



## **Erik Satie Poet, Playwright and Composer**

### **Robert Orledge**

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Over the years I feel I have come to know the strange phenomenon that is Erik Satie quite well. The sad thing is that if I had been alive at the same time as he was, and knew as much about him then, I don't think I would have wanted to meet him. At his least attractive, he was a sponging, irascible alcoholic who refused to speak to his supportive brother Conrad for over seven years, supposedly because he would not have a drink with him after their father's funeral in December 1903. Conrad undoubtedly feared beginning what would have been an extended binge at his expense, laced (in that period) with religious paranoia. For before Satie returned to learning at the Schola Cantorum in 1905, he felt particularly insecure and uncertain of his musical direction. And even after graduating there as a composer of proven competence in 1912, he imagined personal slights where none were intended and remained intransigent towards their supposed perpetrators for long periods of time. Thus as late as February 1924, he severed relations with Auric and Poulenc when he discovered about the backstage goings-on at Diaghilev's Monte Carlo opera season the previous month, and their association with his lifelong enemy, Louis Laloy (who had omitted Satie's name from the official programme, even as the composer of the new recitatives for Gounod's *Le Médecin malgré lui*). Whereas he had congratulated Poulenc for his success with *Les Biches* on 11 January, he told Milhaud a few weeks later that the ballet was 'the lowest of the low' and that Auric's *Les Fâcheux* 'had lost all its charm due to the lassitude of its author'.<sup>[1]</sup> And he refused to see either composer on his deathbed the following year.

In reality, Satie was hypermoral and, despite his somewhat suspicious enthusiasm for the activities of salt-of-the-earth characters like working-class truck drivers, he disliked Cocteau playing footsie with him at dinner parties, and subsequently wrote libellous articles and letters waging war against 'Omoplates' and 'Homogènes' like Poulenc and Auric (in Auric's case erroneously). He envisaged all sorts of homosexual and drug-taking activities in Monte Carlo, as well as despising the arrivisme of his previous protégés from Les Six. And he had already distanced himself from this group in 1923 in his desire to maintain his position as godfather of the most extreme avant-garde. Another gripe was that both Poulenc and Auric came from wealthy backgrounds, and for this reason (alone it would seem) he did not admire the music of Lord Berners. He told his young Belgian friend, E.L. T. Mesens in 1921 that his fellow eccentric was 'a professional amateur. He hasn't understood.'<sup>[2]</sup>

Many aspects of Satie's strange personal logic, which sometimes ventured towards the paranoid, stemmed from his own position as an impoverished, uncompromising professional composer. As such, he never took on any other form of paid employment and survived ignominiously on the generosity of friends like Dukas, Milhaud, or his brother Conrad. In the summer months, when his wealthier acquaintances were sunning themselves on the Riviera, matters often became desperate. This was especially true during the war, and his celebrated letter to Valentine Gross in August 1918 shows things at their nadir. For once, he admitted that 'I loathe this 'beggar's' life'I shit on Art: it has cut me up too often.'<sup>[3]</sup>

And this was shortly after his substantial commissions for *Parade* and *Socrate*, for Satie was also financially incompetent. When he had money, he spent it almost immediately. Besides being over-generous to his friends, it also explains the many new umbrellas, handkerchiefs, shirts and wing collars

found in his otherwise filthy Arcueil apartment after his death. The logic behind these was that Satie was making provision for future periods of poverty and the preservation of his carefully controlled public images. From a home that no-one was ever allowed to enter (apart from the stray dogs he took pity on), and which had no running water or heating, he managed to emerge immaculate each day, emerging 'into the world as an actor steps out from the wings', as Roger Shattuck so eloquently observed.[4] The precedent began with the seven identical dun-coloured velvet corduroy suits, purchased at La Belle Jardinière department store in 1895, either from a small legacy or, more likely, with the assistance of the wealthy Le Monnier brothers from his native Honfleur. With these he created his second persona as 'The Velvet Gentleman' and he was anxious that all his suits should all be preserved in as near identical condition as possible. The clue as to how he achieved this comes from the painter and art historian, Francis Jourdain, who asked Satie to join him one evening for the dress rehearsal of the melodrama *The Fatal Card*. 'He was wearing a hat, coat and shoes of velvet corduroy, and he asked me to let him go back home and change. He returned wearing a suit and an overcoat identical to those he had taken off, only with the velvet in very slightly better condition.'[5] And protecting his umbrellas under his coat when it rained is explained both from his desire to keep them new and from the fact that Satie loved rain but hated sunshine. Besides, carrying umbrellas at all times was a family trait, as his friends discovered at his funeral. And they also fitted with his final persona as an anonymous professional notary, which he adopted around the time he entered the *Schola Cantorum*. They also allowed him to go straight from the bars he loved around the Gare St Lazare to the high society events that he was increasingly invited to after the succès de scandale of *Parade* in 1917.

Some aspects of Satie's logic, however, require more explanation. Whilst Satie was a musical iconoclast, he had no interest in modern innovations like recording, or the telephone and radio. Recordings during his lifetime were rare and he had nothing to do with the first one in 1912.[6] As to recording his own piano music, like Debussy and Fauré, he was probably never asked, and he would have been even more nervous about doing so than they were. He is only known to have listened to the Radiola[7] once (which he called the 'sémaphore auditif'),[8] when he heard a broadcast by Milhaud at the apartment of his friends, the Henriquets, at 7.30pm on Monday 3 March 1924. Similarly, he only ever mentions using the telephone once, when he rang the Comtesse de Beaumont on 22 March 1922.[9] He asked friends to take the phone off the hook when he visited them, and presumably he only rang the Comtesse because she was a wealthy patron, and because he was excited about the new concept of choreography he had devised with André Derain in which the movements were to come before the music rather than deriving from it. But this logical concept was sadly never put into practice, even in the private *divertissement* *La Statue retrouvée*, produced for the Comtesse by Cocteau, Picasso, Satie and Massine the following year, when Massine was the last to join the team.

In passing, Satie did not even trust the post and put letters and packets whose content he was uncertain of unopened into one of his two grand pianos, perhaps fearing an unpleasant surprise or even a bomb. This happened with the Christmas gift that Milhaud's mother sent him in 1922. On 19 December he told Milhaud that 'I have received a package signed G. Milhaud and coming from the Colonial Exhibition in Marseilles. This package has not yet been opened. What is it?'[10] It turned out to be chestnut fondants, for which Satie thanked her in his usual, charming manner on New Year's Eve.

