

# SATIE

## Piano Works

Uspud • Le Fils des étoiles

Duanduan Hao, Piano



## Erik Satie (1866–1925) Piano Works

<b>1</b>	<b>Allegro</b> (1884)	<b>0:21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Tendrement</b> (version for piano) (1902)	<b>3:59</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Leit-motiv du ‘Panthée’</b> (1891)	<b>0:45</b>		<b>Le Fils des étoiles: 3 Preludes</b> (1891)	<b>13:34</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Verset laïque et somptueux</b> (1900)	<b>1:27</b>	<b>18</b>	Act I: Prélude, ‘La Vocation’	4:39
<b>4</b>	<b>Fugue-valse</b> (1906)	<b>1:59</b>	<b>19</b>	Act II: Prélude, ‘L’Initiation’	3:51
	<b>Cinq Grimaces pour Le Songe d’une nuit d’été</b> (arr. Darius Milhaud for piano) (1915)	<b>3:57</b>	<b>20</b>	Act III: Prélude, ‘L’Incantation’	4:57
<b>5</b>	No. 1. Prélude	0:50		<b>Sonatine bureaucratique</b> (1917)	<b>4:25</b>
<b>6</b>	No. 2. Coquecigrue	0:51	<b>21</b>	I. Allegro	1:08
<b>7</b>	No. 3. Chasse	0:40	<b>22</b>	II. Andante	1:20
<b>8</b>	No. 4. Fanfaronnade	0:28	<b>23</b>	III. Vivache	1:53
<b>9</b>	No. 5. Pour sortir – Retraite	1:05	<b>24</b>	<b>Nocturne No. 6</b> (completed by Robert Orledge) (1919)	<b>1:41</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Sans titre, peut-être pour la messe des pauvres, ‘Modéré’</b> (version for piano) (1893)	<b>1:09</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Le Bœuf Angora (The Angora Ox)</b> (trans. piano by Johnny Fritz) (?1901)	<b>5:45</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Pousse l’amour: Chanson andalouse</b> (1906)	<b>1:48</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Le Fils des étoiles, Act I: Gnossienne No. 7</b> (1891)	<b>4:28</b>
	<b>La Belle excentrique</b> (version for piano) (1920)	<b>4:20</b>		<b>L’Enfance de Ko-Quo (Recommandations maternelles)</b> (1913)	<b>2:16</b>
<b>12</b>	Dance No. 1. Marche Franco-Lunaire	2:04	<b>27</b>	I. Ne bois pas ton chocolat avec tes doigts	0:51
<b>13</b>	Dance No. 2. Valse du mystérieux baiser dans l’œil	2:14	<b>28</b>	II. Ne souffle pas dans tes oreilles	0:35
	<b>uspud</b> (version for piano) (1892)	<b>26:31</b>	<b>29</b>	III. Ne mets pas ta tête sous ton bras	0:46
<b>14</b>	Act I	10:49	<b>30</b>	<b>Poudre d’Or</b> (1902)	<b>5:38</b>
<b>15</b>	Act II	6:43			
<b>16</b>	Act III	8:52			

Publishers: Durand/Salabert/Eschig 2016 Edition (1–4, 10–13, 18–20, 24–25, 27–29); Universal Edition (5–9); Éditions Salabert (14–16); E. Baudoux (17, 30); Peters Edition (21–23, 26)

## Erik Satie (1866–1925) Piano Works

While the world of music composition has attracted some ‘colourful characters’, from Mozart’s vulgar letters and cat impressions to Peter Warlock’s ultimately fatal interest in witchcraft and sadism, surely the greatest eccentric of them all is the Parisian, Erik Satie (1866–1925). Always appearing in one of seven identical suits, Satie would eat only white food, carried a hammer with him to defend himself from any assailants, and even founded his own religion – of which he was the sole member.<sup>1</sup> While Debussy described him as a ‘medieval and gentle musician, out of place in this century’, certain traits in Satie’s work anticipated later artistic movements, most notably Minimalism, Surrealism and the Theatre of the Absurd. Well known for his sense of humour and dandyish charm, the ‘good master from Arcueil’ – as his friends affectionately called him – is often associated with *Les Six*, though he was not an official member of this group of composers, so prevalent in 1920s Paris. When Satie died in 1925, his friends were shocked to discover that the dapper French composer had lived in a filthy, threadbare room which had not seen a single visitor in 27 years, laden with hoarded umbrellas and newspapers that almost completely buried its most striking feature: two grand pianos placed one on top of the other, with the upper piano used as storage for letters. It was simultaneously a haven and a prison for Satie, an introverted alcoholic who died from cirrhosis of the liver.

