CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM AND 'LE CAS SATIE'

by

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Abstract

While scholars recognize Satie's important influence on the music of our century, the extent and specific nature of his influence has yet to be defined. Focusing on analyses of his personality and his music, modern literature continually neglects to study Satie's historical importance. It is his so-called bizarre and eccentric personality and the pretended simplicity of his musical style that have, in general, attracted modern authors' attention. Consequently, a controversy known as "Le Cas Satie" has developed: How could an eccentric composer whose music is frequently considered inconsequential, have truly exerted the great influence attributed to him in modern literature? If Satie's historical position is to be understood, modern literature's portrayal of the composer must be examined for accuracy, and the extent of his impact must be clarified. This study makes a contribution in this direction by examining criticism (in music reviews, art and theatrical journals and in daily newspapers) published in Paris from 1892 to 1930.

Our thesis first surveys this criticism, familiarizing the reader with it and revealing how widely Satie was known through the press. An analysis of the criticism then demonstrates how Satie was generally regarded by his contemporaries. Three facets of the composer are discussed: his personality, his humor, and his music. We learn that the contemporary view of Satie was that of a respected composer, unlike the typical modern depiction of him as an eccentric. Furthermore, an
examination of contemporary comments about Satie's significance provides insights into his historical position, for they reveal that it was not his music, but rather the influence of his musical compositions and his aesthetics that were considered his most important contributions. By defining those areas in which Satie was believed to be most significant, we begin to understand the extent and specific nature of his influence.
Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................... ii
List of Figures .................................................. v
Acknowledgements ................................................ vi
I. INTRODUCTION ............................................... 1
II. SURVEY OF THE CRITICISM .................................. 7
   A. WRITINGS FROM 1892 TO 1919 ............................. 9
   B. WRITINGS FROM 1920 TO SATIE'S DEATH .................. 15
   C. OBITUARIES ............................................... 28
   D. WRITINGS FROM 1926 TO 1930 ............................. 30
   E. SUMMARY .................................................. 35
III. SATIE'S PERSONALITY, HIS HUMOR, AND HIS MUSIC:
     CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ...................................... 40
     A. SATIE'S PERSONALITY ..................................... 40
     B. SATIE'S HUMOR .......................................... 49
     C. SATIE'S MUSIC ........................................... 55
IV. SATIE'S SIGNIFICANCE AND THE EXTENT OF HIS IMPACT .. 66
    A. SATIE'S SIGNIFICANCE .................................... 66
    B. SATIE'S INFLUENCE ...................................... 70
    C. SATIE'S INNOVATIONS .................................... 81
V. CONCLUSION ................................................... 92

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................... 98
   A. WRITINGS DATING FROM 1892 TO 1930 ..................... 98
   B. WRITINGS DATING AFTER 1930 ............................. 108
List of Figures

1. Annual Amounts of Criticism ................................. 8
2. Annual Amounts of Criticism in Various Sources ....... 37
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I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1932, when Templier wrote the first biography of Satie,¹ writers have acknowledged the composer's important influence on the music of our century. Today it is recognized that Satie's aesthetic and new approach to music was a marked reaction against Romanticism and Impressionism, a rebellion in musical thought with which Satie "foreshadowed the lines on which French music of the last fifty years has developed."²

Satie's influence on French composers was profound. For example, it has often been said that the chains of unresolved chords in Satie's Sarabandes (1887) foreshadowed the techniques of Impressionism,³ and that Satie advised Debussy to reject Wagner's ideas in favor of a purely French musical style. After Jean Cocteau, in his book Le Coq et l'Arlequin (1917), proclaimed that Satie's music fulfilled the need for a return to a clear and simple musical style that was strictly French, younger composers such as the members of Les Six and L'Ecole d'Arcueil began to realize that Satie's ideas were worthwhile. These composers then adopted and began to apply Satie's aesthetic and his approach to music. Moreover, to explain Satie's influence, modern authors claim his musique d'ameublement was the precursor of our daily background "musak"

and that it initiated the world of movie music." Some authors even profess that John Cage was influenced by Satie. However, Satie's importance can not be confined to musical composition, for another of his main accomplishments was to change the public's way of thinking about music.

In spite of the widespread acknowledgement of Satie's influence, he remains relatively unknown. Authors have continually overshadowed his important historical position with analyses of his personality: he is commonly referred to as bizarre, timid, and eccentric. These labels have sometimes been used to explain Satie's unorthodox musical language as well as his use of humorous titles and fanciful annotations. Such analyses deny that Satie's techniques were musically serious and intentional.

It is quite evident that the characterization of Satie in general music histories and dictionaries is primarily the perpetuation of ideas which are put forth in two major biographies: one by P. D. Templier and the other by Rollo Myers. The result is a widespread misunderstanding of Satie. The type of description of his personality which has hindered the appreciation of Satie's talents can be seen in the following excerpts.

Templier, whose work was written with the least amount of

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historical perspective, typically portrays Satie's personality in the following terms: "Satie publicly flaunted his eccentricity and presented himself as a candidate for membership in the Académie des Beaux-Arts." Templier speculates that "the death of Debussy liberated Satie, who had little faith in himself and did not dare express himself seriously." Templier believes that "loneliness itself could explain the strangeness of his personality." He maintains that Satie's humor was "a sign of overdeveloped sensitivity. Through humor, a form of intellectual suicide, he was able to hide his misery and his sad destiny." Templier's attitude may be summarized by his statement: "His name no longer appears on concert programs and although we consider this a good thing, we cannot judge him."

Myers also emphasizes the unusual qualities of Satie's behavior. He writes: "Irresponsible, purely arbitrary fantasy can be discerned in the eccentricities of the [Satie's] uncle exactly the same as with Satie later." Speaking of Satie's use of "humorous disguises" in the Trois Valses Distinguées du Précieux Dégoûté (1914), Myers observes that "it was as much for his private amusement as for any other reason that he chose to present his music that way."

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7Templier, p.19.  
8Ibid., p.42.  
9Ibid., p.69.  
10Ibid., p.93.  
11Ibid., p.103.  
12Myers, p.15.  
13Ibid., p.84.
avoid criticism.

The same type of description is often being perpetuated by more recent authors. For example, Patrick Gowers states that Satie used his "natural humor as a protective cloak."\textsuperscript{14} In Baker's Biographical Dictionary Satie is simply described as a "celebrated French composer who elevated his eccentricities to the level of high art."\textsuperscript{15} David Ewen explains that after Satie went to the Schola Cantorum his "thinking and planning became even more fanciful and grotesque than before."\textsuperscript{16} The problem arising from this type of characterization is evident when an author says the following about Satie's humorous piano pieces: "These works cannot be called important musically, but they are indicative of their composer's strange personality."\textsuperscript{17} It seems that Sonnedecker's 1958 observation still holds true today: "Satie is now generally considered . . . to be little more than a musical humorist and eccentric."\textsuperscript{18}

The other element which has hindered a full appreciation of Satie's work is the simplicity of his musical style. Often his aversion to technical display is taken as a sign of lack of ability. For this reason his music tends to be thought of as

\textsuperscript{15}Baker's Biographical Dictionary, 6th ed., s.v. "Satie, Erik."
\textsuperscript{17}Abraham Skulsky, "The Non-French Generally Fail to Understand his Influence," Musical America 70 (1950): 32.
\textsuperscript{18}Sonnedecker, "The Unappreciated Erik Satie," p.44.
amateurish and inconsequential. Many authors\textsuperscript{19} tend to follow the line of thinking put forth by Skulsky: "Satie's importance lies less in the nature of his own works than in the influence he has exercised."\textsuperscript{20} In two major musical dictionaries we are told that "he was dismissed by most serious musicians as being an uneducated person who tried to conceal his ignorance of music with persiflage."\textsuperscript{21} "He is best remembered as a composer of music which is deliberately modest and inconsequential, and of bizarre titles."\textsuperscript{22} Clearly, when we think of French music at the turn of the century, we tend to think of more elaborate compositions and particularly those of Debussy and Stravinsky.

Because Satie is still seldom taken seriously, a controversy has developed. How could an eccentric composer with a bizarre personality, whose music is considered inconsequential, have truly exerted such influence as modern literature claims? If Satie's importance is to be understood, the portrayal of Satie must be re-examined for accuracy, and the extent of his impact on the artistic revolution must be clarified. This study intends to make a contribution in this direction by studying the criticism of Satie found in the contemporary Parisian press (including literary, artistic, and music journals, as well as newspapers) from 1892 to 1930.

