



ERIK SATIE

Paul SIGNAC, c. 1890, Crayon Conté on paper.

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gift of Mme Françoise Cachin, in memory of her mother Ginette Signac, 1996

GRAND  
PIANO



**SATIE**

COMPLETE PIANO WORKS • 2

NEW SALABERT EDITION

LE FILS DES ÉTOILES

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**NICOLAS HORVATH**

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**NICOLAS HORVATH, *Piano***

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**NICOLAS HORVATH**  
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## NICOLAS HORVATH

An unusual artist with an unconventional résumé, pianist Nicolas Horvath began his music studies at the Académie de Musique Prince Rainier III de Monaco. Aged 16, he caught the attention of the American conductor Lawrence Foster who helped him to secure a three year scholarship from the Princess Grace Foundation in order to further his studies. His mentors include a number of distinguished international pianists, including Bruno Leonardo Gelber, Gérard Frémy, Eric Heidsieck, Gabriel Tacchino, Nelson Delle-Vigne, Philippe Entremont, Oxana Yablonskaya and Liszt specialist Leslie Howard. (It was Howard who invited him to perform for the Liszt Society in the United Kingdom, helping to lay the foundations for Horvath's current recognition as a leading interpreter of Liszt's music.) He is the holder of a number of awards, including First Prize of the Scriabin and the Luigi Nono International Competitions.

Horvath is an enthusiastic promoter of contemporary music; he has commissioned numerous works (including no fewer than 120 as part of his Homages to Philip Glass project in 2014) and collaborated with leading contemporary composers from around the world, including Régis Campo, Mamoru Fujieda, Jaan Rääts, Alvin Curran and Valentyn Silvestrov. He has become noted for the organisation of concerts of unusual length, sometimes lasting over twelve hours, such as the performance of the complete piano music of Philip Glass at the Paris Philharmonie Boulez Hall before a cumulative audience of 14,000 people, and Erik Satie's Vexations. In October 2015 he gave the closing day concert in the Estonia Gallery at the Expo World Exhibition in Milan with a programme of music by Jaan Rääts. A Steinway Artist, his career has taken him to concert venues around the world, and he is also an electroacoustic composer.

[www.nicolashorvath.com](http://www.nicolashorvath.com)

### LE FILS DES ÉTOILES (?1891) \*

73:56

- |          |                                      |       |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>1</b> | Prélude de l'Acte 1 – La Vocation    | 03:53 |
| <b>2</b> | Autre musique pour le Premier Acte   | 21:28 |
| <b>3</b> | Prélude de l'Acte 2 – L'Initiation   | 03:25 |
| <b>4</b> | Autre musique pour le Deuxième Acte  | 20:59 |
| <b>5</b> | Prélude de l'Acte 3 – L'Incantation  | 05:10 |
| <b>6</b> | Autre musique pour le Troisième Acte | 18:38 |

- |          |                                                                                                                       |              |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>7</b> | <b>FÊTE DONNÉE PAR DES CHEVALIERS NORMANDS<br/>EN L'HONNEUR D'UNE JEUNE DEMOISELLE (XI<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE) (1892)</b> | <b>03:08</b> |
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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

OF REVISED EDITION BY R. ORLEDGE  
(EDITIONS SALABERT, 2016)

TOTAL TIME: 77:10

**ERIK SATIE (1866-1925)**  
**COMPLETE PIANO WORKS • 2**  
**NEW SALABERT EDITION**

**ABOUT NICOLAS HORVATH AND THE NEW SALABERT EDITION OF SATIE'S  
'OEUVRES POUR PIANO'**

The internationally renowned French pianist, Nicolas Horvath, approached me (as a Satie scholar) about recording Satie's Complete Piano Music in 2014. After I had heard his phenomenal performances of Philip Glass's music, as well as his amazing virtuosity and sensitive interpretations of Liszt, Chopin and others, I realised that his quest for new approaches to both the Classics and modern music would make him an ideal interpreter of the ground-breaking music of Erik Satie. So I agreed to act as his artistic advisor, and when the commission to edit all of Satie's piano music subsequently came from Salabert (Milan), it provided me with a golden opportunity to revisit all of these wonderful works and sort out the many errors that had accumulated and been perpetuated over the years (some due to Satie and his somewhat erratic proof-reading – as in the *2e Sarabande* in particular). As this was one of the pieces that brought Satie sudden fame in 1911 when Maurice Ravel introduced it to the Parisian musical elite in a concert of the Société Musicale Indépendante at the Salle Gaveau, the need for an authentic recording seemed even more obvious.