Had Satie’s cheery little nine-bar *Allegro* been written a couple of decades later, it could easily be mistaken for a signature theme to a radio programme. Yet this miniature is notable for several reasons: it is Satie’s earliest known work (1884), dating from his teenage years at the Paris Conservatoire but written when he was on a summer holiday in his native Normandy; it is his only composition written in neither Paris nor the Parisian suburb of Arcueil; and it is the first example of Satie’s musical quotations, citing the popular song *Ma Normandie* by Frédéric Bérat, and offering an early glimpse of his many future musical

borrowings and stylistic fusions. *Leit-motiv du ‘Panthée’* is the composer’s only monodic composition, written as a contribution to Joséphin Péladan’s novel *Panthée* (in his cycle *La Décadence latine: éthopée*). With its unpredictable harmonic shifts, *Verset laïque & somptueux* seems to inhabit the world of Debussy’s more reflective piano works, though the same could not be said of the relatively extensive and bizarre *Fugue-Valse* (surely the sole attempt in the canon of Western music to fuse a fugue with a waltz), which was composed in 1906 and later adapted as the *Danse de tendresse* for the ballet *Mercur*.

Satie met the writer, artist and film director Jean Cocteau in 1915, the same year of their first collaboration: incidental music for a production of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, resulting in the *Cinq Grimaces pour Le Songe d’une nuit d’été*.<sup>2</sup> However, its origins lie not with Satie but with another highly eccentric French composer. In early 1915, Edgard Varèse proposed an idea for a French World War One propaganda production of Shakespeare’s comedy to theatrical impresario Gabriel Astruc, hoping to adopt Shakespeare as an ‘ally’ of the French. The music was to be composed by Satie, Schmitt, Ravel, Varèse himself and Stravinsky, while the literary adaptation was entrusted to Cocteau. As most Paris theatres were closed due to the war, it would be put on at the Cirque Medrano near Montmartre with a cast of comic entertainers and acrobats, including star clowns the Fratellini Brothers. But it was a doomed project: in November Varèse left France for the United States, and the following month Cocteau was called up to serve in a French Army ambulance unit. Rehearsals ceased soon after. Only Satie’s music survives, which portrays many of the characteristics of his ‘humoristic’ phase of the 1910s, such as bitonality and allusions to pre-existing music, including the French hunting signal *Le Réveil*, the military bugle call *Retreat*, and Offenbach’s can-can *Le Rondeau du Brésilien*, which he turned into a polka.

Like the first three of his famous *Gnossiennes*, *Modéré*

(1893) has no key signature, no time signature and no bar lines (quite extraordinary for a work of the 19th century), though it is clearly structured into phrases by the minim at the end of each, with the result sounding rather like a hymn or chorale. The French-Spanish hybrid of *Chanson andalouse* finds Satie in a more jovial mood. It was almost certainly written as part of the one-act operetta *Pousse l'amour* (1904–06). It is set to a libretto was by Jean Kolb and Maurice de Feraudy, and earned Satie a degree of popular acclaim.

Premiered at the Théâtre du Colisée on 14 June 1921, *La Belle excentrique* ('The Eccentric Beauty') began as a dance suite for small orchestra, parodying the style of music hall numbers. It was composed as a choreographic stage work with Satie giving it the whimsical subtitle '*fantaisie sérieuse*' ('a serious fantasy'). He later arranged it for piano duet. There are four movements in total, the middle two of which possess typically Satie-esque titles: *Marche Franco-Lunaire* ('Franco-Lunar March') and *Valse du mystérieux baiser dans l'oeil* ('Waltz of the Mysterious Kiss in the Eye').