In order to illustrate how widely known Satie was during

\textsuperscript{20}Skulsky, p.5.
\textsuperscript{21}Baker's.
\textsuperscript{22}Grove's.
his lifetime, we will first survey the contemporary criticism, considering the number of articles dealing with Satie, discussing briefly the events surrounding their publication and the sources in which they were published. Secondly, we shall analyse this literature and reveal how Satie was regarded by his contemporaries. Finally, we shall focus on Satie's impact, attempting to clarify it by examining contemporaries' statements about his importance and his achievements. By taking these three steps this survey of the contemporary press attempts to prove that Satie played a greater role in the artistic revolution than has previously been portrayed in modern literature.

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify Satie's historical importance by demonstrating that he was highly regarded in his own lifetime--and thus that he could have had the great influence he is reputed to have had--and to show the extent of recognition he received for his artistic contributions, as seen in the contemporary press.
II. SURVEY OF THE CRITICISM

This study of Erik Satie is based on articles and notices found in Parisian periodical literature and in daily newspapers dating from 1892 (the first known article) to 1930 (five years after Satie's death). While some of these articles have been cited since Templier's 1932 biography of Satie, the majority were located by a search through numerous contemporary journals, including artistic, theatric, and literary sources. Daily newspapers were likewise also consulted. This collection of criticism draws from a great variety of sources and adequately demonstrates how Satie was represented in the Parisian press between 1892 and 1930.

The amount of criticism found for each year of the period being considered has been charted (Figure 1). The graph (using a scale of one square to equal two articles) illustrates annual fluctuations and identifies the total amount of literature involved in this study.

The fluctuations in the graph will be discussed chronologically. They give a good indication of precisely when Satie received the most attention. The varying amounts of criticism will be related to events and performances, attention

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1 Research was conducted at the University of British Columbia, University of California at Berkeley, and at various branches of the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

2 Because of their lack of indexing and the vast amount of information newspapers contain, this search was done less systematically than the one we undertook for periodicals. For these reasons our study partially relies on the collection of newspaper clippings found in the Fonds Montpensier of the Music Department of the Bibliothèque nationale.
being given to authors and sources of the articles when necessary. This will allow the reader to grasp the relative importance of the many different articles and to become familiar with the literature which will be dealt with in depth in following chapters. References will not always indicate author, title and source, but will be sufficient to allow the reader to find the article in the bibliography.

Figure 1 - Annual Amounts of Criticism

YEARS AMOUNTS (One square equals two articles.)
A. WRITINGS FROM 1892 TO 1919

The earliest located criticisms of Satie's music appeared in 1892. They were reviews of *Le Fils des Etoiles*, an incidental play produced by the Sâr Joséphin Péladan, at one of the Rose et Croix salons. Five brief reviews of this work were uncovered, though it should be mentioned that the articles focused mainly on the drama, barely mentioning the fact that Satie wrote the music.

Several reviews were found in major publications of the time. For example, one of the items was in *Le Ménestrel*, a well-established music periodical whose contributors were often distinguished. Ncisque Narcky wrote a review in *Le Temps*, which was a major daily newspaper; *La Nouvelle revue*, another long-lived publication, contained an article by Louis Gallet. The other two reviews of *Le Fils des Etoiles* were in less prominent periodicals. Maurice Lefèvre's report was in *Le Monde artiste*, and Pierre Valin wrote about the work in *La Revue d'art dramatique et musical*.

No other criticism about Satie was printed—to the best of our knowledge—until 1895 when Conrad Satie (Erik's brother) tried to explain Erik's ideas and interests. His article served as an introduction to part of Satie's *Messe des Pauvres* and was published in *Le Coeur* (the journal of an esoteric group led by Jules Bois).

Satie was not recognized in the press between 1895 and 1911, a fact which can be related to his activities. During part of this period (up to 1903) Satie was involved in the
Montmartre musical scene. He not only socialized for hours in the cafés, but he also worked as a pianist in the Auberge du Clou and sometimes accompanied Vincent Hypsa at soirées in elegant homes. Though Satie composed some songs during these years (e.g., "Je te veux" c. 1900) for well-known chansonnieres such as Paulette Darty, his works were not mentioned in the press, not even in journals reflecting café life such as Le Gil blas illustre. Neither was he recognized while he was at the Schola Cantorum (1905-1908). This lack of press coverage can be explained by several factors: the music of his so-called "mystical" period (1890-1898) was for small and isolated religious groups; in the cafés, the singers were the object of focus, not the pianists or composers; and, most importantly, the public was not yet interested in Satie's music.

It was not until 1911, when Ravel encouraged La Société musicale indépendante (and La Société nationale in 1913) to program Satie's music, that music critics began to notice and to praise Satie. It is interesting to note that the amount of criticism found in 1911 was nearly the same as that found in 1892. Although music publishers began to request Satie's piano works, and his music was performed by these important societies, the general public was yet to be exposed to Satie through the press.

The articles dating from 1911 to 1917 were published almost exclusively in music journals. One of two exceptions was an item found in La Comoedia illustre. As a supplement to the newspaper Comoedia, it was an expensive publication focusing
primarily on the dramatic arts. This 1911 unsigned review covered the season opener of La Société musicale indépendante at the Salle Gaveau, where three of Satie's pieces were performed: the Deuxième Sarabande, the prelude to Fils des Étoiles, and the Troisième Gymnopédie. This same event was covered in three other anonymous reviews in Le Guide musical, Le Courrier musical, a rather conservative but intelligent and reputable journal, and in Musica, a leading illustrated music journal of the time. Two articles from 1911 were not about the performance. One of them, written by M. D. Calvocoressi, was published in Musica. The other was Jean Ecorcheville's article entitled "Erik Satie" which appeared in the music journal S.I.M.

For the year 1913, music journals were again the main sources of articles dealing with Satie. The subject this time was primarily the April fifth concert of La Société nationale at the Salle Pleyel in which Ricardo Viñes, a very popular pianist, performed some of Satie's newer pieces, including the Véritables préludes flasques. La Comoedia illustrée carried a rather lengthy and interesting review; Charles Tenroc also wrote about the concert in Le Guide musical.

This concert seemed to inspire Roland-Manuel in the same year to write the article "Silhouettes d'artistes--Erik Satie" in L'Echo musical. This minor journal was in existence for only two years (1911-1913), but contained some important information as it carried feature articles more often than reviews. Georges

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3This is the second of two articles found in non-musical sources between 1911 and 1917.
Auric also wrote a feature article on Satie in 1913. This fairly long article appeared in *La Revue française de musique*. Though entitled "Erik Satie--Musicien humoriste" the essay was more a biography than a discussion of his humorous music.

In spite of the 1913 and 1914 publications of Satie's piano pieces, namely *Descriptions automatiques* and the *Véritables préludes flasques*, there was little written criticism of them. *Le Guide du concert*, a rather important music journal, reprinted two short letters from Satie which described the newly published works. They were accompanied by brief and highly complimentary introductions probably written by the editor. A review of these new publications was written by the composer-critic Gabriel Grovlez for *Musica* in 1914.

The single item marked on the graph for 1916 is an important pamphlet, rather than an article or review: the contents were first given as a lecture at the Société Lyre et Palette. Roland-Manuel, the author, attempted rather unsuccessfully to describe, explain, and support Satie.

Finally, in 1917, Satie became a subject of considerable interest for the general press. The performance of the ballet *Parade* at the Théâtre Châtelet caught the attention of a much wider audience. More people saw this work and more read about it. The rise in interest, as illustrated on the graph, should however be seen in proper perspective. First of all, *Parade* was a collaborative effort--Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, and the dancers of the Ballets russes also attracted attention. Secondly, the amount of reviews would probably have been even
greater if Parade had not been a war-time production.¹

One of the first examples of the general press taking a true interest in Satie was an article entitled "Les Nouveaux ballets russes" by Alexandre Mavroudis in L'Opinion. The focus of this journal was primarily political, but it did carry reviews of current artistic events. The latter were generally longer than those in daily newspapers or in other journals, and were usually more an expression of opinion than a relating of production details. Avoiding sensationalism and humor, articles were usually presented within a conservative framework, without however any bias against the avant-garde.