I also had long discussions with Nicolas about what constituted 'all' of Satie's music for piano. Should we include song accompaniments? Should we include music that may have been written for harmonium (like *uspud*)? Should we include the piano duets in a double recording? Should we include popular songs for which the text and vocal part are either wordless or missing (as in *Imperial Oxford*)? Should we include two early pieces marked as 'String quartets' even though they are obviously conceived both for and at the keyboard? For one never knows quite how much Satie is intending to confuse (or amuse) his audience in his occasional programme notes, or when he is being completely

'dans la situation d'un homme qui ne connaîtrait que treize lettres de l'alphabet et déciderait de créer une littérature nouvelle avec ces seuls moyens.'

p. 18: 'ce bon monsieur Joséphin Peladan, pour lequel ay grand respect et déférence, n'a jamais eu aucune autorité sur l'indépendance de mon Esthétique; se trouve vis-à-vis de moy, non mon maître main mon collaborateur, ainsy de meme que mes vieux amys messieurs J.P. Contamine de Latour et Albert Tinchant [du Chat Noir].'

'Passons. Je reviendrai sur ce sujet.'

p. 19: 'comme gardien dans un de nos musées nationaux ou autres. ....Soyez assez bon pour croire que ce n'est nullement plaisanterie, fumisterie grossière, de ma part'.

'MM. Paladilhe, Dubois & Lenepveu me furent, sans raison du reste, préférés. Et cela me fit grosse peine.'

'L'avenir me donnera raison. N'ai-je pas été déjà bon prophète?'

**Robert Orledge**



**ROBERT ORLEDGE** has established himself as a leading scholar of late 19th- and early 20th-century French music, focussing on the music of Satie, Debussy, Fauré and Koechlin. He is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Liverpool and has had a special interest in Satie's music since 1985, writing numerous articles on his music, as well as the major publications "Satie the Composer" (Cambridge, 1990/2010) and "Satie Remembered" (Faber, 1995). In 2016 his completely revised edition of Satie's piano music was published by Salabert in Milan and this has been used as the basis for the present recordings.

## FRENCH ORIGINALS OF QUOTES:

p. 16: "Lorsque je me rencontrai avec lui [Debussy], au commencement de notre liaison, il était tout imprégné de Moussorgsky & cherchait très consciencieusement une voie qui ne se laissait pas commodément trouver. Sur ce chapitre, j'avais, moi, une grande avance sur lui: les "prix" de Rome, ou d'autres villes, n'alourdissaient pas ma marche, étant donné que je ne porte pas de ces prix-là sur moi ni sur mon dos; car je suis un homme dans le genre d'Adam (*du Paradis*), lequel n'a jamais remporté de prix – un paresseux, sans doute.

J'écrivais, à ce moment-là, le *Fils des Etoiles* – sur un texte de Joséphin Peladan; & j'expliquais, à Debussy, le besoin pour nous Français de se dégager de l'aventure Wagner, laquelle ne répondait pas à nos aspirations naturelles. Et lui faisais-je remarquer que je n'étais nullement antiwagnérien, mais que nous devons avoir une musique à nous – sans choucroute, si possible.

Pourquoi ne pas server des moyens représentatives que nous exposaient Claude Monet, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, etc? Pourquoi ne pas transposer musicalement ces moyens? Rien de plus simple. Ne sont-ce pas des expressions?

Là était la source d'un départ profitable à des expériences fécondes en réalisations quasi-sûres – fructueuses, même...Qui pouvait lui montrer des exemples? lui révéler des trouvailles? lui indiquer le terrain à fouiller? lui fournir des observations éprouvées?...Qui?...

Dès que je le vis pour la première fois, je fus porté vers lui & désirai vivre sans cesse à ses côtés. J'eus pendant trente ans, le bonheur de pouvoir réaliser ce vœu. Nous avons compris à demi-mot, sans explications compliquées, car nous nous connaissions – depuis toujours, il semblait.

P. 17: J'ai assisté à tout son développement créateur. Le *Quatuor*, les *Chansons de Bilitis*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, naquirent devant moi; & et je puis encore oublier l'émotion que cette musique me donna; car je savourais délicieusement la 'nébulosité' nouvelle & précieuse, à ce moment. Et les magnifiques Morceaux de piano, sous ses doigts, prenaient des poses de féeries, s'alanguissaient & murmuraient en de tendres mélancolies.

L'esthétique de Debussy se rattache au symbolisme dans plusieurs de ses oeuvres: elle est impressionniste dans l'ensemble de son oeuvre. Pardonnez-le-moi, je vous prie: n'en suis-je pas un peu la cause? On le dit....Je ne veux pas répondre: cela ne m'intéresse plus [en 1922]."

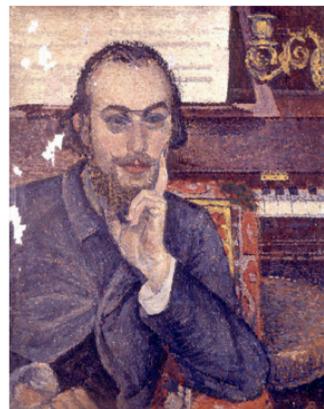
serious in his directions – which is less often than we might imagine. These discussions also helped me make my decisions for the new and entirely revised Salabert Edition and it seemed to me to be in the best interests of Satie (which is what we should all working towards) if I passed on my corrections and conclusions to Nicolas.