While Satie wrote for the future and lived very much in the present, his roots were in the past - in plainsong, Gothic architecture and the history of medieval France. Such paradoxes abound in his strangely logical world, and what the inventor of the prepared piano (for *Le Piège de Méduse*), total chromaticism (*Vexations*), minimalism (*Gymnopédies*), and the first co-ordinated film score (*Entr'acte*) was most concerned about was the 'exteriorisation' of his musical thought in print. Hence the barless, but regularly metred piano pieces of 1913, without repeated clefs, and with those wonderful, but mostly irrelevant comments to amuse the performer that had begun with the *Gnossiennes* in 1890. The music appeared bizarre to the public (who mostly didn't buy it) but it was utterly logical for Satie to want his music to look as striking as literary or artistic publications, and to want to combine music, poetry and art as he did in the *Sports et divertissements* of 1914. In this instance, you will remember, Stravinsky refused the fee offered by Lucien Vogel because it was too small, whereas Satie rejected it because it was too large. Illogical? No, because Satie was in awe of Stravinsky and would never have suspected him of being so mercenary. And his bizarre texts and programme notes for *Le Guide du concert*, that begin with a true statement and then

launch into whimsy, arose from the same desire to amuse and be different, with a self-deprecation that begins with the 3eme Gymnopédie 'which is now to be found underneath every piano', as he told readers of *Le Chat Noir* journal in 1889.[11] [You can see the 1888 edition of this piece, and the Ogives, in the exhibition].

His similar concern for the aesthetic marriage of music and prose led him to invent all lower case type for *uspud* in 1892, for which he made his own musical woodblocks, which had sudden changes of clef and stave to 'distance Stupid people'[12] from his score. Similarly, he invented 'punctuation form' in Rosicrucian works like the *Prélude du Nazaréen*, in which recurring cadences of various lengths act as commas or full-stops in the repetitive cells from which the music is constructed.

On another level, the absence of any co-ordination between music and stage in all of these early theatre works arose not from Satie's inability to match their often violent, exotic or esoteric action in musical terms, but from a desire that the piece should itself be self-sufficient and not fall into the Wagnerian tradition of descriptive, hyper-expressive music which he despised. Besides, an anonymous, though stylistically identifiable score could be used for other occasions. The same concern for self-sufficiency amid theatrical chaos can be found as late as the final ballet *Relâche*, in which Satie fashioned the two halves around René Clair's film to be precisely proportioned mirror images of each other. This was even more so of *Parade*, in which everything originally revolved around the central *Steamboat Ragtime*, everything was at the same pulse, and yet the work has no definitive form - there being different endings for the concert hall and the stage.

Another aspect of his *Rose+Croix* music that seems wierd and illogical until you know the reasoning behind it, springs from Satie's desire for publicity during this early period of relative obscurity. This was his aim in challenging (and actually arranging) a duel with Eugene Bertrand, as it seemed to be the only way to persuade him even to look at his score for *uspud* in December 1892. Publicity also accounts for his hilarious performances of *uspud* with harmonium at the *Auberge du Clou*, because he knew full well that a composer like Debussy would nevertheless be able to understand the seriousness of purpose behind the 'scenic backcloth' of the music. And in the *Rose+Croix* piece *Fête donnée par des Chevaliers Normands*, Satie, with what he saw as his limited technical means at the time, set out to prove that a viable piece could be constructed from a simple musical system based on intervals, though this was the only occasion (of many) in which the sensitive composer did not take over from the logician during the construction process.

If we turn now towards Satie's writings and drawings, we find that they are, without exception, meticulously neat and painstaking. Only the musical sketch-books reveal signs of untidiness and what was surely at times the white heat of inspiration. This can be at least partially explained by a theory first put to me by Sarah Nichols. This includes Satie in a group of distinguished creators alongside Picasso, Lewis Carroll and Hans Christian Andersen, all of whom were higher-order dyslexics or imagists, and all of whom Satie admired. Typically, his exceptional intelligence and different logical approach made him frequently frustrated with what he saw as the inadequacies of others (especially music critics), and this led to frequent 'explosions'. He was as fascinated with his own thought processes as Lewis Carroll was, and explored them deliberately. Similarly, he only made progress with *Parade* after the like-minded Picasso joined the team and gave him ideas he could work with (unlike Cocteau). So, with Satie, periods of elated bonhomie (often exacerbated by drink and little food) alternated with others of almost embarrassing shyness and timidity (hence his often-repeated and rather feeble jokes at society gatherings). He was anti-authoritarian and very much in favour of the young - seeing himself as coming 'into this world very young in a very old age'. Underneath he was sensitive to others, yet volatile when he felt himself threatened.

Most important, he seems to have conceptualised his ideas, which made the two-dimensional concept of writing extremely laborious (it took him forty minutes to write a short letter-card, according to Jean Wiener). So he masked his shortcomings in his slow and conscious calligraphy, which means that the many little drawings he made of everything from spaceships to advertisements for medieval sorcerors must have happily filled many lonely hours in a run-down industrial backwater like Arcueil. At the same time, the

higher order dyslexia would have given him a spatial approach to music (which explains his fascination with Cubism and sculpture) and made him attracted to transformational thinking, magic and the potentials of formal mirroring. A particular case of this is the original concept of the *Gymnopédies* with the first two as a mirroring pair. Both were constructed in two halves and the first originally had a four-bar introduction and no balancing coda, whereas the second had a coda and no introduction. And in the first there are only four bars that vary between the two balancing halves, whilst in the second it was the melody in the first half that Satie revised. However, the rule of three took precedence in the end, with Satie adding an introduction to the Second *Gymnopédie* for its later publication in 1895 to make it seem like the others. On this rule of three, incidentally, Satie said of the *Aperçus désagréables* in 1913 that 'before I compose a piece, I walk round it several times, accompanied by myself', [13] and if the second and third pieces in a set were as good as the first, it was 'the absolutely new form' he had invented that 'was good in itself'. [14] Which was rather like viewing the same sculpture by his friend Brancusi from three different angles, and shows a truly three-dimensional, almost architectural approach to music.