As with *La Belle excentrique*, the most substantial work recorded here, *uspud*, was not originally intended for piano. Conceived as a Christian ballet/shadow play in three acts by J.P. Contamine de Latour, Satie's music required flutes, harps, and strings. Although it was composed in 1892, it was not premiered until almost a century later, on 9 May 1979 at the Opéra-Comique.<sup>3</sup> Satie's bitterness that it was not performed at its intended location was expressed on the title page of the score: '*présenté au théâtre national de l'Opéra de 20 décembre 1892*' – 'presented to' but not 'performed at'. The play bears a striking resemblance to Rivière's *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, which Satie witnessed some five years previously. As one might expect, De Latour and Satie take the hermetic theme to the point of absurdity, resulting in a mock-serious spiritual exercise, provoking both enthusiastic appreciation and strong criticism when Satie played it through on the piano one evening to a group of acquaintances at the Auberge du Clou. *Uspud* is the sole character, while everyone and everything else – from saints and angels to demons and

humans with animals heads – appear as figments of his feverish, fantastic imagination. The music was probably intended not to be continuous, but rather to highlight particular features of the tableaux and commentary.

A less obscure example of Satie's incidental music, *Le Fils des étoiles* ('The Son of the Stars') was composed in December 1891 to accompany the eponymous poetic drama by Péladan. Satie provided more than an hour of music for Péladan's play, intended for flutes and harps, and this represents his longest through-composed surviving score. However, only his three short act preludes were performed at the premiere on 22 March 1892, and Satie subsequently arranged the preludes for solo piano, publishing them in 1896. The preludes come from what is referred to as Satie's 'Rosicrucian' period, so called because before founding his own church, he was the official composer for the sect the *Mystical Order of the Rose+Cross of the Temple and Grail*, founded by Péladan, where he was given free rein to experiment in his music. Consequently, the harmonic language is more avant-garde than that usually associated with Satie: after the colourful aggression and erratic harmonies of *La Vocation* come the opening chords of *L'Initiation*, which sound much more like Messiaen than Satie. In addition to the three preludes, the incidental music for *Le Fils des étoiles* also contains a *Gnossienne* in Act I, often referred to (unofficially) as his *Gnossienne No. 7*.

The *Sonatine bureaucratique* was composed in the summer of 1917, the same period when Satie's madcap ballet *Parade* was premiered by Diaghilev's Ballets russes. Together with Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1 'Classical'*, which dates from the same year, it anticipates the neo-Classical movement that would become fashionable a few years later, for it comprises a re-working of Clementi's *Sonatina in C major, Op. 36, No. 1*. The programmatic element concerns a minor bureaucrat, happy with his lot, humming an old Peruvian tune 'collected in Lower Brittany from a deaf mute' (heard in the final movement, the deliberately-misspelled *Vivache*). The result is a light-hearted pastiche that is part quotation, part mimicry and part grotesque.

*Nocturne No. 6* is a posthumous work. Shortly before his death in 1925, Satie told the composer and writer Robert Caby that its manuscript was virtually complete and might be published at some point. Six decades later, musicologist Robert Orledge examined Satie's notebooks from the period and discovered a single full draft of a piano piece, missing only two bars in the left hand. Orledge completed a performing version and it was published as Satie's *Nocturne No. 6* in 1994. Also unfinished but left in a far less complete state is *Le Bœuf Angora* ('The Angora Ox') of 1901 for orchestra, from which the final 7 bars were reused in *Redite* from *Trois morceaux en forme de poire*.

Satie's *Enfantines* comprise three sets of beginner piano pieces 'written with the aim of preparing children for the sound patterns of modern music.' They were composed in 1913 and published the following year, with two additional sets published posthumously, including

*L'Enfance de Ko-Quo (Recommandations maternelles)*. The titles reflect Satie's absurdist humour, while simultaneously appealing to the younger pianist: *Ne bois pas ton chocolat avec tes doigts* ('Don't drink your chocolate with your fingers'); *Ne souffle pas dans tes oreilles* ('Don't blow in your ears'); and *Ne mets pas ta tête sous ton bras* ('Don't put your head under your arm'), yet the rather sober character of each piece does not reflect such playful descriptions.