In the end, we decided just to take the music written for solo keyboard, treating the duets as a separate genre. We included Satie's own reductions of his ballets (like *Mercur*e and *Relâche*) but not his song accompaniments, or pieces published earlier by Robert Caby that had turned out not to be by Satie at all (like the *Rêverie du pauvre* (MC 399) that was a transposition of the accompaniment to Massenet's song 'Les enfants' made for a parody version (as 'Les éléphants') by Vincent Hyspa around 1900). Then only complete pieces titled by Satie were included, though I decided to include some first versions of pieces that were complete, identifiable and of special interest, and which were simply superseded by Satie's later visions of them (as in the first versions of 'Le Golf' and 'Le Tennis' in *Sports et divertissements*). However, it was sometimes difficult to decide when pieces were short rather than incomplete, so, for instance, the piece that Caby published as an 'Air' in 1968 has been included as a '*Pièce sans titre*' of 1914, whereas *Bévue indiscreète* and *Le vizir autrichien* (both fancifully titled by Satie) have not, because they are simply incomplete minuet-like sketches for what became the more substantial piece titled *Profondeur* around 1909 (which, naturally, is included, even though Satie chose not to publish it during his lifetime). So, in reality, one would have to get Satie back from beyond the grave to decide precisely what went into a 'complete' edition of his piano music. He might well then say 'only what I chose to publish during my career', but that would then deprive us of most of the *Rose+Croix* music (published posthumously by Darius Milhaud). So the problems are never-ending and only capable of individual solutions, of which the present recording constitutes one.

This cycle also contains music that even Satie enthusiasts may not know exists, like what I believe to be the first two movements of the *Petite Sonate* that Satie wrote for Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum as part of his 'Ille Cours' in 1908-9, and which d'Indy

praised (rather to Satie's surprise, I suspect). *Profondeur*, a sort of minuet, may perhaps have been intended as the third movement of this sonata, so the three movements are presented together in this recording. There are various other Schola exercises included to give examples of other things that Satie was working on; some piano reductions of popular songs (when Satie made them himself); some extra trial versions of *Préludes flasques* and *Enfantines* (when they seem to be of equal merit to the pieces Satie chose to publish), and Satie's piano solo versions of the first two movements of *La Belle excentrique* (because they contain important differences from the better known piano duet versions). In retrospect, I have also included two reconstructions of later pieces that Satie intended to complete: *La mer est pleine d'eau: c'est à n'y rien comprendre* for its wonderful title as much as for its content; and the cellular *7e Nocturne*, as Satie planned to write seven of these pieces in 1919 and this is the only real contender for the title and forms a gentle coda to the set in the same key and spirit as it began.

Thus, there is much to discover and to reappraise alongside familiar favourites like the *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. This will become apparent with some of the speeds adopted, about which Satie was sometimes rather vague. All the *Rose+Croix* music is marked 'Slow' or 'Very slow', and pieces like the *Gymnopédies* have had this lethargy applied to each crotchet or quarter note, when Satie surely meant the slow pulse to apply to each complete bar. He chided the conductor Roger Désormière in 1923 for not putting accents on the second beat chords in each bar and thus making them sound sluggish, and his first version of the *1ère Sarabande* had a metronome mark of crotchet/quarter note = 104. Even though Satie later lowered this to crotchet = 84, the *Sarabandes* are often (and erroneously) played more slowly. Musicality has to be the guiding factor here, and anything that sounds like a dirge, or ignores the conceptual spirit of the music, is not as Satie intended it.



Portrait of Erik Satie by Antoine de la Rochefoucauld

myself, wrote to my contemporary Maurice Beaubourg (who was beginning to become known as a journalist and dramatist) to help me get a job as "an attendant in one of our museums – national or otherwise." Lest he think otherwise, I asked him to "be good enough to believe that this is in no way a jest, or coarse practical joke on my part." Nothing came of this, however, as was the case with my various applications to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1892-96 to fill the positions left vacant by the deaths of Ernest Guiraud (whose composition classes I attended at the Conservatoire), Charles Gounod and Ambroise Thomas. "But M.M. Paladilhe, Dubois and Lenepveu were preferred rather than myself, quite without reason, what is more. And that caused me much grief." I ask you, who will be seen as the non-entity twenty years on? But let us pass on again. "The future will prove me right. Haven't prophecies of mine already been realized?"



Satie by Ignacio Zuloaga



Satie by Renaudin

'modern' chords I had invented to open *Le Fils des étoiles* and mixed them with the concept of ordinary cadences from the past, which I then organized by melodic types. My ingenious system made them overlap each other and, voilà, they produced my much shorter *Fête donnée* where melody, harmony and form were presented in a completely new way.