Satie was obsessed with making lists as much as with devising compositional systems, numerology and solving chess problems, and these lists would have struck him as funny in their fantastical concepts. Like many higher order dyslexics his frustration with early learning led to reports of idleness and lack of progress at the Paris Conservatoire in the 1880s, where he was good at dictation but poor at sight-reading. In fact the edition of Mendelssohn [15] that he practiced from shows him more interested in working out a definitive form of his signature on the cover than in the virtually pristine piano pieces themselves. Satie's dislike of playing or even discussing his music in public follows on from his early experiences. While the spelling difficulties we normally associate with dyslexia were more the province of his friend Debussy, this hypothesis explains so much that it deserves serious credence in Satie's case and is in no way meant to be condescending. Besides, his ability to see things differently from others made him a connoisseur of modern art. Picasso's mistress from 1904 to 1912, Fernande Olivier, said that 'The only person that I heard argue clearly and sensibly about Cubism was Erik Satie', [16] and in a fast-changing world of multiple -isms riddled with charlatans, Satie's uncanny ability to spot the good from the bad could have made him a fortune.

So there were many good sides to his character too, another being his love of children, whom he took for outings at his own expense in Arcueil around 1910 and taught them about pitch using local drainpipes as examples. But children were very different from adults, and when the adult world discovered him (through Ravel championing his music at the Société Musicale Indépendante in 1911), he was, illogically, not pleased. But his explanation to newly forgiven brother Conrad on 17 January, reveals that he felt confused by the enthusiastic reception for his early works by the young opponents of Vincent d'Indy, who found his recent music dull. Now the fruits of his supposed ignorance, which had led him to enrol at d'Indy's Schola Cantorum, were being acclaimed! Satie found this 'total nonsense', [17] even if he soon realised that it would create a demand for his subsequent compositions. For that is where his true interest always lay. In the same letter he also denounced his cabaret work as 'more stupid and dirty than anything'. But now, at last, he was able to give it up, and it is ironical that he soon fell out with his admired benefactor Ravel, initially because he wanted his new young protégé, Roland-Manuel, to take lessons with his old teacher, Albert Roussel, whereas Roland-Manuel preferred the more celebrated Ravel.

On the subject of changing views by the usually intransigent Satie, one can also cite the case of Alfredo Casella. In a rare example of frankly expressed opinion in 1918, Satie agreed with Henry Prunières in saying that 'in his music the form is generally lacking in sincerity and he switches too easily from the style of Fauré to the style of Stravinsky.' Even so, Satie found Prunières indulgent, and thought he might have added 'that he is always lacking in intelligence. Is it intelligent to depict Latin visions with Slavic means; to confuse the sky of Italy with the sky of Russia; to dress Romans as Cossacks' That's what our dear Casella does.' [18] Above all, Satie would have disliked the absence of an authentic Italian voice in the Casella works he must have heard, and as we have seen, he was an unqualified admirer of Stravinsky. He also saw Casella as a poor pianist as well as a jack-of-all-trades (for he hated pastiche), probably because he had accepted an official post as professor of piano in Rome in 1915. Later, however, when Casella's style became more neo-classical and Italian in the 1920s, and he began to champion young Italian composers, Satie changed his views (no doubt assisted by Casella conducting a performance of Socrate). He then



supported him in getting a commission from Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois with the folk inspired *La Giara* in 1924, and this was performed shortly before his own ballet *Relâche* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where its success pleased Satie very much.

Obviously, it is not possible to cover everything in a paper of this length, so I should like to finish with a couple of evaluations of Satie that tell us more about his logic and reinforce some of my earlier observations. The first comes from Francis Picabia, with whom he collaborated on *Relâche*, his final 'instantanéiste' ballet in 1924:

'satie's case is extraordinary' He's a mischievous and cunning old artist. At least, that's how he thinks of himself. Myself, I think the opposite! He's a very susceptible man, arrogant, a real sad child, but one who is sometimes made optimistic by alcohol. But he's a good friend, and I like him a lot. [19]

The second comes from Madeleine Milhaud, who knew him well and could still imitate Satie's chuckle with his hand to his mouth to perfection at the age of 100:

'He was a most lovable person: unpredictable, with a certain charm. His way of speaking was very spontaneous - the complete opposite of his writing' satie never told a dirty story; I never met anyone so polite. But he could be very violent. As Cocteau said: 'satie with never blows up without a reason.' Everything Satie did was logical, based on the fact that he was very sensitive and could be hurt by the slightest thing. It was logic carried to an extreme. Look at it coldly and it makes sense. He had no feeling for the mores of his time. He was extremely proud and he never showed his poverty to anyone. 'Poverty entered my room one day', he said, 'like a miserable little girl with [large] green eyes.' [20]

I don't want to venture far into detailed analysis of Satie's compositional logic today, because it is far easier to explain in writing. However, the abstruse genesis of the *Prélude en tapisserie* in October 1906 is shown in your handout and, for once, I can find no logical explanation other than that A acts as a recurring rondo motif, everything is in 2/4 time, and motifs A and C begin with dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythm. The dotted lines show where Satie marks a tempo. You can also see in *Satie the Composer* (pp. 71 to 77) how two very different pieces emerged in the autumn of 1920. The first is the *Elégie* for his lifelong friend Debussy, which began as a series of parallel fifths, bitonally exploiting the ambiguity between E and F minor as it unfolded chromatically, whilst never clearly asserting either key. This is followed by no less than 28 trials for the seemingly straightforward start of the '*Marche Franco-Lunaire*' from *La Belle Excentrique*, which show how Satie was anxious to make a really striking, chic and Parisian initial impression in his final years. These trials take the same sort of blind alleys and back tracks that Pietro Dossena has found in his fascinating and important work in genetic criticism relating to key-points in *Socrate*, *Sports et divertissements* and recently the *Messe des pauvres*. And in passing, Satie's afterthoughts were invariably his happiest inspirations. Like the strange, disembodied ending of *Socrate*, that seems to go on revolving into infinite space, but also comes back to the F# on which it began. Who would have thought that Satie only added this at the proof stage, and that several of his earlier trials resolved the long monotone As and Bs of *Socrates'* death neatly onto C?

But I should, perhaps appropriately, like to leave you with some observations about Satie's musical logic in the tiny song '*Adieu*', the last of the *Quatre petite mélodies*, composed to words by Raymond Radiguet in November to December 1920. Its original title in *Les Joues en feu* (*Lettres d'un Alphabet*) was '*Mouchoir*' and in the poem an ageing Admiral is reassured that he will not lose face by waving his old handkerchief. How else does one get rid of the flies of the past?

