stage the powerful spirit of genuine poetry. He believes that he can present on the stage, and express in his music, all the strange and enigmatic aspects of life in our time; he also wants to make his music resound with the shock of the unexpected, of the truly singular.

"M. Savinio's music always appears to be running at a vertiginous speed; it seems to be frenetic and extraordinarily lively, but in fact, it is extremely limpid. It is constructed in orderly fashion; it is based exclusively on melodic line and rejects any experiment with harmony that might give a hint of impressionism. It is very curious to note how such a simple procedure has enabled M. Savinio to compose musical works whose firm construction and powerful severity are totally in keeping with the austerity that stamps our time.

"M. Savinio's music for the theater plays an extremely independent role; it is not connected with the drama or ballet in any specific way. It does not translate into sounds the feelings or situations of the story, but simply plays its own poetic role in the spectacle as a whole. M. Savinio has been applying this method only since Niobé.

"Connoisseurs of music will perhaps be pleased to know that, in his latest works, the young musician has not divided the music into measures. The sonority of his orchestra will be very different from everything that other contemporary composers have accustomed us to hearing. He takes no account whatever of the sensory effect produced by the fusion of all the instruments, or of any other orchestral effects of the same kind. M. Savinio wants to make modern music into a noble, pure, poetic, and severe art. He wants to restore to it the chaste sentiment, the natural poetry, and the heroic, moving tone that one finds sometimes in the old melodramas of Giuseppe Verdi — the very melodramas that certain musicographers today look down on as too banal. He also wants to restore to it the spirit of fatality and eternity that breathes in the music of Modest Mussorgsky.

"But these are not meant to be comparisons, for Savinio himself wants neither to look back toward the past nor to copy the art of any new composer. His own art strives to capture all the poetry that bursts from today's world. His artistry consists in presenting it to us under the aspect of eternity. But what really inspires and elevates him is his imagination, for he is not at all like the majority of today's musicians, who possess no abilities outside of their music. M. Savinio, who is also a poet, painter, and playwright, resembles in that respect the protean geniuses of the Tuscan Renaissance. His artistic inventions almost always contain a note of peasant poetry, although his music has nothing in common with folk music or program music. He also believes that an artist's work must relate only to the period in which that artist lives; and only those works will be mighty and everlasting which bear the imprint of their time."²¹

AUGUST 16 and 17

USPUD

christian ballet in three acts by j. p. contamaine de la tour; music by erik satie. presented to the national theatre of the opera 20 dec. 1892. sole character: uspud.

spiritualities: the christian church, male and female saints, martyrs and confessors, christ on the cross, the seven orders of heavenly messengers; demonialities.

Act I

a deserted beach; a statue centre; sea in the distance

USPUD dressed as a Persian.

uspud returns from the christians' torture and bears relics. he piles them at the foot of the statue and burns them; smoke rises up and changes into seraphim who fade away into emptiness.

a terrific thunderclap is heard; the statue falls into pieces. uspod is dismayed.

suddenly the sky turns white. a very beautiful woman, clad in a golden tunic and with her breast pierced by a dagger, appears before uspod and stretches out her arms to him. it is the christian church.

uspud, astonished, picks up some sand and rubs his eyes with it. sounding of trumpets. aerial procession of martyrs cursing uspod.

uspud picks up stones and throws them at the christian church; the stones change into balls of fire. uspod's fury. he takes up a larger stone, which explodes with a bang; flames rise up and from their bosom the stars escape. great convulsion in nature."

end of the first act

Act II

USPUD prays to his household gods.

demons rise up and disappear straightway; they assume human form but with the heads of animals such as dogs, jackals, tortoises, goats, fishes, lynxes tigerwolves, oxen, oyster-catchers, unicorns, sheep, antelopes, ants, spiders, gnus, snakes, blue agouti goats, baboons, cuculus, crabs, albatrosses, pacres, ostriches, moles, secretary-birds, old bulls, red caterpillars, bontis, pogos, boars, crocodiles, buffalo, etc.

uspud is afraid and tries to flee, but demons surround him and jostle him; he tries to smash his head, but the walls draw back and ooze blood. in the air a vision is seen of a pagan court, watching victims being tortured. uspod, in his anguish, prays to heaven.

the christian church reappears, white as snow and clear as crystal; lotus blossoms spring up where she has trod. she draws the dagger from her breast and plunges it into that of uspod, who goes into a trance. simultaneously a gigantic crucifix emerges from the ground and rises up towards the sky, taking the christian church with it. there can be heard the choir of angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim, thrones, powers and dominions singing a hymn to the almighty. uspod is surrounded by a great light; he falls to his knees, beating his breast. he is converted.

end of the second act

Act III

the top of a mountain; a crucifix above.

uspud, clad in homespun garments, prostrates himself before the crucifix; for a long time he prays and weeps.

when he raises his head, christ unfastens his right arm from the cross, blesses uspod and disappears. the holy spirit penetrates uspod.