Erik Satie in his Montmartre apartment, Rusiñol, 1891

Another problem in 1892 was that although I was becoming well-known in Bohemian Montmartre – my image was often painted by my new Spanish friends Santiago Rusiñol, Ramón Casos and Ignacio Zuloaga, as well as other young artists like Paul Signac and Antoine de La Rochefoucauld – I was often too poor to light a fire in my tiny room at 6 rue Cortot, even in the depths of winter. So, for the one and only time in my life, I, me,

Although Sâr Peladan had brought me some publicity and helped me get my *Sonneries* printed, I felt I was becoming too much identified with him in the public eye. Mindful of his legal action against Rodolphe Salis, I carefully wrote an open letter to *Gil Blas* on 14 August 1892 asserting that *"this good Monsieur Josephin Peladan, for whom I have great respect and deference, has never exercised authority over the independence of my Aesthetic; his position in relation to me is not that of my master but of my collaborator, in the same way as my old friends Messieurs J.P. Contamine de Latour and Albert Tinchant [of the Chat Noir]."* Besides, most of my music for *Le Fils des étoiles* was never played when Peladan's play was first performed and Contamine and I wanted to feel completely independent when we began an even weirder play called *uspud* shortly afterwards. 'But let us pass on. I shall return to this subject.'

## SATIE'S GENIUS AND HIS RELEVANCE FOR THE PRESENT DAY

Erik Satie (1866-1925) was indisputably a genius and John Cage regarded him as 'indispensable' to any modern musician. However, these concepts require some explanation. In the first place, Satie's unhappy years at the Paris Conservatoire (1879-86) – which he was probably made to attend by his stepmother, Eugénie, a budding salon composer with social aspirations – convinced him to reject Romantic expressiveness, directional music leading to grand climaxes, and all forms of emotional excess. So whilst Satie performed works like Chopin Ballades and Mendelssohn Concertos in his examinations, he was already more concerned with his future identity, and came to reject virtuosity and anything traditional in his own music. It is true that there are odd signs of Chopin in very early works like the *Valse-ballet* and *Fantaisie-valse* of c.1886, which were his only attempts at conventional, appealing 'salon' music. However, if his piano pieces are difficult to perform well, their problems are rarely technical, and they only become 'showy' as a joke (when Satie mimics the repetitive end of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony in 'De Podophthalma'), or parodies academic sonata form (in 'D'Holothurie', also from the celebrated *Embryons desséchés* [*Dried Up Embryos*] of 1913).

Another factor in the equation is that although Satie had a gift for memorable melody and harmony, as well as an excellent ear, his friend and collaborator, the Spanish poet, J.P. Contamine de Latour (1867-1926) recalled in his memoirs that in the 1890s, Satie 'was in the position of a man who knows only thirteen letters of the alphabet, and decides to create a new literature using only these, rather than admit his own insufficiency. For sheer bravado, it was unparalleled at the time, but he made it a point of honour to succeed with his system'. [Il était dans la situation d'un homme qui ne connaîtrait que treize lettres de l'alphabet et déciderait de créer une littérature nouvelle avec ces seuls moyens, plutôt d'avouer sa pauvreté. Comme audace on n'avait pas encore trouvé mieux, mais il tenait à l'honneur de réussir avec son système.] Indeed he only remedied the technical side during his voluntary contrapuntal, compositional, and analytical studies with Albert Roussel, Vincent d'Indy and others at the Schola Cantorum between 1905 and 1912. During this period he (typically) invented the 'new fugue' with its deliberate simplicity

(as in *En habit de cheval*). And after it his approach became more linear, and even sparser than before – notably in the 60 or so ‘humoristic’ piano pieces he composed between 1912 and 1915, of which the best known are the *Sports et divertissements*.

Thus, in his early *Rose+Croix* music the ever-inventive and innovation-seeking Satie took the spirit, but not the letter, of medieval plainsong as the basis for pieces like the four *Ogives* (?1888), which use slow chordal chains, with contrasts of texture and dynamics as a means of both expansion and formal balance. But within this hieratic formula, Satie was always experimenting and inventing new organizational systems – as in the *Fête donnée par des Chevaliers Normands* with its thirteen overlapping harmonic cells divided into melodic categories, or the bi-partite *Prélude du Nazaréen* (also 1892), in which he perfected his concept of what Patrick Gowers has described as musical ‘punctuation form’. Here the complex, cellular music acts as the prose, with the punctuation provided by a series of recurring cadence figures acting as commas, and as full stops when two of them occur together. These have their own distinctive rhythms and more sensuous harmonies to distinguish them from the surrounding musical literature.