One might well wonder why 16 bars of music lasting only 35 seconds occupied Satie for almost two months until one studies the four pages of sketches that begin the notebook known as BNF MS 9674. Satie began by creating a rather staid rhythm on a monotone that was, frankly, at odds with Radiguet's amusing mini-

poem. This led to his first attempt at a melody, beginning with the descending scale Satie was to use much more effectively to end the final version (cf EXX. 1 and 3). But it would have him taken some time to realise this. You can also see the first ideas for harmonisation in bars 10-12, at the point Satie knew would ultimately be the turning-point and climax of the song from his initial immersion in the poem (which, like Debussy, he almost certainly learned by heart first). The interesting thing is that his bassline in bar 11 is reversed in the final version in bar 10, and the rising figure in the upper part was to become a unifying feature of the final accompaniment. But both of these discoveries would again have taken some time to emerge.

Then Satie made a second, more flexible monotone rhythmic setting over the first, which he erased, but which still remains visible in the manuscript. This was more responsive to Radiguet's poem and shortened the song, which he first set as bars 3-14 in the final version, changing the first two lines from descending scales to palindromes (see EX. 2). This seemingly tiny change was important, both because it gave the voice its own initial identity, and because it still linked in with the rising accompaniment as an echo across bars 3-4. Lastly, Satie added a brief introduction and balancing coda, making what started out as a café-concert waltz into a quirky and sophisticated art song .

Then, sometime before the fair copy reached publication by the Editions du Sirène in 1922, Satie added the bass octaves to the coda, added the pause and slow up in bars 12-13, and moved the *Élargir* marking from bar 12 to bar 15 to emphasise the coda (cf EXX. 2 and 3). This had the added benefit of balancing the introduction in which the treble octaves were initially pitched an octave lower (see EX. 2). The miraculous thing, of course, is that once Satie had established the nature of the accompaniment in his first draft and decided on the final format of the song in his second, producing the quirky harmonies in the third seems to have occurred quite spontaneously, with only two (but significant) second thoughts in bars 7 and 10 (EX. 2). So Satie ended up with a meticulously balanced 16 bar song in a 6 + 4 + 6 format with which he was finally satisfied in December 1920. The process of creation may seem laborious for a mature and experienced composer, but the process of conscious self-discovery and the painstaking logic behind it are both fascinating and typical of Satie the composer.

[Finish with 1990 recording of *Adieu* by Eileen Hulse and Robin Bowman: Track 16]

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[1] Satie (ed. Ornella Volta): *Correspondance presque complète* (Paris, Fayard/IMEC, 2/2003), 585. Letter of 5 February 1924. ('Les Biches sont au-dessous de tout; les Fâcheux ont perdu tout leur charme, grace à la veulerie de leur auteur.')

[2] Quoted in Mesens: 'Le souvenir d'Erik Satie', *Revue musicale*, 214 (June 1952), 150. ('C'est un amateur-professionnel. Il n'a pas compris.')

[3] *Correspondance*, 334. Letter of 23 August 1918: ('Cette vie de 'mendigot' me répugne' J'emmerde l'Art: je lui dois trop de 'rasoireries'.') At this point, Satie even considered a paid job, and Gross contacted a Monsieur Lebey, who proposed that Satie create a new teaching course. Satie proposed 'The Modern Aesthetic' but the plan never came to fruition and Satie remained forever unemployed.

[4] Roger Shattuck: *The Banquet Years* (London, Faber, 1959), 142.

[5] Francis Jourdain: *Né en 76* (Paris, Editions du Pavillon, 1951), 245 (translated by Roger Nichols in *Orledge: Satie Remembered* (London, Faber, 1995), 39). ('Etant coiffé, vêtu et chaussé de velours à côtes, il me demande de lui donner le temps de rentrer se changer. Il revient vêtu d'un complet et d'un pardessus identiques à ceux qu'il avait quittés, mais d'un velours un tout petit peu plus fin.')

[6] The song *La Diva de l'Empire*, recorded for Pathé by Adeline Lanthenay.

[7] An early name for the radio in France.

[8] See the letter to Milhaud of 3 March 1924 in *Correspondance*, 596.

[9] *Ibid.*, 475.

[10] *Correspondance*, 508. ('J'ai reçu un paquet signé G. Milhaud & venant de Marseille (Exposition Coloniale). Ce paquet n'est pas encore ouvert. Qu'est-ce ?')

[11] *Le Chat Noir*, VIII/369 (9 February 1889), at the end of an advertisement for the *Ogives*. ('sa Troisième Gymnopédie, actuellement sous tous les pianos.')

This had been printed privately in red ink with Gothic titles in November 1888, and was available from his father, Alfred's music store at 66 boulevard Magenta.

[12] See copy no. 16 (of 100) of the large uspd brochure (Paris, E. Woestendieck, 1892), p. 8, now in the private collection of Johny Fritz, Luxembourg. ('pour l'éloignement des Stupides').

[13] At the end of a publicity document for his publisher Eugene-Louis Demets, cited in Satie (ed. Volta): *Écrits* (Paris, Éditions Champ Libre, 1981), 143. ('Avant d'écrire une oeuvre, j'en fais plusieurs fois le tour, en compagnie de moi-même.')

[14] Reported by Paul Collaer in *La musique moderne* (Brussels, Editions Meddens, 3/1963), 136. ('J'ai inventé une forme absolument nouveau'si [les autres pièces] sont encore bonnes, c'est que la forme que j'ai imaginée est bonne en elle-même.')

[15] Now in the collection of James Fuld in New York. The Peters Edition dates from c 1881.

[16] Ornella Volta: *L'Ymagier d'Erik Satie* (Paris, Editions Van de Velde, 1979), 65. ('L'unique personne que j'ai entendue raisonner clairement et simplement du cubisme ce fut Erik Satie.')

[17] Letter to Conrad Satie of 17 January 1911, cited in *Correspondance*, 145. ('C'est à n'y rien comprendre'C'est plus bête et plus sale que nature.')

[18] Letter of 3 April 1918 in *Correspondance*, 324. ('Chez lui la forme manque généralement de sincérité qu'il passé trop facilement du style de Fauré au style de Strawinsky'.vous pourriez ajouter que toujours il manqué d'intelligence. Est-ce intelligence de dépeindre des visions latines avec des moyens slaves; de confondre le ciel de l'Italie avec le ciel de Russie; d'habiller les Romaines en Cosaques' C'est ce que fait notre cher Casella.')

[19] From a letter to André Breton of 17 February 1922, just after Breton's 'trial' for anti-Dadaism at the Closerie des Lilas restaurant, at which Satie presided. He remained faithful to this movement and had no time for the automatic writing and dream visions of the Surrealists, led by Breton, whose quarrel came to a public head at the premiere of *Mercure* in 1924. Cited in Michel Sanouillet: *Dada à Paris* (Paris, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965), 516. ('Le cas Satie est extraordinaire'C'est un vieil artiste malin et roublard. C'est du moins ce qu'il pense de lui; moi je pense le contraire! C'est un homme très susceptible, orgueilleux, un véritable enfant triste, mais que l'alcool rend par moment optimiste. C'est un bon ami que j'aime beaucoup.')