Although the circulation of L'Opinion was fairly small in 1917 (4,900), its contributors and editors made it a prestigious publication.⁵ These details about the journal are relevant to this study because they show that Satie was presented to a conservative and respectable audience between 1917 and 1921 (the other articles in L'Opinion will be mentioned later), a crucial period for the formation of public opinion about Satie.

Other pertinent articles to appear in general sources in 1917 were: "Les Ballets russes" by Michel Levray, in La Revue des oeuvres nouvelles; and several reviews of Parade and the Ballets russes in Le Mercure de France. One of the reviews in

¹During the war the press was limited by lack of money and paper rationing, and their focus was primarily on the war.

⁵Jean de Pierrefeu, a successful editor of several newspapers and journals, was the chief editor; Paul Deschanel was a regular contributor, Henri Massis and Ernest Bichari collaborated, and Lucien Romier was an editorialist until 1922. See Claude Bellanger, Histoire de la presse française, vol.3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), pp.393, 428.
Le Mercure, the one dealing specifically with Parade (two others were titled "Notations" and "Les Ballets russes à Paris"), was written by Jean Marnold, their regular and somewhat insensitive music critic. These Le Mercure de France reviews, though brief, are conspicuous because of the prominence of the source. Le Mercure was most probably read by a vast and varied audience both because it published articles on a great variety of topics and because of its long-standing reputation (it was begun in 1672).

The 1917 productions of the Ballets russes were also reviewed in a magazine titled Le Théâtre et la musique, which was the most specialized music journal that treated Parade. Reviews of this ballet in journals of a purely musical focus are conspicuously lacking. The author of this article was, however, Emile Vuillermoz, a well-known music critic and historian.

Two items written in 1917 were reprinted in 1922 in the Collection des plus beaux numéros de Comoedia illustrée et programmes des Ballets russes. One was a review of Parade by Svetloff, the other was a program note by Guillaume Apollinaire, the avant-garde poet who represented the revolutionary trends in literary circles.

The only article from 1917 to appear in a strictly musical source was a short text in Le Courrier musical's "bibliographie" section. In this Georges Auric, the young composer and disciple of Satie, wrote a defensive response to Roland-Manuel's lecture and pamphlet of 1916. Auric also wrote the only article to appear in 1919, an important text for two reasons: (1) it was
the first time a literary source, a publication called Littérature,\(^6\) carried information about Satie, and (2) it introduced Socrate and bespoke its worth long before its premiere.

**B. WRITINGS FROM 1920 TO SATIE'S DEATH**

In 1920, as shown on the graph, twenty-eight articles were published, which is about triple that in 1917. Of these, five concerned Socrate, five the Festival Erik Satie, and eight the repetition of Parade. The remainder were about various other events or were general comments about the man and his work.

Socrate premiered at the Salle Erard in May 1920 under the auspices of La Société nationale. The voice parts were sung by Mesdames Balguerie and Jane Bathori, two singers who often performed new music (especially Satie's). As was mentioned previously, five articles in 1920 were concerned with Socrate. Ernest Pignan, the editor and sole author for the publication entitled Essais critiques, wrote two of the reviews of this work (one is a response to Henri Collets' review of Socrate which has not been located). Essais critiques was a small journal likely enjoying only a limited audience due to the rather outspoken attitude of Pignan. The most significant reviews of Socrate appeared in two general interest journals: Le Mercure de France

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\(^{6}\)Francis Steegmuller, in her biography of Jean Cocteau, says this publication was anti-Cocteau. Considering Cocteau's support of Satie, this article is even more interesting. Francis Steegmuller, Jean Cocteau (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1970).
and *La Nouvelle revue française* (see bibliography for the titles and authors). Some comments about the latter journal will demonstrate the value of the articles.

Although the variety of topics treated in the *La Nouvelle revue française* caused it to appeal to a general audience, the writers directed their articles to an intellectual and artistically-conscious class of readers. Created in 1908 by André Gide, the journal received contributions from such renowned literary figures as Paul Valéry and Paul Claudel, as well as musical figures like Georges Auric and Henry Prunières (who later founded and edited *La Revue musicale*). When the publication resumed after the war under the direction of Jacques Rivière (a very successful newspaper man), it tried to "démobiliser l'intelligence française" and to "oublier un peu la guerre et la [sic] nationalisme." 7 Though the journal retained a slightly conservative stance, it was, until 1940, the most brilliant of French journals. 8 Considering the reputation and the intended audience of this source, it is clear that any criticism of Satie in *La Nouvelle revue française* was of considerable importance.

The Festival Erik Satie was held at the Salle Erard on 8 June 1920. There Jean Cocteau discussed his theories about the renovation of art and lectured about Satie. Several reviewers mention that the concert was well attended, especially by the very affluent. It was probably better attended than the

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7 Bellanger, p. 596.
8 Ibid.
premiere of Socrate because of Cocteau's presence. The concert covered two of the composer's styles of writing: humorous pieces such as the Chapitres tournés en tous sens (performed by Viñes), and the more "serious" works like the Nocturnes and Socrate.\footnote{Unfortunately, at this performance Mme Freund sang all the voice parts and as her voice was apparently incapable of sustaining the number of parts, the work was deemed monotonous.}

The event was covered in a variety of sources. One review appeared in Essais critiques. L'Opinion also ran a review of the gala evening, as did Le Courrier musical, and two daily newspapers, Le Figaro and L'Excelsior. Thus it can be seen that many people were exposed to Satie, his ideas and his music through this festival, not only due to it being well attended, but also due to the coverage from two daily newspapers. Le Figaro, for example, had a reputation as one of the four top papers, belonging to a group of excellent dailies appealing to cultured audiences in both Paris and the provinces. Its circulation in 1920 has been estimated as being between 43,500 (the amount for 1917) and 30,000 (circulation in 1934).\footnote{Bellanger, p.428.} These figures provide a much clearer idea of how widely known Satie was through the press.

Other criticism from 1920 focused on the repeat performance of Parade on 23 December at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. All but one of the reviews of this performance were found in daily newspapers. The exception is the article written by Alfred Jeaneret in L'Esprit nouveau, a very interesting modernistic journal. In Le Figaro Antoines Banes (the same author who
reviewed the Festival Erik Satie for *Le Figaro*) wrote about the ballet, although he admits not being able to attend! *Bonsoir*, another daily paper, but one with a lesser reputation and smaller production than *Le Figaro*, had André Billy give his thoughts about the work. The three other articles about *Parade* are more significant because two of them were written by a crucial figure of the times, Jean Cocteau, and all three appeared in major papers.

In *Paris-midi* 21 December 1920 Cocteau explains, in his characteristically flamboyant manner, the principles of *Parade*, attracting publicity in anticipation of the performance. *Paris-midi*, unlike most other daily papers, focused on the stockmarket and the races. Its circulation in 1920 was c. 13,000. Therefore this article reached a public beyond the limits of literary and artistic circles.

The other two important reviews, one by Cocteau the other by Louis Laloy (later a contributor to *La Revue musicale*), appeared in *Comoedia*, an unusual newspaper as it concentrated only on theatrical, literary, and artistic life. Bellanger describes the newspaper in this manner:

> [Comoedia] était sans équivalent pour l'époque, en France comme à l'étranger: la qualité et la variété de ses articles en font aujourd'hui une des sources les plus complètes de l'histoire culturelle française.12

The paper definitely had a recognized modern outlook in graphic

11 Bellanger, p.428.
12 Ibid., p.381.
design and in the direct style of its articles.\textsuperscript{13} It is extremely valuable as a research tool as it included interviews of many famous artists and almost all the prominent writers of the period contributed.

A distinctive feature article from 1920 was written by Jean Cocteau, once again playing a major role as publicist for Satie. His article, simply titled "Erik Satie," was based on a conference given by Cocteau in Brussels in 1919. It was issued in Action, a rather radical, short-lived, literary journal. Though the journal probably did not have a large circulation and was not particularly prestigious, this article is valuable because we know that the same material was presented to a group outside France.

Another major essay is one which has been cited in bibliographies since 1932. "Les Russes, Les Six et Erik Satie" by Henri Collet was published in Comoedia in January 1920. The ideas Collet presented in this article made history, for here he coined the phrase "Les Six," and revealed Satie's role in the evolution of the group. Also of interest was an article found in Libre nouvelle, a journal appealing to the general rather than the intellectual public, in which André Coeuroy, later the editor of La Revue musicale, tried to explain "L'Humour musical d'Erik Satie."