In 1917, during the composition of *The Death of Socrates* [Mort de Socrate], Satie reflected on his career as a professional composer in a revealing article called ‘Subject matter (Idea) and Craftsmanship (Construction)’ [La Matière (Idée) et la Main d’Oeuvre (Couture)]. At its heart are these two statements:

‘A melody does not imply *its harmony*, any more than a landscape implies *its colour*. The harmonic potential of a melody is infinite... Do not forget that the melody is the Idea, the outline; as much as it is the form and the subject matter of a work. The harmony is an illumination, an exhibition of the object, its reflection’.<sup>1</sup>

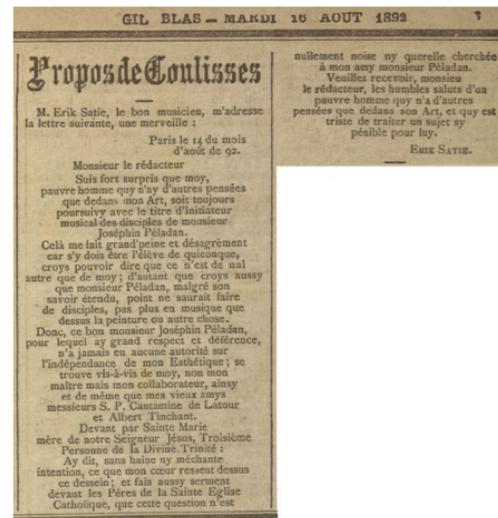
‘If there is form and a new style of writing, there is a new craft... The Idea can do without Art. Let us mistrust Art: it is often nothing but virtuosity’.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Une mélodie n’a pas son harmonie, pas plus qu’un paysage n’a sa couleur. La situation harmonique d’une mélodie est infinie... N’oubliez pas que la mélodie est l’idée, le contour, ainsi qu’elle est la forme & la matière d’une oeuvre. L’harmonie, elle, est un éclairage, une exposition de l’objet, son reflet.]

<sup>2</sup> [S’il y a forme & écriture nouvelle, il y a métier nouveau... L’idée peut se passer de l’Art. Méfions-nous de l’Art: il n’est souvent que de la Virtuosité.]

*I witnessed his whole creative development. The String Quartet, the Chansons de Bédier, Pelléas et Mélisande were born before me [in 1893-98]; and I still remember the emotion that this music gave me; with rapture I savoured its ‘raziness’, which was new and wonderful at that time. And the magnificent Piano Pieces seemed to come from fairyland under his fingers, languid and murmuring with tender melancholy.*

*In several of his works Debussy’s aesthetic is related to symbolism; his work as a whole is impressionistic. Forgive me for mentioning it: am I not to some extent the cause of this? People say so... I shall not reply: it doesn’t interest me any more [in 1922].”*



Letter to Gil Blas, 14 August 1992

Back in 1892, I also had other problems. My friend Contamine de Latour saw me as being ‘in the position of a man who knows only thirteen letters of the alphabet and decides to create a new literature using only these’. So with a little help from what I knew about – plainsong, the modes, repeated cells, architecture, literature and art – as well as a great desire to overthrow the excesses of the Romantic era, I began writing archaic-sounding works like the *Fête donnée par les Chevaliers Normandes en l’honneur d’une jeune Demoiselle (XIe Siècle)*. Feeling iconoclastic at the time and rather attached to the interval of the fourth (both perfect and augmented), I used elements of the disembodied,

## ERIK SATIE ON HIMSELF

### A sort of reflective autobiography with some additions and discoveries by Robert Orledge

*"When I first met Debussy, at the beginning of our relationship, he was full of Mussorgsky and trying very conscientiously to find a path which was not easy to discover. In this respect, I, myself, had a great advance on him: no 'prizes' from Rome, or any other town, weighed down my steps, since I do not carry any of those things around on me, or on my back; for I am a man in the style of Adam (from Paradise), who never won any prizes at all – a lazy man, no doubt.*

*At that time I was writing my *Fils des Étoiles* – to a text by Josephin Peladan – and I explained to Debussy how we French needed to break away from the Wagnerian adventure, which did not correspond with our natural aspirations. And I told him that I was not at all anti-Wagnerian, but that we needed a music of our own – preferably without sauerkraut.*

*Why not use the representational methods demonstrated by Claude Monet, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, etc? Why not make a musical transposition of these methods? Nothing could be simpler. Are they not also expressions?*

*That was the profitable starting-point for fertile experiments abounding in tentative – and even fruitful – results... Who could show him examples? reveal discoveries to him? point out the ground to be explored? give him the benefit of experience? ...Who?...*

*As soon as I saw him for the first time, I was drawn towards him and longed to live forever at his side. For thirty years I had the joy of seeing this wish fulfilled. We understood each other perfectly, with no need for complicated explanations, for it seemed that we had always known each other.*

So, for Satie, the Idea was central, both as a melodic initiator of compositions, and as something that could transcend what was normally regarded as high art. By 1917, Satie had achieved the technical expertise necessary to achieve this high and sophisticated art (even if his orchestration was, in reality, closer to instrumentation), but he chose to remain with simplicity, clarity, precision, elegance and economy, which he regarded as quintessentially French traits. However, he principally regarded himself as Parisian, so the elements of sophistication, surprise and chic also come into the equation, and provided his main contribution to the fashionable world of the 1920s as 'godfather' to Les Six and the embodiment of the 'esprit nouveau'.