[20] From an interview with Roger Nichols at the Exeter Festival on 4 June 1987. The quote about poverty comes from the same letter to his brother Conrad of 17 January 1911 cited above. Cocteau's other bon mot about Satie was that composition for him was rather a process of 'decomposition'- his approach being so analytical and painstaking.





## Erik Satie Poet, Playwright and Composer

### Caroline Potter

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Erik Satie's creativity exploded in several different directions around 1912-14. His manuscripts and correspondence testify to his talent for calligraphy, and his drawings, usually in black or red and usually created for himself, show that he was an artist gifted in several media. While Satie wrote many songs, only one set, the tiny *Trois poèmes d'amour* (1914), features his own texts. Steven Moore Whiting believes that his increasing success as a composer gave him confidence to work in other media: 'In Satie's case, it was finding the route to glory in 1911 [when Ravel promoted his music] that enabled him to try out paths beyond the realm of musical composition; journalism from 1912 on, theatrical comedy in 1913, lyric poetry in 1914, and public lectures (causeries) from 1916 on.'<sup>[1]</sup>

Satie is well-known for the humorous texts accompanying some of his piano pieces from the *Véritables préludes flasques* (1912) onwards, just before his excursion into poetry and playwriting, further evidencing his need to enhance his music with other artistic forms. While these texts are generally absurd, or comments directed to the performer, or both, the elaborate commentaries of *Heures séculaires et instantanées* (1913) are more like prose poems which feature echoes of French poets including Verlaine and Hugo. From 1912, his occasional journalism found regular outlets in *L'oil de veau*, a short-lived journal published by his friend Roland-Manuel,<sup>[2]</sup> and the more established *Revue musicale*.

Given Satie's extensive literary interests and his desire to control the appearance of his music, it is not surprising that he decided to write his own poetry. Perhaps the topic of the *Trois poèmes d'amour* is unexpected, though, as Satie, as far as we know, had little direct experience of romantic relationships. His only documented affair (with the painter Suzanne Valadon) lasted, according to him, from 14 January until 20 June 1893; reports that he may have had another brief relationship in 1914, with the poet Henriette Sauret, are as yet unconfirmed.

The songs were composed, according to the manuscripts, on 20 November, 25 November and 2 December 1914<sup>[3]</sup> and were originally headed 'Musique de M. Erik Satie (sur des paroles magiques de lui-même)'. Robert Orledge discovered Satie's original preface to these songs in a sketchbook; it does not appear in the published version:

These poems do not discuss the love of Glory, the love of Lucre, the love of Commerce or of Geography. No. These poems are poems of the love... of Love; they are simple and devout pages wherein are reflected all the tenderness of a virtuous man, very proper in his ways. You can listen to them without fear. They are three in number: the first has as its title: Love Poem No. 1; the title of the second is a little less glorious: Love Poem No. 3; as to the third poem, its title is more modest still: Love Poem No. 2. I am going to sing them to you myself, with a single vocal cord, in the same way as was customary in ancient times, at the court of our good old kings of the 12th, of the 12th arrondissement.<sup>[4]</sup>

(Satie subsequently decided against this quixotic 1, 3, 2 numbering.)

Performance: Jane Manning and Roy Howat

The *Trois poèmes d'amour* have a fake medieval flavour, hence the otherwise obscure reference to 'the 12th [century]'; the love expressed in these songs is an idealised, courtly love, though not without some surprising twists. Satie was interested in all things Gothic - particularly drawings of castles and suits of armour, calligraphy, and architecture. This interest dates back at least as far as his first significant work, the *four Ogives* for piano (1888?) - an 'ogive' being an arched medieval doorway.

The three songs form a rhyming set for several reasons. Firstly, as in many of his piano works including the *Gymnopédies*, Satie created a group of three pieces which are deliberately similar in mood and texture - like viewing a sculpture from three different angles, as he said of his *Gymnopédies*. Unlike most composers, he was not at all concerned about providing variety within a set of pieces. Secondly, the predominance of conjunct quaver movement, intentionally reminiscent of Gregorian chant (another cod-medieval feature) in the vocal line is common to all three songs; leaps wider than a second are rare and therefore attract attention (e.g. line 4 of song 1, 'Pour plaire à son amante', features an octave leap from the first to the second word). Satie's reference to 'a single vocal cord' no doubt refers to the limited vocal range of the songs, which remain in the speech register throughout. Thirdly, Satie avoids the first person singular pronoun, for archaic effect and to further position the narrator as a self-effacing petitioner. The narrator presents himself as an insignificant being - a grain of sand - who seeks only to please his lover. The lady in question is named as 'la si belle Hortence' in the second song - a suitably old-fashioned spelling evoking medieval France. In October 1892 Debussy famously described Satie as a 'gentle medieval musician lost in this century',<sup>[5]</sup> words which seem to anticipate this work.

Most importantly, the form of each poem is identical and all the rhymes are identical.<sup>[6]</sup> Satie uses a simple ABA form in all three poems, repeating (or almost repeating) the opening two lines to round off each. He uses lines with six syllables and a 'feminine' mute 'e' at the end of each. The mute 'e' at the end of each line should be pronounced in poetry or classical song but should traditionally not be a stressed syllable. However, Satie perversely abandons the quaver movement of the rest of the vocal line for these final syllables, stretching the mute 'e' out to a crotchet and surely poking fun at the usual stress patterns by underlining the weak syllable. Satie's interest in musical systems of various sorts is well-documented, and this use of an obsessive rhyme scheme (adherence to which is more important than the meaning of the words) is therefore closely connected to his compositional practice.

Before the first song, Satie noted on the manuscript: 'The poet dares to make a discreet declaration of love to his beloved, a pale vow. The latter listens to him coldly, on the tip of her lips.'<sup>[7]</sup> This romantic, heart-on-sleeve expression of feeling is, as we shall see, rarely reflected in the music, though similar flowery statements preface the other two songs.