That Satie did not premiere any new works between 1921 and June of 1924 explains the drop in the number of articles found

\textsuperscript{13}Bellanger, p.382.
for these years (see Figure 1). The subjects covered during this time were fairly diverse as there were more feature articles than reviews. Some, however, were reviews, as Satie's music was often repeated on concert programs devoted to new music.

Three of the ten articles found in 1921 had to do with Parade. This is because the performance of this work was in late December and criticism of it carried on into January. Of these, the one in L'Opinion and the one in La Nouvelle revue française, were major reviews. The other, in Le Crapouillot, deals less specifically with Parade and more in general with the Ballets russes' latest season.

Henry Bidou, a regular critic for L'Opinion, devoted two full columns to Parade. His review is a major contribution to this study because of its detailed description of the scenery, the characters, and the scenario. Also, most importantly, Bidou managed to understand and relate the essence of Satie's music.

In La Nouvelle revue française Georges Auric once again penned his thoughts about Parade and Satie's contributions to modern music. This review is important because of the stature of the magazine and the fact that Auric was now a recognized composer.

Another 1921 article appeared in Essais critiques entitled "Les Sifflets et le genie." Here Pignan discussed the significance of laughter and hissing at performances, especially in connection with Parade, though the author did cite reactions to the music of other composers as well. This article was
perhaps inspired by André Coeuroy's essay about humor in music (in *Libre nouvelle* 1920).

*La Revue musicale*, which began in 1920 as the outlet for modern musical thought from a musicological standpoint, has continued for over sixty years to be an outstanding source of information. In 1921 it published an historically insightful article titled "Le Declin de L'Impressionism." Although this broad subject covered composers other than Satie, it does rally around his force as an instigator of change.

Paul Collaer, the noted musicologist who often contributed to *La Revue musicale*, submitted a very complimentary and insightful review of *Socrate* to the November 1921 issue of *Action*. *Action* is classified a literary source because the contents were usually exclusively poetry or short stories by leading literary figures (such as Jean Cocteau or Blaise Cendrars). This review and a poem to and about Erik Satie by Blaise Cendrars in *L'Oeuf dur* 1923 (another literary journal), further illustrate that Satie's music and ideas served as inspiration to more than the musically oriented.

Although there were no performances of new compositions by Satie until June 1924 (*Mercure*) his music was included on concert programs devoted to the promotion of modern music. An example of such were the Concerts Jean Wiener, whose sponsor, being a wealthy, semi-professional pianist, chose to use such talented musicians such as the Pro Arte quartet, the singer Mme Balguerie, and the conductor André Caplet, for his programs. In January of 1923 Satie received a lot of exposure through one of
these events, which featured the music of Les Six and Satie. *Socrate* was the predominant subject in most of the reviews. In *L'Action française* the critic reflected on his long experience with *Socrate* while revealing that the work was often performed between 1920 and 1923. The critics for *L'Echo national* and *L'Excelsior* also chose to focus on *Socrate*, while the only review to tell about the concert as a whole appeared in *L'Eclair*.

In February 1923 Boris de Schloezer, a knowledgeable and highly respected music critic and historian, submitted an article to *La Revue contemporaine*, a general interest source. In his outstanding essay, de Schloezer outlined the innovations of modern music, citing the works performed at the Concerts Jean Wiener to prove his points. In this same year André George compiled a profile on Satie for *Nouvelles littéraires*, which was Comoedia's only competitor.

In 1924 the amount of criticism peaked, as shown on the graph, at sixty reviews. These can be divided into three categories: reviews of *Mercure*, reviews of *Relâche*, and miscellaneous subjects. Although *Mercure* and *Relâche* were the major events to catch the attention of critics, numerous articles (fourteen) dealt in general with Satie. For example, in * Sélection*, a beautiful art journal full of woodcuts and photographs of artists' works, we find one of the most significant articles in the entire collection of Satie criticism. In this periodical Paul Collaer wrote about "L'Influence d'Erik Satie" citing specific musical examples as
well as mentioning Satie's ability to project his moral attitude and intellect. Because this article appeared in a sophisticated art journal, another dimension is added to our understanding of the extent of the public's interest in Satie. In *La Revue musicale* Charles Koechlin, composer and musicologist, wrote about the importance of Satie. This article appeared shortly before George Auriol's biography of Satie. (However, the biography was written in such a humorous manner that it cannot be taken literally.) Boris de Schloezer also contributed an essay about Satie to *La Revue musicale* in 1924. This major article included many of de Schloezer's ideas about social attitudes. *Les Feuilles libres*, a general interest journal with a modern outlook, printed an article titled "Les Dernières œuvres d'Erik Satie et les premières œuvres d'Henri Sauguet", written by Darius Milhaud.

Daily newspapers also provided the public with some background on Satie. *Humanité* (13 March) gave a biographical sketch on the composer using material which seems to be derived from Koechlin's article. Two other articles with background information ("Vingt minutes avec Erik Satie" and "Notes sur Erik Satie" by Picabia) appeared in the May and December issues of the *Paris-journal*.

Satie's music was featured on another of the Concerts Jean Wiener in December of 1924. Only one article, printed in *Nouvelles littéraires*, discussed the event. The article, though not signed, was most probably by Georges Auric, as he contributed several articles about Satie to this paper that
year. For example, his review of the April Koussevitsky concert which included a discussion about Satie and modern music.

Other articles from 1924 to fall into the miscellaneous category were found in a Belgian paper, the Matin d'Anvers. A Soirée Erik Satie merited two articles dated the 16 and 23 March. The first dealt with biographical information and the second reviewed the soirée.

It has often been said that Mercure and Relâche were the subject of much criticism. The following discussion will reveal, with respect to the amount of articles, exactly how controversial they were. Mercure premiered 2 June 1924 at the Cigale as part of the Soirées de Paris, which were shows put on by the Comte Etienne de Beaumont to "révéler, chacune de son côté la nouvelle âme et le plus jeune visage de notre France." Mercure was danced by the Ballets russes with scenery by Picasso. The soirée included Satie's Premier Amour, a pantomime by Massine on the Morceaux en forme de poire. Mercure was, however, the main attraction.

Ten reviews of this ballet were found: seven in daily newspapers, three in periodicals. Most of the newspaper articles were merely announcements of the works to be presented at the soirée, or were brief reviews. However, substantial reviews were written by Louis Laloy (Comoedia); Paul Souday (Paris-midi); and Georges Auric (Nouvelles littéraires). It is interesting that the three periodical articles were all in

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musical sources. Even more interesting is that one of these was in *Le Ménestrel*, for this journal had not discussed Satie in its pages since 1892! Though a long review, it was not signed. The other reviews were in *Le Monde musical* (by Maurice Boucher), and in *Le Courrier musical*. Boucher's article was the more detailed of the two.

Although both *Mercure* and *Relâche* were considered controversial, *Relâche* was certainly criticized far more than *Mercure*. With regard to *Relâche* a total of thirty items were found, four of which were in music journals, the rest in newspapers. Part of the interest in this work stemmed from the delayed premiere which many thought to be another prank on the part of Picabia and Satie. The opening at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (a prestigious establishment) was scheduled for 28 November, but due to the illness of Jean Borlin, the star of the Ballets suédois, *Relâche* premiered a week later (2 December). Though only two newspapers wrote about the delay (*Comoedia* 29 November and 2 December and *L'Eclair* 9 December) it is likely the postponement heightened public anticipation causing the work to be more closely followed. Another publicity item, appearing in *Comoedia* on 27 November, was the choreographer Rolf de Maré's interview of Picabia who wrote the scenario. Although it did not deal specifically with Satie, this is a valuable article, as it gives insight into Picabia's ideas and the artistic principles of the production.

Some of the first reviews of the performances were found in *Paris-midi*, one of the large daily newspapers. Though the three
articles in this paper are not especially long or detailed, they are categorized as being major items because all three were printed in the 5 December issue, thus increasing the impact of the criticism. One of these (Jacques Parsons' review) focused on the cinematographic aspect of Relâche, but he did discuss the music for the Entr'acte. The other two reviews were written by Paul Achard and by Paul Souday.

The same situation applies to the two items published in Comoedia on 6 December. Though the reviews were brief and not by well-known critics, it is the fact that the two articles appeared in the same issue of this primary source that makes them important.

Emile Vuillermoz's long and reflective review of Relâche appeared in the 6 December issue of L'Excelsior. This article merits notice not just for its length, but also for the author's insightful commentary on this unique production.