procession of male and female saints: saint cleopheme spits his teeth into his hand; saint micanar bears his eyes on a platter; the blessed marcomir has his legs burnt to a cinder; saint induciomare's body is pierced with arrows; saint chassebaigre, confessor, in violet robes; saint lumore with a sword; saint gebu with red-hot irons; saint glunde with a wheel; saint krenou with a sheep; saint japuis, with doves escaping from a cleft in his forehead; saint umbeuse spinning wool; the blessed melou the lame; saint vequin the flayed; saint purine the unshod; saint plan, preaching friar; saint lenu with a hatchet. their voices summon uspod to martyrdom.

he is penetrated by an unquenchable thirst for suffering. he tears off his homespun robes and appears clad in the white tunic of neophytes. he prays again.

a swarm of demons rise up on all sides. they assume monstrous forms; black dogs with a golden horn on the forehead; fish bodies with the head and wings of birds; giants with bulls' heads, snorting fire through their nostrils.

uspud commends his soul to the lord, then gives himself up to the demons, who tear him to pieces in a fury.

the christian church appears, radiant with light and escorted by two angels bearing palm leaves and crowns. she takes uspod's soul in her arms and raises him up towards christ, who is resplendent in heaven.

end of the third act

CURTAIN

* * * * *

in preparation

ONTROTANCE, ballet in one act

to follow later
(God willing)

CORCLERU, ballet in three acts

IRNEBIZOLLE, ballet in two acts

TUMISRUDEBUDE, ballet in three acts²²

*

SPORTS ET DIVERTISSEMENTS

This publication embodies two arts, drawing and music

The drawing part consists of lines, witty lines;

the musical part of plain black dots. These two parts put together make an album. I suggest you turn its pages with a tolerant thumb

*and with a smile, for this is a work of pure whimsy.
Let no one look for more.*

For the "dried up" and the "stultified" I have added a chorale, sober and suitable. This makes a sort of wormwood preamble,

a way of starting out wholly austere and unfrivolous.

I have put into it everything I know about boredom.

I dedicate this chorale to those who already dislike me.

And withdraw.

– Erik Satie
prefatory statement to music
(Translated by Virgil Thomson)

AUGUST 23 and 24

Anyone who does not love Wagner does not love France Didn't you know Wagner was French? — from Leipsick [Picardy].

... But of course ...

How could you forget? ... So soon,? ... You? . . . a patriot? . . .

*

Am I French? ...

Of course I am How do you think a man of my age could not be French? . . .

You amaze me ...

*

We know that Art has no homeland, . poor thing ... its lack of fortune prevents it

So why not play Richard Strauss and Schoenberg? Tell us, dear M. Laloy, you who know everything ...

*

Yes! ... the Germans get everything from France.... It's quite shameful! ...

You know, don't you, that Wagner was French? ... he was very FrancoGerman — the dear Man — like all good Frenchmen, come to that.... Just remember, . . . I beg of you.... He was so good! ... and so much 'one of us'!

For we must not confuse him with Strauss and Schoenberg ... No connection ... absolutely none.

They are not good, of course — nor French, it goes without saying.²³

AUGUST 30 and 31

"Futurist Manifesto against Montmartre"

(Futurist manifesto, 1913)

"When we erected the solid pedestal of Futurism in Paris, we thought of you, Montmartre, old romantic infection! Now, as your last degenerate and crippled sons yap helplessly around you, we finally rise and shout at the top of our voices: Forward, demolishers!"

"Make way for the picks!"

"Montmartre must be destroyed!!!"

"And we mean the Butte itself, let it be clear. The bars and the night restaurants don't matter, but we have had enough of sentimental adventures, little houses, little gardens, little birds ..."

"Montmartre, scrofulous mound, the shadow of your hideous goitre dedicated to the Sacré Coeur shelters a rabble of antiquarians and refired shopkeepers — get rid of them! Together with your miserable endowment, those antiquated hussar trousered artists (!), those passéist moth-eaten parrots. Yes, we know you have the Rue Saint-Vincent, the Rue des Saules, the Place du Calvaire — so what? That all belongs to the past; once it was a flower, now it is a dung heap, and we are young, alive and strong, and those morbid, sickly alleys with their tottering half-dead houses fill us with disgust and loathing."

"Stop luring from their distant provinces those comic-opera supernumeraries, those long-haired daubers whose marrow you suck before leaving them to rot in the filthy water of your ruts. Oh yes, you have cherished them, these lovers of a night, these ambitious bohemians, like a prostitute defends "her man", and have also pushed them into the deepest shame, even as far as the Pont des Arts."

"Have you forgotten, Montmartre, that once you were a rock of resistance against all that belonged to yesterday, all that glorified the obvious? But Donnay has left the "Chat Noir", Pierrot has become diseased by honours and wants to join the institution, and Louise, weak and repentant, has returned to the respectable bosom of her family."

"Crumbling old houses, rotting walls, fences hiding mountains of excrement — your time is up!"

"Away with you, vile merchants of holy objects who beckon prostitutes, with your pseudo-artistic cabarets and awful bric à brac, cemeteries of objets d'art. Flee into the night of the past with all your multicoloured rags, your stillborn dreams, and take with you your hoarse Mimi Pinsons, your elderly Musettes. But you go on rotting where you are. You lack the energy to rebel, and in the demolished ruins we shall find nothing but stinking dust."