The mute 'e' ending lends itself to the use of diminutives, often with comic effect, echoing Pierre de Ronsard's (1524-1585) famous poem 'à son âme', beginning 'Amelette Ronsardelette, Mignonnelette, doucelette, Tres-chère hostesse de mon corps'. This poem was memorably set by Ravel in 1923-4 featuring open fifths in the largely one-handed piano part - Ravel said this accompaniment facilitated playing the piano and smoking at the same time. Peter Dayan draws attention to the second line of the last poem (repeated as the final line): 'Ô douce luronette.' In Dayan's words, 'a 'luronne' is- a woman with an approach to love which aligns itself with the stereotypically masculine rather than the stereotypically feminine, being enterprising rather than modest. But the adjective 'douce' undermines that alignment.'<sup>[8]</sup> Harrap's Dictionary defines 'une luronne' as 'a strapping, beefy woman.' I assume, therefore, that a 'luronette' is a small version of the same. Incidentally, the gender of the singer was a secondary consideration for Satie, and while the dedicatee of the three songs is Henri Fabert (who gave the first

performance with Satie on 2 April 1916), the composer made a neat copy for the soprano Jane Bathori, a frequent collaborator.[9] Orledge mentions that 'the vocal line of the first song ('Ne suis que grain de sable') was originally pitched an octave higher'[10] and I wonder whether Satie abandoned this in order to keep the vocal range within the speech register.

An odd feature of the poems is the shift from the second person singular to plural and back again in the first and third songs (the second song avoids these pronouns altogether). In the first song, the pronoun jolts from the suggestion of 'tu' in 'Toujours frais et t'aimable' (lines 2 and 8) to 'Aimez votre amant frère' (line 6). While 'ton amant frère' would have worked in this poetic form, Satie perhaps wanted to avoid the assonance of 'ton amant', or he liked the shivering repeated 'r' sounds of 'votre' and 'frère' in the same line, highlighting the apparent fragility of the narrator. Or perhaps he wanted to show that the narrator is nervous and uncertain how to address his beloved. Incidentally, 'toujours frais et t'aimable' is also a phonetic pun.[11] By the final poem, the narrator is happy to say 'Ta parure est secrète' (lines 1 and 7), no doubt partly because 'Votre parure' would have involved an extra syllable, ruining the poetic form.

The relationship between the piano and the vocal line seems obscure, but in fact the pianist shadows the singer's melodic material in inner parts. Satie made a rare and fascinating (and completely serious) statement about his beliefs as a composer in 1917, in a sketchbook for Socrate:

A melody does not imply its harmony, any more than a landscape implies its colour. The harmonic character of a melody is infinite for a melody is an expression within the overall Expression.

Do not forget that the melody is the Idea, the outline; at the same time as being the form and the subject matter of the work. The harmony is an illumination, an explanation of the subject, its reflection.[12]

Orledge notes that 'even before Satie wrote his article on subject matter and craftsmanship [partly quoted above], he was clearly adhering to its principles in practice,'[13] as we can see in the *Trois poèmes d'amour*. The piano parts are sometimes chordal in texture and sometimes more varied, and there are many seemingly random registral changes and elaborations of the rhythm which show that the 'melody does not imply its harmony' in a straightforward manner. And while the music often uses conventional tonal vocabulary, its syntax is skewed.

'Ta parure est secrète' is the strangest song of all; according to Orledge, manuscript evidence shows that the odd decorative flourishes in the piano part were added at a very late stage in composition. What these flourishes signify is unclear: could their decorative style echo the word 'parure'? Could this be a flamboyant 'romantic song' gesture disconnected from its appropriate musical context, which deliberately disrupts the chant-like rhythmic and melodic style of the rest of the songs?

In February-March 1913, Satie wrote his only known play, *Le piège de Méduse* (translated by Nigel Wilkins as 'Baron Medusa's Trap'), adding seven short dances by June of that year.[14] It is described on the title page as « Comédie lyrique en un acte de M. ERIK SATIE avec musique du danse du même monsieur. » Typically, Satie was reluctant to offer any serious analysis of his work, commenting in the published preface: 'This is a work of fantasy' not realistic. A joke. Don't read anything else into it. The role of Baron Medusa is a sort of portrait- It's even my portrait- a portrait of my whole body.'[15] While this upfront reference to the name character being a portrait of himself appears most uncharacteristic of Satie, when Pierre Bertin played the role in the public premiere in 1921, Satie was very angry that Bertin appropriated many of his mannerisms. Some of the Baron's gestures seem calculated to distance the character from his creator: for instance, at the end of Act 1, we see Méduse on the phone (Satie had no interest in new technology, rarely used a telephone and hated it when others used a telephone in his presence).

It is a very short play, around 25 minutes long in performance, in nine scenes with seven tiny musical interludes which were originally written for a piano with a sheet of paper inserted between the strings to create a percussive effect - the first known example of a prepared piano. The characters are: Baron Méduse, described as being very rich, with a private income; Polycarpe, his servant; Frisette, his daughter; Astolfo, her fiancé; and Jonas, who does not have a speaking role but is referred to several times. Jonas is a stuffed monkey who performs dances accompanied by the musical interludes. The names of the characters have varied origins: Polycarpe is the patron saint of noise;[16] Frisette has a typically 'feminine' fluffy Molière-type name; Astolfo's name has an Italian ring, perhaps evoking the commedia dell'arte; and while the name Méduse echoes the Greek myth (where, of course, it belonged to a female), there is (perhaps not surprisingly) no reference to Greek myth in the play.[17]

Satie's article, 'Choses de théâtre', published in the *Revue musicale S.I.M.* on 15 January 1913, gives clues about his revived theatrical interest. Here, he mentions a plan to write a theatrical work featuring a master, a servant and a skeleton monkey which can be animated,[18] which sounds like a sketch for *Le piège de Méduse*. An undated fragmentary text (now in the Woods-Bliss collection at Harvard) also may have been a party-out for some ideas used in the play:

The door opens: the Gentleman and Lady enter without noticing the bear. They seem to think people are playing a party game - not an amusing one, either.

They are surprised to see everyone climbing everything that is climbable. They have come to ask the young lady's hand in marriage for their son - and they move towards the Lady, greet her and compliment her. (?)

As soon as they see the bear, the poor people, shivering with fright, immediately clamber on all the furniture and stick themselves on the ceiling. The panic is at its height. When will this all end?

But the Bear Tamer moves towards the window and opens it. He reappears with a barrel organ.

This animal doesn't recognise his Master any more.

Straight away, the bear dances, even having the cheek to smile.[19]

Another undated fragment (reproduced by Ornella Volta immediately below this story) may well be connected to it: 'The servant thinks the bear looks strangely like M. Thiers. He does not hesitate to draw attention to himself by his bestiality.'[20] Several elements of these strange bitty tales - a bourgeois home in which people behave far from conventionally, a marriage proposal, a dancing animal, a servant - are shared with *Le piège de Méduse*.