Another author with a solid musical background, Georges Auric, contributed an article to Nouvelles littéraires, the influential arts newspaper, also on 6 December. Though this review was brief (Auric waited to give his final opinion) it is a major item because of the author and the source. Here Auric directed his criticism at the entire production, not at Satie specifically. Relâche's powerful effect on the critics is clearly and simply revealed by the amount of criticism written within two days (seven reviews in major sources).

Several reviews came out in the daily press on 9 December. Le Figaro, already mentioned as being one of the top papers, ran
a review by André Messager, which focused more on the music than did many of the other reviews. A much smaller paper, *Le Petit journal*, ran an article by Paul Dambly which described the scenario in some detail and was at the same time critical, an approach infrequently taken by critics as usually reviewers either describe the work or they criticize specific elements. The other review to appear on 9 December was in *L'Eclair*, by Roland-Manuel.

Roland-Manuel also reviewed *Relâche* in *La Revue Pleyel*, a journal devoted to music criticism. He titled his critique "Adieu à Satie," giving some indication of his opinion of the work. This latter article is for several reasons noteworthy as a major review. One being that the author had reviewed Satie for many years (note the 1916 pamphlet), and the second being that the article shows a change in attitude on the part of the author. Thirdly, it is noteworthy because it clarifies why *Relâche* was harshly criticized.

Another important review, perhaps even more so than Roland-Manuel's in *La Revue Pleyel*, was the one by Auric in *Nouvelles littéraires* on 13 December. Auric's critique was very influential not only because of its publication in a major source, its length, and the fact that he was a long-time follower of Satie, but also because Auric's comments were vindictive.

Four more articles were written before Satie's death in July, 1925, three of them for journals and one item for a newspaper. A significant journal article was written by Henri
Sauguet, a member of L'Ecole d'Arcueil, for the short-lived modernistic journal *La Vie des lettres et des arts*. This piece is distinctive because it was based on a conference given at the Sorbonne on 25 March, "sous les auspices du Groupe d'Etudes philosophiques et scientifiques pour l'examen des Idées nouvelles."  

In the 1 February issue of *La Revue européenne*, Boris de Schloezer gave his ideas about how critics' opinions can be explained "psychologiquement par le besoin de réagir contre le culte de ridicule" as related to *Relâche*. De Schloezer's article gives us some important insight to the public's attitudes at this time, attitudes which will be revealed in the following chapters. The one newspaper item, in *Progrès de Lyon* (10 March 1925), mentioned *Relâche* and gave some background on Satie, suggesting that there was a performance of this work in Lyon at that time.

C. OBITUARIES

In turning to the notices of Satie's death it is helpful to describe them in general first. One of the major distinctions between the articles about his death is their length: many of the newspaper obituaries were very brief and contained similar material, in the manner of a press release. Another distinguishing feature of the obituaries is that many newspapers and some journals which had not previously written about Satie

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did acknowledge him upon his death. A few newspapers and journals carried longer descriptions of Satie's life and his music. Nearly all the articles told where he was born, that he was a close friend of Debussy, mentioned his association with Les Six and L'Ecole d'Arcueil, and gave the titles of some of his major works.

Major memorials to appear in journals were written by prominent figures such as Boris de Schloezer, Jean Cocteau, and Georges Auric. The obituary Maurice Imbert wrote for Le Courrier musical was another important journal article about Satie's death. The daily newspapers Comoedia, Nouvelles littéraires, Le Figaro, Petit bleu, Neptune d'Anvers and Matin d'Anvers, also carried major obituaries. Most notable among these was a series written by Contamine de Latour, an old friend of Satie's, which appeared in Comoedia on 3, 5, 6 August; 17 Georges Auric's memorial to Satie, which made the front page of Nouvelles littéraires on 11 July; and the item in Le Figaro which is a major one because it gave more of Satie's background than many of the other notices.

17 This series has been cited in bibliographies for years, and reasonably so, for it provides much information about Satie's years in Montmartre.
Several events in 1926 initiated commentary. One was a festival of Satie's works produced as a benefit for his tomb. Another was the premiere of *Jack-in-the-Box*. The third event was a conference-program, also intended as a benefit for his tomb. These articles, like most of those written after Satie's death, are not critical in nature, but rather provide biographical information along with an account of the event covered.

In studying the literature surrounding the Festival Erik Satie, which was sponsored by the Comte Etienne de Beaumont, produced at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and performed by some of Satie's long-standing musician friends (i.e. Mme Bathori, Jean Wiener, Ricardo Viñes), it becomes obvious that the newspaper *Comoedia* was a great supporter of Satie.

There were six items in *Comoedia* concerning Satie's tomb. Four were about the festival: a brief notice of the event appeared on 4 May; an article on 13 May told what the program was; on 17 May Jean Cocteau wrote a typically dramatic article stressing the reason for the festival; and on 19 May there appeared a fairly long article describing the program in greater detail. Printed within a week of these articles was a notice about a Brussels concert also intended to raise money for the tomb. Then on 8 July *Comoedia* ran another short article about the tomb, stating what programs the Count had sponsored and telling where to send donations.

This festival was also reviewed by Roussel in *Le Gaulois*,
mentioned in *Impartial français* and in *Le Temps*, and was described in *Le Figaro*. Charles Koechlin wrote, in the *Journal des débats*, a lengthy article which was inspired by the festival, but which was actually more an explanation of Satie than a review of the program.

*Jack-in-the-Box*, Satie's unedited work which was lost until after his death and then orchestrated by Milhaud, was produced by the Count de Beaumont at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt the first week in June (1926). The program included *Parade* and two of Stravinsky's works, but the newspaper reviews focused on the premiere of *Jack-in-the-Box*. A short description of the work appeared in *Le Figaro* on 12 May, where Louis Laloy previewed upcoming works by the Ballets russes. Actual reviews appeared in *Paris-midi*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Oeuvre*, and *Le Gaulois*. Although these reviews discussed the performance, they also included some biographical material on Satie.

On 19 June 1926, in a newspaper called *Renaissance*, Elizabeth Bénard-Sesboüé described a lecture given to Belgian students which was followed by a program of Satie's works. An article in the *Matin d'Anvers* (9 May) tells us that this event was organized by the "Pro Arte " of the Brussels Conservatory in memory of Erik Satie, to raise money for his tomb. These are the only two articles located that mentioned this conference.¹⁸

A few articles which do not fit into any particular category were also, of course, memorial in nature. *Le Soir*, on

¹⁸Excluding the announcement in *Comoedia*. See p.30.
30 June, printed an announcement stating that the town of Arcueil was going to commemorate Satie's death by naming a street after him and by installing a plaque on the house in which he had lived. Several months later (in September) Pierre Massot, a friend of Satie's, contributed a memorial to *Ere nouvelle* (a daily paper). This article did not seem to have been inspired by any particular event. Another article unrelated to a specific event was written by Roland-Manuel for *La Revue Pleyel*. In it the author apologized, now that Satie was dead, for having criticized him.

By consulting the graph it is quite clear that there was a drastic drop in the amount of writing concerned with Satie in 1927. The single item that was found that had anything to do with Satie was actually a reprint of a letter (one of a series) from Debussy to Satie, signed with Debussy's pseudonym, M. Croche, in the music journal *Le Guide du concert*.

Interest in Satie, as reflected in the press, remained low in 1928. Only three items were found for that year: two were memorials, the other (in *L'Oeuvre de Liège*) was about an evening of dance starring two performers whom Satie supposedly appreciated and encouraged. Several of his works were on that evening's program, but they were not the object of criticism.

The memorials were in *Le Petit parisien*, a daily newspaper, and in *Le Monde* an arty-political journal. The former was a typical memorial with its biography and summary of works. Robert Caby's article in *Le Monde* was more distinctive. In it he tried to remind the public how great Satie was, and he told
how, after three years, Satie was being forgotten by orchestras and critics. Included in this same issue was a text by Satie ("La Matière et la Main d'oeuvre") and program notes to *Socrate*.

Considering the drop in criticism in 1927 and 1928, the substantial increase in 1929 appears, at first, somewhat surprising. However, most of this criticism stems from another formal commemoration of Satie's death which took place on 30 June 1929, the installation of the memorial plaque at 22 rue Cauchy in Arcueil-Cachan. The commemoration was sponsored by Darius Milhaud and Robery Caby, who, along with Templier and Rousseau, spoke of Satie's life and work; the concert that followed was performed by the eminent artists who were Satie's first and most devoted interpreters. According to one report in *L'Intransigeant*, five to six hundred people gathered in the Paris suburb on this occasion.