Like his much-loved *Je te veux* (1902), the pieces *Poudre d'Or 'Valse'* (1901) and *Tendrement* (1903) belong to Satie's salon-style waltzes – the latter a product of his collaborations with the cabaret performer Vincent Hyspa. Both pieces exist in song and solo piano versions, exhibiting the amiable and relaxed side of this most curious character.

**Dominic Wells**

<sup>1</sup> The *Église Métropolitaine d'Art de Jésus Conducteur*, founded in 1895.

<sup>2</sup> A year later in 1916, Satie and Cocteau worked together again on *Parade*, which was premiered in 1917 by Sergey Diaghilev's Ballets russes, with sets and costumes by Picasso, and choreography by Massine.

<sup>3</sup> This was performed by Michael Tranchant at the piano, narrator Hubert Camerilo and slide projections by Robert Doisneau.



### **Duanduan Hao**

Duanduan Hao was born in China in 1990. He began his piano lessons when he was four and by the age of six was already drawing attention to his precocious ability. He then studied in Shanghai and in Paris, going on to win many prizes in international piano competitions in Germany, France, Switzerland, China, Italy and elsewhere. Now resident in New York and studying at The Juilliard School and Columbia University, he is a musician of some versatility, with an exceptional talent that has brought him wide critical approval.

Satie's personal eccentricities have never masked the fact that his music was both revolutionary and anticipatory of later artistic movements, principally Minimalism, Surrealism and the Theatre of the Absurd. His piano music offers a perfect distillation of these elements. The *Allegro* is his earliest known work, offering his first use of quotations, a favoured device. The extended pieces *Le Fils des étoiles* and *uspu* derive from incidental music, glorying in parodic and grotesque scenes, while his 'humoristic' phase of the 1910s is explored in *Cinq Grimaces*. Only Satie could attempt to fuse a fugue with a waltz, as he does in the *Fugue-valse*.

**Erik  
SATIE**  
(1866–1925)

1	<b>Allegro</b> (1884)	0:21
2	<b>Leit-motiv du 'Panthée'</b> (1891)	0:45
3	<b>Verset laïque et somptueux</b> (1900)	1:27
4	<b>Fugue-valse</b> (1906)	1:59
5–9	<b>Cinq Grimaces pour Le Songe d'une nuit d'été</b> (arr. D. Milhaud) (1915)	3:57
10	<b>Sans titre, peut-être pour la messe des pauvres, 'Modéré'</b> (1893)*	1:09
11	<b>Pousse l'amour: Chanson andalouse</b> (1906)	1:48
12–13	<b>La Belle excentrique</b> (1920)*	4:20
14–16	<b>uspu</b> (1892)*	26:31
17	<b>Tendrement</b> (1902)*	3:59
18–20	<b>Le Fils des étoiles</b> (1891)	13:34
21–23	<b>Sonatine bureaucratique</b> (1917)	4:25
24	<b>Nocturne No. 6</b> (completed by Robert Orledge) (1919)	1:41
25	<b>Le Bœuf Angora</b> (trans. by Johnny Fritz) (?1901)	5:45
26	<b>Le Fils des étoiles, Act I: Gnossienne No. 7</b> (1891)	4:28
27–29	<b>L'Enfance de Ko-Quo (Recommandations maternelles)</b> (1913)	2:16
30	<b>Poudre d'Or</b> (1902)	5:38

\* Version for piano • A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet

**Duanduan Hao, Piano**

Recorded: 12–14 May 2017 at the Performing Arts Centre, The Country Day School, King City, Ontario, Canada • Producers: Norbert Kraft and Bonnie Silver • Engineer: Norbert Kraft • Editor: Bonnie Silver  
Booklet notes: Dominic Wells • Cover image © Nataliia Dubchak / Dreamstime.com



8.573796

DDD

Playing Time  
84:54



Made in Germany  
[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)

© & © 2018 Naxos Rights US, Inc.  
Booklet notes in English