Roger Shattuck, in his influential *The Banquet Years*, places Satie in the context of other artists associated with 'the absurd' - Apollinaire, Le Douanier Rousseau and, most significantly, Alfred Jarry, whose *Ubu Roi* (premiered in 1896) Satie must have known. Connections between *Ubu Roi* and *Le piège de Méduse* include the use of childlike, naïve elements, the inclusion of a puppet, and the external appearance of conformity combined with the absurd. Satie's *Le piège de Méduse*, whose title may suggest a Greek, heroic theme, moves away from the idealised heroes of the 18th century French play, which was often based on Greek myth: this is far from a full-length five-act classical drama.

*Le piège de Méduse* was first performed privately in January 1914 at the home of the composer Roland-

Manuel's parents. Roland-Manuel himself played the role of Méduse, his fiancée Suzanne Roux was Frisette, and his half-brother Jean Dreyfus danced Jonas. Satie played the prepared piano. For the public premiere on 24 May 1921 in the Théâtre Michel, Satie orchestrated the dances for a small ensemble of clarinet, trumpet, trombone, percussion, violin, cello and double bass; the ensemble was conducted by Darius Milhaud.[21]

Le piège de Méduse is viewed by many critics as a harbinger of surrealism or Dada; Nigel Wilkins described the play as 'a Dada drama.'[22] The expression used by the literary critic Henri Béhar to describe the behaviour of the characters is 'ironic conformity'. On the surface, the play appears to be a portrait of typical bourgeois behaviour, the main plotline being Astolfo's visit to his prospective father-in-law, Méduse, to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. The inclusion of a dancing stuffed monkey, who comes to life between the parodistic bourgeois scenes, is the most obvious example of surrealist incongruity in the play.

The social status of Méduse is, on the surface, established. He is independently wealthy and can afford a servant, though Polycarpe does not behave as a social inferior - quite the reverse. He addresses his master as 'tu' and announces in scene i that he 'has to go out this evening to a billiards match' attended by Napoleon! The servant constantly berates his master, creating humour in an inversion of the traditional relationship (and perhaps stressing Satie's left-wing credentials). But even this relationship is rather more complex than it first appears. In scene viii, Méduse says 'I am handing in my resignation as a member of the Union', and Polycarpe responds 'You don't have the right.' At the end of the tiny scene Polycarpe is diminished - Méduse asserts his right to resign, threatens to shoot his servant, and tells him to hide in the cellar. The stage directions at the end of the scene read: 'Exit Polycarpe. Hard to believe he is the same man.' In the final scene of the play - in which, following theatrical tradition for once, all the characters are together on stage - Méduse sets a trap for Astolfo, hence the title of the work. He asks his future son-in-law: 'Can you dance on an eye - on the left eye?' Astolfo initially replies with a question mark, and then admits he cannot. This was the correct response and Méduse welcomes him into the family. Not everything in this most peculiar play fails to make sense'

Satie draws the only female character, Frisette, in one dimension only; she is presented purely as the daughter of one character and the future fiancée of another. In fact, Méduse refers to her in scene ii as 'ma fille de lait', suggesting that he is Frisette's wet nurse! As he goes on to say: 'Oh, that's some story. I won't recount it to you; you wouldn't understand anything' Neither do I, actually.' There is more gender-bending confusion in the following scene, where Frisette first appears and Méduse asks her: 'so, you want to marry? You don't want to remain a bachelor?' While Frisette's name may place her in Molière's era, her verbal interjections (in scene iii, these are mostly repetitions of 'Oui, papa') recall none other than Yniold, Golaud's son, who has a small but irritating role in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which of course is best-known in the setting by Satie's friend Debussy. It is possible, therefore, that Frisette's repetitive language is not just mechanistic but also a private joke between Satie and his more celebrated friend.

The first and final dances are Quadrilles, a dance described in the *New Grove* as 'made up of lively, rhythmic themes of rigid eight- or sixteen-bar lengths, the sections being much repeated within a figure'; traditionally, quadrilles have several named sections, and 'the music was in 2/4, and was usually adapted from popular songs or stage works.'[23] However, Satie's Quadrilles are short and completely unrelated in tempo, rhythm and even their implied time signature, though barlines are absent in all of the dances (recorded example - the two Quadrilles, played on prepared piano by Alexandre Tharaud).

Two of the other five dances are untitled, and the others are a Mazurka, a Valse and a Polka. The bewildering variety of national dance types move the play further away from any specific time or place; we have already noted that the variety of nationalities suggested by the characters' names adds to this effect. There is nothing remotely Polish or Austrian about any of the characters or situations, though for the Polka, Jonas is directed to slap his thighs and scratch himself with a potato.



Satie favours a brisk triple time or a march-like rhythm, as we have heard. All the dances are mechanical, matching the artificiality of the dancing stuffed monkey, and can be repeated as often as required to fit in with the monkey's actions. The mechanical aesthetic links the dances to other Satie works including the *Trois poèmes d'amour*, which similarly distance human feelings behind a repetitive and somewhat ridiculous regularity. Like Molière, Satie finds humour in mechanistic behaviour - and his clockwork humour is underlined by Jonas the monkey, who is the only 'real' mechanical being in the play. One is again reminded of the fragment written by Satie (quoted above) featuring a bear dancing to his master's barrel organ; perhaps Satie intended his piano interludes to evoke this mechanical instrument (the only one commonly available in 1913), not least because a jerky dancing puppet monkey often accompanies a barrel organ. The deformed piano sound matches the low-rent organ sound of the barrel organ and could well explain why Satie chose to prepare his piano. And perhaps Satie saw himself as the animal trainer, as he was the pianist at the first performance of his play.

As in his collection of short piano pieces *Sports et divertissements* (1914) and the piano accompaniments to his *Trois poèmes d'amour*, Satie favours abrupt registral and textural changes in his piano writing. The great Italian writer Tomasi di Lampedusa considers that this is 'surrealist music', though as Ornella Volta rightly points out, the self-proclaimed leader of the surrealists, André Breton, knew nothing about music and indeed positively disliked it.[24]

In Henri Béhar's words: 'Anticipating the Dada movement by several years, Satie illustrates one of its key themes: the questioning of meaning. His language is constantly ridiculous, always changing register, turned upside down, creating confusion.'[25] Similarly, the dances are not always connected with their titles, feature frequent registral or rhythmic jolts, and their length is not always specified. Satie's musical and poetic languages are quirky and innovative - the work of a creator who is always recognisable, no matter what medium he employs.