Some of the longer articles prompted by this commemorative festival included only typical information about Satie's life and work (e.g. in *Le Petit journal* 1 and 3 July; *Le Matin* 29 June; *Comoedia* 30 June). Among the more unusual of the longer articles was a lighthearted biographical sketch by Georges Auric (*Gringoire* 5 August) in which he simply uses the commemoration as a springboard for his recollections. Robert Caby wrote, in the socialist paper *Humanité*, about Satie's involvement as a socialist. Another article, rather unusual because of its grandiose manner in terms of a memorial, was printed in *Le Soir*

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19 This was first talked about in 1926, see p.32.
and written by Georges Pioch.

Seeming to stem from the past memorial, though not mentioning it, was the article in *Le Petit parisien* (by Yves Dautun) which did not appear until 20 August 1929. In it the author recalled times he spent with Satie and tried to dispell any misconceptions about the composer.

In 1930, the final year of criticism covered by this study, there were only a few articles to be found. Lugères related a mélange of stories about Satie's idiocyncracies when commemorating the fifth anniversary of Satie's death. Lugères also mentioned that the town of Arcueil faithfully remembered Satie every year in early July. *Nouvelles littéraires* printed a short item pertaining to Satie on 9 July 1930. It was the first article about Satie in this paper since 1925. Though it was titled "Erik Satie" the article was actually about a new journal called *Vigile* whose approach was revealed in another article about Satie, this one by Maxime Jacob. Jacob's article, titled "L'Example d'Erik Satie" was quite long (eleven pages).

Darius Milhaud wrote in *Musique* (a monthly journal devoted to criticism, history, aesthetics, and musical information) an article about Satie and Bach's *Art of the Fugue*. It is a transcription of Satie's analysis (done at the Schola Cantorum in 1908) of the seventh fugue in that collection. This interesting article revealed the fervor and joy with which Satie studied the works of Bach.

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20 Jacob was a member of L'Ecole d'Arcueil.
Though the present study ends in 1930, it should be noted that there were many reviews of Templier's biography of Satie in late 1932 and into 1933. This shows that even at that time Satie was a lively subject for the press.

E. SUMMARY

The preceding has been a description in chronological order of the literature dealt with in this study. As has been demonstrated, the annual changes in the amount of criticism (shown clearly on the graph) are related to various events or performances of the composer's works. These fluctuations basically reflect the composer's popularity and his musical productivity.

The overall upward curve (depicted in dotted lines, see Figure 1) relates to the years Satie's major works were performed and received increasing amounts of criticism. The curve indicates increased interest in Satie and in contemporary music in general (note Satie's connection with the Ballets russes and the Concerts Jean Wiener for example). This simply illustrates that the growth of modern music was simultaneous to the growth of Satie's notoriety. The fact that Satie made a great contribution to modern music has never been contested. The point to be made with this upward curve is that Satie's effect on the public (their exposure to modern ideas) had to increase as the amount of attention Satie received in the press

\[2^{1}\text{P. D. Templier, } \textit{Erik Satie} \text{ (Paris: Les Editions Reider, 1932).}\]
Another graph charting yearly the amount of criticism found in various types of sources (i.e. musical or literary journals, newspapers) demonstrates when groups with somewhat varying cultural interests were most exposed to Satie (see Figure 2). For example, until 1917 criticism of Satie was found almost entirely in music journals (delineated by an open bar on the graph). The graph also shows that this type of journal had the longest and steadiest interest in Satie, as there were articles appearing at both extremes of the period in question (1892 to 1930), and there are only four years without any articles (speaking only of the years shown on the graph, for comparison with the other types of journals).

In 1917 general interest periodicals (marked by a diagonally slashed bar) carried more about Satie than music journals did, and in 1920 and 1921 they carried more than any other type of publication. After this peak the amount of criticism in general interest sources declined. They remained however a primary source for articles. Their coverage spanned from 1892 to 1930, though there was a long gap between 1892 and 1917 when they printed no information about Satie.

The third primary source of information about Satie was daily newspapers (indicated by a solid bar). They, like general interest and music journals, regularly demonstrated interest in Satie, though not as consistently as did music journals (there is a twenty-five year gap from 1895 to 1920 when no reviews were written in daily papers). In 1920 daily newspaper coverage
Figure 2 - Annual Amounts of Criticism in Various Sources

YEARS AMOUNTS (One square equals two articles.)


Legend:
- Art Journals
- Daily Newspapers
- Music Journals
- General Interest Journals
- Literary Journals
- Theatrical Journals
ranked second to that in general interest sources. Such coverage, however, dropped sharply in 1921. Thereafter daily newspapers continued to contain more information about Satie than any of the other sources. The significance of the newspapers' interest in Satie is that it did not drop as quickly as it rose, nor did it drop as quickly as musical journals' interest in Satie diminished. This implies that while musical circles lost interest in Satie suddenly, the general public maintained its interest in him.

In the discussion of the next three types of periodicals (artistic, literary, and theatrical journals) the reader should be aware of the significance of the articles appearing in them. Although the amount that Satie is discussed in these journals is minimal, the articles' prominence is increased because the journals' focus is not musical. Editors of these journals must have thought the article very important to warrant its inclusion even though the musical subject was not in keeping with their focus.

Theatrical magazines (marked by a bar with circles) contain more information than either artistic or literary journals simply because many of Satie's works were performed in the theater. Interestingly enough is that even in 1911 and 1913, before Satie's major stage productions (the ballets), he was mentioned in this type of periodical. As shown on the graph, the production of Parade in 1917 was recognized more in theatrical than in music journals, but in 1920 the coverage in theatrical journals was minimal. In 1924 there were only three
articles in theatrical journals and after that, none.

Strictly literary journals (depicted by a horizontally striped bar) contain a minimal amount of information. Not more than one article appeared in this type of journal in any year, and these primarily from 1919 to 1923.

The representation of Satie in artistic journals (shown by a bar with crosses) is consistent in the annual amount of one article. These journals contain the least amount of information about Satie. The first article appeared in 1892, the second in 1924, and a final item in 1928.

To reiterate the points illustrated by this graph: Satie was, until 1917, known and discussed primarily in musical circles; after the collaboration with Cocteau in 1917 the general public became more exposed to the avant-garde techniques employed by Satie (through general interest sources and newspapers); Satie's ideas were felt and appreciated even in artistic and literary circles.

This chapter has explained how much criticism focused on Satie, what it is and where it was found, and consequently has demonstrated how widely known Satie actually was and by whom. In the following chapter the content of this criticism will be examined to show how Satie was regarded by his contemporaries.
III. SATIE'S PERSONALITY, HIS HUMOR, AND HIS MUSIC: CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

This chapter will concentrate on contemporary remarks about Satie's personality, his humor, and his music. Selection of texts for discussion is based on the importance of the source or author, or the representative nature of the remarks. Revealing how Satie was generally regarded during his lifetime helps us both to understand just how strong an impact he might have had, and to clarify his historical position.

A. SATIE'S PERSONALITY

Was Satie really thought of as an eccentric, bizarre musician? Was he truly considered an isolated, lonely figure? As both questions received positive and negative responses in contemporary criticism it is important to determine which view was expressed by the majority of the critics, and to see whether the views changed over the thirty-eight year period covered in this study.

We begin with the question of whether Satie's contemporaries thought he was bizarre, eccentric or curious, focusing first on the criticism which expressed this general opinion. Of the entire collection of contemporary criticism examined only twelve major articles plus quite a few obituary notices referred to Satie in such terms. (Only three of these references appeared before 1924.) Although these articles contain examples of authors making specific derogatory comments about Satie's personality, many of them were not entirely
critical.

Jean Ecorcheville, in his biographical article on Satie, was the first author to mention Satie's eccentricity. The reference came after Ecorcheville wrote about Satie's early years—his connections with the Rose et Croix, mysticism and religion—up to the presentation of *Upsud* to the Director of the Paris Opera. Ecorcheville wrote "Glissons sur ce premier appel de la loufoquerie"¹ telling us that those early impressions of Satie should be forgotten as they only accurately reflected the years of his youth. So, although Ecorcheville acknowledged that Satie's behavior was, at one time, rather eccentric, his article actually supported Satie and attempted to clarify Satie's background for the public.