So one can truthfully say that Satie's genius came from his being a man of Ideas, both in the way that he approached each work, and in the prevalent concept of the Idea itself. He was no intellectual, but few composers can claim to have invented something absolutely original which then influenced others. With Satie such iconoclastic ideas abound, and they had a marked effect on the aesthetic of John Cage and his contemporaries once they became internationally known after World War II. And they mostly arose within his piano music. Thus, underneath the surface of the slow, haunting *Gymnopédies* lies the concept of a music that is divorced from its implied source of inspiration – here celebratory dances by nude Spartan boys. This divorce is compounded by the apocalyptic, prefacing quotation from Contamine de Latour's *Les Antiques*, in which 'shadows of a raging torrent rushed in waves of gold over the polished flagstones'. [Oblique et coupant l'ombre en torrent éclatant/ Ruisselait en flots d'or sur la dalle polie] Moreover, Satie viewed these sets of pieces in an architectural manner, like walking round a sculpture and viewing it from different angles. If one side looked good, then the whole creation must be good in itself.

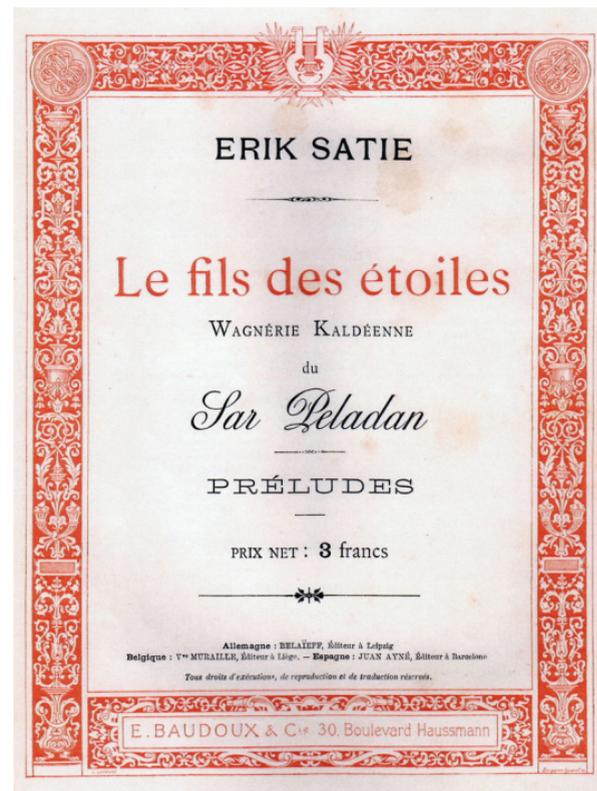
This spatial concept of music as architecture or mere scenic backcloth to an utterly divorced text appears even more clearly in Satie's early theatrical works, like *Le Fils des étoiles* or the weird 'Christian' ballet *uspud*, whose other claim to fame is its text entirely in lower case letters, long before e.e. cummings. Only very occasionally does Satie remember the theatrical stage in his early works. At the end of his *Prélude à La Porte héroïque du ciel* (1894), he indicates the rise of the curtain and a small musical extension

into the first moments of the opening scene. Satie liked this piece so much that he dedicated it to himself! But it still has nothing one could justifiably relate to Jules Bois' effusive and mystical text.

Then, in the previous year (1893), Satie was vexed by the ups and downs of his tempestuous (and only) affair with the artist Suzanne Valadon (1867-1938). He expressed this in two original ways. In the *Danses Gothiques*, he composed a huge chunk of cellular music to preserve the 'calm and tranquillity of his soul', which he then divided up arbitrarily into nine separate dances with elaborate religious titles. Sometimes a new dance will start in the middle of a motif, so titles and music are clearly unrelated.