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[1] Whiting, p. 442.

[2] Orledge (1990), p. 213. The journal ceased publication after the May 1912 number.

[3] Orledge, Robert (1990) *Satie the Composer*. Cambridge: CUP, pp. 208-9.

[4] Translation in Orledge, Robert (1984-5) 'Satie's Approach to Composition in His Later Years (1913-24)', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 111, p. 159. Original in *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, MS 9615 (1), p. 1: 'Ces poèmes ne traitent pas de l'amour de la Gloire, de l'amour du Lucre, de

l'amour du Commerce ou de celui de la Géographie. Non. Ces poèmes sont des poèmes d'amour... de l'Amour; ce sont des pages bêtes et simples où se voit toute la tendresse d'un homme vertueux, très convenables dans ses manières. Vous pouvez les écouter sans crainte. Ils sont au nombre de trois: le premier a comme titre: Poème d'Amour No. 1; le titre du deuxième est un peu moins glorieux: Poème d'Amour No. 3; quant au troisième poème, son titre est plus modeste encore: Poème d'Amour No. 2. Je vais vous les chanter moi-même, sur une seule corde vocale, ainsi que cela se pratiquait, dans l'ancien temps, à la Cour de nos bons vieux rois du XIIe, du XIIIe arrondissement.'

[5] Cited in Robert Orledge (1987) 'satie, Koechlin and the ballet Uspud', *Music and Letters*, vol. 64 no. 1, p. 27 footnote 4. Debussy wrote these words (in red ink) as a dedication to Satie on a copy of Debussy's own *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire*.

[6] Satie wrote three poems which were published in an article by Nigel Wilkins in 1975 ('The Writings of Erik Satie: Miscellaneous Fragments', *Music and Letters* Vol. 56 nos. 3-4 (July-October), p. 303). These poems are also based on identical rhymes at the end of each of their six lines. Again, the rhyme scheme is here more important than the logical meaning of the poem. The second of these poems features diminutives, some invented, at the end of each line, and an unexpected conclusion which undermines the rest of the text: 'C'est le temps des pâquerettes/De mille fleurettes/De mille bleuettes/Et des alouettes/Des petites bêtes/Des maux de têtes.'

[7] 'Le poète ose faire, à son amante, une discrète déclaration, un pâle aveu. Celle-ci l'écoute froidement, du bout des lèvres.'

[8] Peter Dayan (2008), 'Erik Satie's Poetry' in *Modern Language Review* 103 (April), pp. 409-423, at p. 420.

[9] Orledge (1990), p. 309.

[10] Orledge (1984-5), p. 159.

[11] 'Et aimable' is correct French but the hiatus between 'et' and 'aimable' may have been considered awkward by Satie; while 'et t'aimable' is more euphonious, it incorrectly suggests that the words used are 'est aimable' (in which case a liaison between the two words would be correct), creating ambiguity to the ears of French speakers.

[12] Robert Orledge's translation; cited in Orledge (1984-5), p. 157. Original in BN ms. 9611 (4), p. 3 and cited in Wilkins, Nigel (1975) 'The Writings of Erik Satie: Miscellaneous Fragments', *Music and Letters* Vol. 56 nos. 3-4 (July-October), p. 301: 'Une mélodie n'a pas son harmonie, pas plus qu'un paysage n'a sa couleur. La situation harmonique d'une mélodie est infinie, car une mélodie est une expression dans l'Expression. [] N'oubliez pas que que la mélodie est l'Idée, le contour; ainsi qu'elle est la forme et la matière d'une 'uvre. L'harmonie, elle, est une éclairage, une exposition de l'objet, son reflet.'

[13] Orledge (1984-5), p. 163.

[14] Orledge (1990), p. 297.

[15] « C'est ici une pièce de fantaisie' sans réalité. Une boutade. N'y voyez pas autre chose. Le rôle du

baron Méduse est une façon de portrait' C'est même mon portrait' un portrait en pied. »

[16] Dawson (1993) points out that Cocteau refers to Polycarpe in his polemic *Le coq et l'Arlequin*, which praises Satie's musical style as a suitable one for young French musicians to follow (p. 129). Cocteau's book was written in 1916-17 - therefore a few years after Satie's play.

[17] Dawson believes (1993, p. 128) that the name may be an oblique reference to Satie's wish to 'petrify time in his music'.

[18] Article reprinted in Ornella Volta (ed.) (1977) *Satie Ecrits*. Paris : Champ-Libre, p. 71.

[19] Reprinted in Volta (1977), p. 151: 'La porte s'ouvre: le Gentleman et la Lady pénètrent sans remarquer l'ours. Ils ont l'air de croire que l'on joue à un jeu de société - peu amusant, du reste.

Ils sont surpris de voir toute la compagnie grimpée sur tout ce qui est grimpable. Ils viennent demander la main de la jeune fille pour leur fils - et se dirigent vers la Dame, la saluent et lui font des compliments. (')

Dès qu'ils voient l'ours, les pauvres gens, pris d'une frousse intense, escaladent aussitôt tous les meubles et vont s'accrocher au plafond. La panique est à son comble. Quand tout cela finira-t-il'

Mais le Montreur d'Ours a pu gagner la fenêtre et l'ouvrir. Il réapparaît avec un orgue de Barberie.

Cet animal ne reconnaît plus son bon Maître.

L'ours danse immédiatement, ayant même le culot de sourire.'

[20] Ibid: 'Le domestique trouve que l'ours ressemble curieusement à M. Thiers. Il ne tarde pas à se signaler par sa bestialité.' Volta mentions in the second (1981) edition of the *Ecrits* that a bear (called Caviar) was a star attraction at the Nouveau Cirque in Paris in the early years of the 20th century.

[21] Orledge (1990), pp. 297-8.

[22] Nigel Wilkins (1975) 'The Writings of Erik Satie: Miscellaneous Fragments', *Music and Letters* Vol. 56 nos. 3-4 (July-October), p. 239.

[23] Andrew Lamb, 'Quadrille', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (accessed 30 October 2009), '<http://www.grovemusic.com>'

[24] Ornella Volta (ed.) (1988) *Erik Satie: Le piège de Méduse*. Paris: Le Castor Astral, pp. 57-8.

[25] Béhar (1979), p. 138 : « En précédant le mouvement Dada de plusieurs années, Satie illustre l'un de ses thèmes fondamentaux, qui est la mise en cause du langage. Il utilise une langue constamment cocasse, toute en ruptures de ton, en coq-à-l'âne, en confusions. »