Another important text discussing Satie's unusual character was the pamphlet by Roland-Manuel. Although the author was actually trying to promote Satie he described his character in rather negative terms: "plus curieux, de plus déconcertant . . . bizarre, timide . . ."² The author's reason for introducing Satie in such a way was perhaps to surround the composer with an air of mystery as a means of publicity, as was quite popular around the turn of the century. Today Roland-Manuel's description of Satie sounds rather negative, but at the time it was almost certainly meant to be complimentary and intriguing, for he also wrote: "tous ceux qui s'intéressent à

notre musique, avaient pour le moins retenu la sonorité du nom mystérieux d'Erik Satie."

Most interestingly, it was not until March 1924 that another article noted Satie's odd behavior. The author began by writing that "Erik nous est venu du Nord dans une barque de cuir que menait un équipage de trolls. Troll égale farfadet, et Satie étant margrave dans le royaume des farfadets, Satie égale Puck." Such a fanciful opening was not diminished by the rest of the article, as he went on to write about how Satie requested, "d'un coup-douze complets indentiques, de velours gris côtelé,--avec couvre-chefs assortis." About Satie's long nightly walk from Montmartre to Arcueil, the author related it was "à travers les sauvages quartiers de la Glacière et de la Santé où l'apache ne dédaigne pas de rôder,--ce pourquoi, en guise de tomahawk, notre musicien portait un marteau dans sa poche." These are just a few examples of the ludicrous manner in which Satie was so unrealistically portrayed.

The idea that Satie was an unusual character was circulated primarily immediately after his death. A typical remark in an obituary was "c'est une curieuse figure qui disparaît du monde musical." The obituary in *Le Monde musical* contained the

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3 *Conférence sur Erik Satie*, p.1.
6 Ibid., p.211.
7 "Le Théâtre et la musique à l'étranger," *Journal de Genève* 6 May 1925. Note: page numbers will not be given for newspaper references.
following: "Plus encore que sa musique, la curiosité d'esprit de Satie devait . . . contribuer ainsi, puissamment, à la plus grande transformation qu'aït vue la scène lyrique depuis Wagner. . . . C'est sa singularité outrancière et paradoxale qui a empêché le succès direct de ses efforts." 8 Maurice Imbert epitomized Satie as "un musicien bizarre, entre tous, d'esprit et de manières, ironique, caustique, mystificateur, abracadabrant en un mot." 9

Another article to make specific reference to Satie's eccentricity was found in Comoedia in which Contamine de Latour described Satie as he had known him during their youthful friendship in Montmartre. Latour's reference to eccentricity came when he discussed Satie after the composer had moved to Arcueil: "Il avait renoncé à ses costumes gris, aux cheveux longs, à l'excentricité et à la turbulence." 10 This article reveals that Satie's eccentricity was a characteristic of his youth, one not to be associated with his entire life.

In contrast to these articles are ten others which refer to Satie's sensibility or which otherwise describe an image contrary to that of an eccentric. Five of these were written before Satie's death, five afterwards. The first important example of this more positive type of commentary came when Jean Marnold stated that "M. Erik Satie est un si charmant homme,

d'une âme tellement innocente et d'un coeur si délicatement fidèle à ses amitiés, que je n'ai vraiment pas le courage d'écrire ce que je pense de la musique." It seems unlikely that a truly bizarre and curious figure would elicit this remark from such a respected critic. A more specific reference supporting this "sensible" image of Satie was found in *Le Courrier musical*, in which Georges Auric wrote: "La causerie ... scandaliserait sans doute cette gent trop sérieuse. ... ne saurait nous cacher deux bien grandes vertus: la timidité et la sensibilité." In 1920 the reviewer of the Concert Erik Satie referred to the composer as "un musicien extrêmement subtil, sensible ..." Marcel Azais, in his article on L'Ecole d'Arcueil, referred to Satie as an intelligent musician. After 1925 there were two important examples supporting this "sensible" image, both written by Robert Caby. In the first article he actually referred to the intelligence of Satie's composition: "La musique d'Erik Satie, outre sa perpétuelle harmonie sonore, est une véritable harmonie intellectuelle." In 1929 Caby called Satie "un des hommes le plus intelligents."

We may now answer the question "Was Satie really thought of

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15Robert Caby, "La Commémoration de la mort d'Erik Satie," *Humanité* 30 June 1929.
as an eccentric, bizarre musician?" The overriding observation is that critics then were not preoccupied with Satie's personality, as are so many writers today. This is very clear simply because the amount of literature mentioning his personality is so minimal in comparison to the total amount of criticism. Although the eccentric image was the majority view, it did not gain prominence until 1924 and primarily upon his death in 1925. And though it has been discovered that Satie's eccentricity was an element of his youth, it is inappropriate to think of Satie's entire life as being that of an eccentric.

As to the image of Satie as a lonely, isolated individual there were nine major articles supporting this view (three written before 1925) in addition to many obituaries. As was the case with the articles about Satie's behavior, those presenting Satie as an isolated, lonely man must be read in the context of the period. For example, two articles found in 1911 referred, as did the program for La Société musicale indépendante concert, to Satie as "ce compositeur isolé." 16 This description gives the impression that Satie was isolated from other composers and people. However, within the context of an ideal which was fairly popular at the time, it should be interpreted as praise for a gifted original composer not attached to any school or "ism".

Another article which presented this "isolated" image was

found in *L'Opinion* in 1917. What the author wrote is an obvious mistruth and an exaggeration: "Et le maître pré-debussyste est resté à Paris, ou plutôt à Arcueil-Cachan, dans sa maisonnette mystérieuse où personne n'a eu jusqu'à présent le droit de pénétrer et qu'il ne quitte que rarement pour descendre un petit peu à la ville."\(^{17}\) Although the mystique surrounding Satie's lodgings was verified by other writers, the idea that Satie rarely went into town has been strongly discredited.\(^{18}\) Considering the relative importance of this journal it is easy to understand how such rumors were spread.

A more interesting example of an author's unreliability, in relation to the study of Satie as a solitary person, was found in Contamine de Latour's article in *Comoedia*. Latour stated that Satie sought solitude in Arcueil because he felt the need to devote himself to work and study. He also claimed that Satie rarely left his home there and admitted only very few friends. Latour then contradicted himself by writing "Mais il venait souvent me voir."\(^{19}\)

In 1926 there were two articles in *Comoedia* which reinforced upon the public the idea that Satie was a solitary man. In the first of these the author wrote: "Il vivait à Arcueil dans une unique chambre qu'il ne quittait presque jamais

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\(^{18}\)See for example the story about Satie taking the long nightly walk from Montmartre to Arcueil in *La Revue musicale* 5 (1924): 209.

\(^{19}\)Latour, "Satie intime," *Comoedia* 6 August 1925.
et où personne ne pénétrait."\textsuperscript{20} The other essay, subtitled "Le Solitaire d'Arcueil" and written by Cocteau, contained the following: "Nous vîmes sa maison; il y habitait une pauvre chambre où jamais aucun de nous n'avait pénétré."\textsuperscript{21}

The evidence that Satie preferred that no one enter his home is strong. Charles Koechlin, however, attempted to explain why Satie seemed so inhospitable:

Dirai-je quelques mots de sa vie privée? Seulement pour se rappeler qu'il fut et mourut pauvre. Fort ombrageux, sans doute, parce que très imaginatif et d'une fierté qui ne transigeait pas. À cause de cette fierté, je pense, jamais il ne voulut recevoir ses intimes en ce domicile misérable d'Arcueil, qu'ils ne connurent qu'après sa mort. Point de concessions, nul trait d'arrivisme, mais un souci constant de la dignité de l'artiste ... \textsuperscript{22}

The case for the image of Satie as a solitary man was further reinforced by several of the obituary notices which referred to his "destinée singulière et mélancolique."\textsuperscript{23} This certainly evoked an image of an isolated and perhaps lonely man. As was the case with the portrayal of Satie's curious behavior, it was really not until his death that this image became widespread.