Then Satie wrote an extraordinary, internally repetitive piece called *Vexations*, which began with a (very necessary) period of silent meditation before the whole piece was repeated 840 times. Besides having many connections with the Lucas summation series (1, 3, 4, 7, 11 etc, right up to 840 – the sum of the first twelve numbers up to 322), its theme features 11 of the 12 semitones that make up the chromatic scale. So it is essentially the first piece of organised total chromaticism, as well as being quasi-serial with a hexachordal subdivision, as later favoured by Anton Webern. At the same time, the theme has associations with the keys of E flat, C and F sharp minor and with E major in its last five notes. The tiny song 'Bonjour Biqui, Bonjour!' which Satie composed for Suzanne as an Easter gift on 2 April 1893, uses chords 1 and 13 from the *Vexations* sequence, so *Vexations* begins where the song leaves off. Thus they clearly belong together, and if we remember that 'Vexations' was the subtitle of the *Coelum Philosophorum* by the 16th-century Swiss alchemist, Paracelsus, we can begin to see that most pieces by Satie have hidden depths and mysteries if you know where to look for them, and why John Cage attached so much importance to a strangely chromatic piece that, in itself, lasts less than a minute and is also repetitive in itself. Satie's fascination with medieval history, magic and alchemy means that he would surely have known about this connection.

Then we find Satie inventing another Cageian stand-by, the prepared piano, by placing sheets of tissue paper between the hammers and the strings at the premiere of *Le Piège de Meduse* in 1914. Then comes 'furnishing music' in 1917, the forerunner of muzak, or music not meant to be listened to; the new approach to 'initial choreography' that he



Score of *Le Fils des étoiles*, page 1



a. Programme poster of the first Rose+Croix soirée



b. Poster of the Salon de Rose+Croix from 10 March to 10 April. Galerie Durand-Ruel, by Carlos Schwabe

proposed to André Derain and Léonide Massine in 1922 (with the music being added later to fit this); leading to the first synchronized score to a silent film with René Clair's *Entr'acte* in 1924 (published as *Cinéma*). Apollinaire coined the term 'sur-réalisme' to apply to Satie's *Parade*, and it goes without saying that 'minimalism' in modern music stemmed from his repetitive pieces with the occasional surprise, as in 'Aubade' from the *Avant-dernières pensées* (1915), which began life as a one-chord serenade, or 'strange rumour' [étrange rumeur] dedicated to Paul Dukas.

Sometimes with Satie, the Idea behind a work can appear more significant than the music it generated, but that is generally because its full implications have not been taken into consideration. If we imagine that the 21 tiny *Sports et divertissements* are just for entertainment and diversion, then we have to remember that their combination of music, prose poems and Cubist pictures in a mini-*gesamtkunstwerk* with Japanese haiku-like tendencies was remarkable for its time. For, more than any other contemporary composer, Satie sought to demolish the barriers between the arts and to look at music afresh as a vital part in the interaction between the various levels of aesthetic experience; as a contribution towards a larger, and always thoroughly modern, whole. He might be described as the first cross-cultural artist whose quest to publicise and radicalise his latest compositions led him to end up working to commission with elite names like Picasso, Braque, Cocteau, Derain, Diaghilev, Massine, Rolf de Maré and Brancusi in the post-war years. Despite his being vilified by many after his death, Satie's enduring success can be seen in the survival of his influence into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a living spirit, even as a blueprint for future iconoclasm, in composers as diverse as Virgil Thomson, Steve Reich, Morton Feldman, Howard Skempton, Christopher Hobbs and Harrison Birtwistle, to cite but a few.

## ABOUT THIS RECORDING

In his quest to make this landmark recording as authentic as possible, Nicolas Horvath has recorded the music with the piano sound that Satie would have known and composed for during his career. Thus the pieces up to 1897 are recorded on an 1881 Erard (which once belonged to Cosima Wagner). When Satie asked Picasso to design the programme/poster for the Festival of his works in June 1920, he specifically got him to include 'Piano Erard' at the bottom, which implies that this was his instrument by choice.

## The Rose+Croix music (1891-95)

### Le Fils des étoiles [?December 1891]

The incidental music to the three acts of Péladan's pastoral drama (set in Chaldea in 3000 BC and featuring a 16-year old androgynous shepherd boy called Oelohil) is one of Satie's longest scores. Only the three act-preludes were published and performed in his lifetime, with the misleading title 'Wagnerie Kaldéenne' being added by his publisher Baudoux to a remarkable edition printed entirely in red ink and without barlines in 1896. It also carries a 'dedication' bearing the imprint of Satie's own newly-founded church, L'Église Métropolitaine d'Art de Jésus Conducteur.

Supposedly for harps and flutes, it is more likely that Satie played the preludes himself on piano or harmonium at the Galerie Durand-Ruel on 22 March 1892, because the harp-parts for Satie's famous chromatic fourth chords at the start are virtually impossible to perform. The rising melody above them is clearly plainsong derived, even if the music was announced beforehand as being of 'an admirably oriental character' which, at the premiere, 'proved to be far beyond the heads' of his audience 'and was met by an icy silence!' [d'un caractère admirablement oriental... Musique magnifiquement incomprise et accueillie par un silence glacial.] However, the complete music appears on the present recording and shows Satie composing in short juxtaposed sections and inserting a complete and attractive *Glossienne* towards the end of Act 1.