"Call us savages, barbarians — we don't care! We are strong, I assure you, and we are climbing to attack your maggoty cheese followed by the great army of victors with metal scaffolding, dynamite and explosives. Your Moulin de la Galette will be swallowed up by a Métro station. Your flea-ridden Place du Tertre will be crossed by buses and trams, and from all the dung that you are trying to defend today an apotheosis of skyscrapers will rise to pierce the heavens, great blocks of houses infinitely tall. And then you will laugh with us at your attachment to these remnants of another century. Like us, you will want to perceive all the new beauty of geometrical buildings, stations, electrical instruments, aeroplanes, our whole life whirling with steel, fever and speed."

"There are corpses that must be killed."

"Montmartre must be killed!"

"The last windmills will fall, the twisting coy old streets collapse. Make way for the Futurist pick! Montmartre will have ended its life. It will cease to be the rotten brain crowned with a clerical cap, weighing on a Paris which is awakening to the inspiration of the future. And in the evening, when the sun goes down, the brilliant beams of a thousand electric lamps will pierce the great highways filled with noise and movement. The majestic façades with their multicoloured electric signs will light up violently; the wild trembling of our wonderful speed machines will be

heard, and at the window of your departed and forgotten Louise the electric advertisements will wheel tirelessly against the sky, conquered at last."

"Montmartre must be destroyed!!!"

"A.-F. Mac Del Marle, Futurist painter"²⁴

They're still working at it.

P.Z., reactionary programmer

Footnotes

1. Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, [Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1963], pp. 96-97.
2. Erik Satie, "Memoirs of an Amnesiac" [1924], in *The Writings of Erik Satie*, translated and edited by Nigel Wilkins [London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd., 1980], pp. 63-64.
3. Rollo H. Myers, *Erik Satie*, [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968], p. 127-28.
4. Myers, p. 129.
5. Myers, p. 128.
6. John Cage, *Silence* [Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961], p. 82.
7. The Golden Section is the proportion achieved when a line is cut (sectioned) at approximately .618034 ... of its total length, so that the ratio of the shorter to the longer segment = the ratio of the longer segment to the total length of the originally uncut line. The value of this ratio can be approximated by taking the ratio of two sequential numbers in a Fibonacci Series, defined as a series where every number (starting with the third) is the sum of the two previous numbers, for example: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, etc. The further out in the series the sequential numbers are, the closer they converge upon the true ratio. For music, these whole numbers can be thought of as multiples of a common unit of time (one composes phrase lengths of 3 followed by 5 measures; or 13 followed by 21 quarter notes, etc. Obviously, one can reverse the size progression - i.e. 21 followed by 13 still preserves the relationship). (See also Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983])
8. Cage, p. 81.
9. In Alan Gillmore, *Erik Satie* [Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., Twayne Publishers, 1988], p. 39, translated by Salley Abeles, *A History of Modern Music* [Cleveland: World Publishing, 1961]
10. Le Corbusier, *Modulor I and II* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1980], p. 93.
11. Myers, p. 119.
12. Ambroise Vollard, *Renior: An Intimate Record* [Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1925]. Authorized translation by Harold L. Van Doren & Randolph T. Weaver [New York: Dover Publications, 1990], passim.
13. Cage, p. 78.
14. Wittenborn Schultz, *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, Second Edition, edited by Robert Motherwell [1951] [Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989], p. XXII.
15. Wilkins, p. 84.
16. Erik Satie, "Memoirs of an Amnesiac" #7 [1912], in *The Writings of Eric Satie*, translated and edited by Nigel Wilkins, [London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd., 1980], p. 58.
17. Man Ray, *Self Portrait* [Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1963], p. 304.
18. Erik Satie (in Ornella Volta, *The Writings of Erik Satie*, copyright M. Pierre Joseph-Lafosse et Ornella Volta [Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1977], pp. 91-95.)
19. Le Corbusier [Charles-Edouard Jeanneret], *Journey to the East*, edited, annotated and translated by Ivan Zaknic [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987], pp. 84, 85, 130.
20. *Le Coeur à barbe*, No. 1, April 1922, from "A Mammals Notebook," in *The Writings of Erik Satie*, translated and edited by Nigel Wilkins, [London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd., 1980], p. 70.
21. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Paris-Journal*, May 24, 1914, in *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-18*, edited by Leroy C. Breuni. English translation by The Viking Press, Inc. [New York: DaCapo Press Inc., 1972], pp. 391-93.
22. *The Writings of Erik Satie*, translated and edited by Nigel Wilkins [London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd., 1980], pp. 130-131.
23. "A Mammal's Notebook," in *The Writings of Erik Satie*, translated and edited by Nigel Wilkins, [London: Ernst Eulenburg, 1980], pp. 68, 70.
24. *Futurismo & Futurismi*, [Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, Bompiani, Sonzogno, Etas S.p.A Milan Italy, 1986. English translation 1986, Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri], pp. 462-63.