## Fête donnée par les Chevaliers Normandes en l'honneur d'une jeune Demoiselle (Xle Siècle) (1892).

Also plainsong inspired, the first of the 'Four Preludes' published posthumously by Darius Milhaud reverses the process of the Ogives in that the theme appears harmonised modally at the outset before being heard on its own. It also marks Satie's first use of a compositional system (which unusually he adhered to throughout) based on a series of interlocking cadences and using contrary motion between the outer parts.

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L'Œuvre de la **Rose + Croix** ne Tourne d'abord, pour obéir à son esthétique exclusivement traditionnelle et liturgique, toujours les fêtes musicales par le chef-lieu de la musique religieuse : cette *Messe du Pape Marcello* qui fut composée en exécution des secrets de Saint Concile de Trente.

Composée en 1527, en contrepoint liguré à six parties, elle est regardée depuis trois siècles comme la plus haute expression du chant religieux.

Par IV, scandale de caractère profane, et méprisement (où cet art accentuait depuis deux siècles, allant le banet des églises), Palestrina écrit sa Messe et sauva la musique d'une sorte d'extinction.

Les plans de l'harmonie retrouvés à cette addition le point de départ et d'analyse en s'appuyant les deux colonnes d'Harmonie de la Beauté harmonique, les deux incommensurables : le Fils de la neuvième Symphonie et les deux actes mystiques de *Paralipomenes*, cette œuvre la plus sublime du siècle.

La Conscience chante parfois que méprisait mais la même Messe l'entendit si ardemment que son cadence devient une date dans les éphémères de la haute culture.

Au reste, accidentel, il signifie réalisation, le moment est d'abord dénotant l'absence par l'absence de cette œuvre, qui symbolise la voix de l'humanité admettant son Sauveur.

La notation en valeurs longues est acceptée à complètement chargé et fait qu'un rendu, représentatif, attachement, l'unité de la mesure, 16 vers, paroles, qui ont leur temps dans la musique du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en elle était considérée comme amovible ; et enfin, le mouvement qu'il convient de prendre est double, car toutes les apparences tendent à en faire exagérer la lenteur et le rythme ne date que de ce siècle, on ne peut avoir de ce côté que des indications discutables.

Nous avons consulté à cet égard toutes les bibliographies et recueils l'opinion des savants musiciens dont le nom fait autorité : Niermeyer, Chéroux, Fétis, d'Ortega, etc. ce qui représente les seuls documents dont on puisse s'appuyer hors de l'Italie.

Si, par la persécution divine, je pourrais la carrière où l'entre avec vous et par vous : dans vingt ans, ce sera peut-être un successeur noble de vous dire : j'ai créé le Fils des Étoiles.

Comme je suis plus, Dieu vous, qu'un Normand, vous être plus que des lettres d'Armée, vous, mes premiers acteurs, nobles musiciens de ma période.

M. ERNEST SATIE a composé trois préludes pour harpe et flûtes, d'un caractère admirablement oriental et qui, au sein de chaque acte, préparent successivement le spectateur à tableaux qu'il va contempler.

Da même jeune maître, que l'Œuvre de la Rose+Croix s'honore de mettre en lumière : les *Sonneries de la Rose-Croix*, *Sonnerie de l'Ordre*, *Sonnerie du Grand Maître*, *Sonnerie de l'Archevêque*, pour harpe et trompette.

L'originalité et le style sévère de ces compositions les ont fait adopter par l'Œuvre, pour ses cérémonies. Elles ne peuvent être vues, à moins d'une licence du grand Maître, être exécutées qu'aux réunions de l'Œuvre.

**ORDRE DU SPECTACLE**

1. Messe du Pape Marcello de Palestrina, chantée à Capella par 40 voix, sous la direction de BIHN GRALLON.
2. Sonnerie de l'Ordre, ERNEST SATIE.
3. Chœur à Palestrina, sous la direction de BIHN GRALLON, dirigé par le béatifié (M<sup>r</sup> DUBOIS).
4. Sonnerie du grand Maître, ERNEST SATIE.
5. Prélude de la Vocation, ERNEST SATIE.

**Le Fils des Étoiles**

6. Acte I. — La Vocation.
7. Prélude de l'Initiation, ERNEST SATIE.
8. Acte II. — L'Initiation.
9. Prélude de l'Incantation, ERNEST SATIE.
10. Acte III. — L'Incantation.
11. Sonnerie de l'Archevêque, ERNEST SATIE.

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(Le Programme de 22 Mars servira à la Répétition générale de Fils des Étoiles, 19 Mars, & à la Répétition générale de la Messe de Palestrina, le Vendredi 20 Mars 1892.)

Fine — Imp. B. — Paris, 11, Rue Le Pelletier, 11, Galerie Durand-Ruel.

Programme from the Rose+Croix soirée  
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