While few articles actually demonstrated that Satie was not lonely and isolated, other factors prove he was not without

\textsuperscript{20}G., "Un festival pour la tombe d'Erik Satie à Arcueil," \textit{Comoedia} 13 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{21}Jean Cocteau, "Pour la tombe d'Erik Satie," \textit{Comoedia} 17 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{22}Charles Koechlin, "Erik Satie," \textit{Le Journal des débats} 16 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{23}See for example, "Mort d'Erik Satie," \textit{Neptune d'Anvers} 5 July 1925.
friends. This is made evident, for example, by festivals dedicated to him by his friends. The foundings of Les Six and L'Ecole d'Arcueil also suggests that Satie had a close circle of acquaintances. One specific contemporary reference mentioning that Satie had friends was in *Le Figaro*, in which Antoine Banes wrote that "M. Erik Satie et M. Jean Cocteau sont des gens heureux. Ils ont des amis nombreux, ardents, qui les adorent et les acclament avant même leur entrée en scène." An obituary notice which listed the many famous people who attended Satie's funeral also serves as contemporary evidence that Satie was not without friends. Further proof of the affection people had for him appeared in the annual commemorations of his death, events which usually saw the participation of hundreds of admirers.

The following conclusions may be made about the contemporary portrayal of Satie as an isolated and lonely musician. First, it should be remembered that certain articles which mention Satie as isolated, when taken in context of the period, may well have intended to compliment him, and should not be taken literally. Second, while the mystery surrounding Satie's lodgings is well substantiated and is the only real proof supporting the lonely image, Koechlin's explanation of Satie's reluctance for houseguests seems to be highly plausible. Third, the considerable amount of criticism itself proves Satie was in the public's eye; his following of younger musicians, poets, actors, and even dancers proves he certainly was not, in

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the literal sense of the word, isolated. Because Satie was not truly isolated his impact was probably stronger than heretofore believed.

B. SATIE'S HUMOR

Satie's use of humor has long been a controversial subject. While many believe his humor was an aspect of his personality, used as a defense against criticism, others regard it as an integral part of his music. Because this study seeks to resolve, in part, the debate concerning his humor, this subject must be examined independently, apart from questions concerning his personality and his music. The literature will be examined to discover whether his humor was a major issue in criticism, and to uncover what views Satie's contemporaries had about his use of humor.

Examination of contemporary views of Satie's humor will begin with those which claim that his humor did not have serious artistic implications or which demonstrated that the critic simply did not understand Satie's humor. Of these, however, many do in the same article express admiration for the composer.

One of the first articles to give a negative connotation to Satie's humor was found in Musica. The author began by suggesting that Satie got his sense of humor from his compatriot Alphonse Allais (this is quite possibly true, for Allais was one of Satie's childhood friends). Calvocoressi went on to say
"Cent anecdotes illustreraient son goût pour la cocasserie."

The author's use of the term "cocasserie" certainly indicates that he thought Satie's humor was not a fundamental element of his personality.

The idea that Satie used humor as a defense against criticism was first suggested in the widely-read publication La Comoedia illustrée. There the critic, again Calvocoressi, wrote very favorably of Satie's works heard at La Société nationale concert. In this article we learn "d'aucuns s'esclaffent, d'autres hausseront les épaules et prendront les airs indignés de ceux qui n'aiment point qu'on les nargue." But Calvocoressi believed:

... pour ma part que sous les mots narquois, je sens une philosophie profonde. L'auteur, que je devine aussi timide et sensitif qu'il est musicien--ce qui n'est pas peu dire--doit avoir horreur de certaines admirations négligentes ou obtuses qui viennent journellement. ... Il a donc, je pense, trouvé, par la vertu de cette ironie appliquée qu'il prodigue, une excellente arme défensive.

Did this critic realize what far-reaching implications this supposition might have?

It is clear that in 1920 some critics still did not understand Satie's type of humor, as seen by Pierre Leroi's review of the Festival Erik Satie where many of Satie's early piano works were performed. Leroi wrote: "n'ayons pas

\[^{25}\text{Calvocoressi, "Erik Satie," p.65.}\]
\[^{27}\text{Ibid.}\]
l'admiration trop complaisante pour celui qui se laisse aller volontiers à la joie si facile d'amuser ses amis."\(^{28}\)

Also printed in 1920 was André Coeuroy's article "La Musique gaie. II. L'Humour musical d'Erik Satie." In this essay Coeuroy displayed a complete misunderstanding of Satie's humor and ignorance of the composer in general. The author felt that "les manifestes sont la forme d'expression des créateurs qui n'ont pas grand'chose à dire."\(^{29}\) His ignorance about Satie was clear when he referred to the works of 1911 as having been written in Satie's youth, and that *Socrate* was a humourous work!

A memorial written by Maurice Imbert was another article referring to Satie's humor in negative terms. The author wrote that Satie was a "fumiste par nature, il produisit alors des pièces, telles les *Gymnopédies*, qui n'ont rien de révolutionnaire en soi, mais glacèrent d'effroi les mélomanes par la seule teneur de leurs titres d'une folie débridée: *Véritables préludes flasques pour un chien, Morceaux en forme de poire*, etc."\(^{30}\) Imbert apparently thought Satie's music was as ridiculous as his titles. Imbert's most derogatory statement was surely "folie débridée" as it gave the impression that Satie was not in control of his ideas.

Articles expressing a positive opinion of Satie's humor, indicating that they understood his humor to be an expression of


\(^{29}\)André Coeuroy, "La Musique gaie. II. L'Humour musical d'Erik Satie," *Libre nouvelle* 5 May 1920.

his artistry, outnumbered those negative opinions seventeen to six. Of the positive opinions, one appeared in 1913, one in 1916, six in 1920, four in 1924, and five in 1925, showing that by about 1920 more people began to understand Satie's humor. Rather than reviewing each of these articles, a selection will suffice for discussion.

In 1913 Georges Auric wrote the first article devoted to the subject "Erik Satie—Musicien humoriste." He referred to Satie's humor as a subtle art which "Tout le monde ne pénètre pas." He also went on to write: "Le public, non pas celui des confrères envieux, des sectaires partiaux, mais le public des amateurs sincères, marque toujours le plus grand enthousiasme pour la musique humoristique de M. Satie."  

One very important and enlightening source was Roland-Manuel's 1916 pamphlet. He viewed Satie's humor as a response to Romantic sentimentality, believing it was a resource of Satie's intelligence rather than being a negative symptom of his personality: "ces générations . . . favorisent logiquement l'élosion d'une ironie qui est comme la revanche de l'intelligence sur un sentimentalisme désordonné. . . . Ainsi naquit . . . l'ironie narquoise et bonhomme d'Erik Satie."  

Roland-Manuel supported his idea by adding that for Satie it was particularly important to "séparer avec soin le comique qui est tout intelligence et la gaieté qui est tout sentiment."  

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32 Ibid.
33 Roland-Manuel, Conférence, p.6.
author realized that Satie "cache plus de musique vraie sous ses titres bouffons." 

Satie's humorous piano pieces were performed more frequently in 1920 than they were in the 'teens (when they were first published) because many of the festivals dedicated to Satie in 1920 featured these works. At these festivals, guest speakers often gave introductory lectures about the composer. Perhaps because of these lectures more people began to understand Satie's humor; they realized it was a new approach—a new aesthetic. Several articles from 1920 reveal this new-found understanding of Satie's humor. For example, Ernest Pignan explained in his review of the Festival Erik Satie, that the composer:

veut par là [the humorous techniques] les détourner de l'atmosphère des écoles pour saisir sur le vif ce qui mérite d'être appris... notre esthétique souffre d'hyper-intellectualisme. En nous montrant du doigt les cirques et les tréteaux, M. Satie nous indique où est le remède. 

Several other ideas concerning Satie's humor were expressed in the contemporary press. Among them was the idea that his humorous titles were in the style of Couperin's titles (e.g. Le Tic Toc). The first time this notion appeared in the press was when André George mentioned that upon hearing Sports et

34 Roland-Manuel, Conférence, p.6.
35 Ibid.
Divertissements he had thought of Couperin.\textsuperscript{37} This connection between the humorous titles of Couperin and those of Satie was also made in some obituary notices, e.g. L'Eclair: "Les titres dans le style de Couperin qu'il choisissait jadis pour ses petites pièces de piano firent souvent prendre à tort pour un humoriste ce musicien dont la pureté et la simplicité renouvelèrent la musique."\textsuperscript{38}

Another contemporary interpretation of Satie's humor was that it was intended to ridicule the Impressionist titles. This idea was first stated by Cocteau in Le Coq et l'arlequin (1917); again later in Action (in a 1920 article by Cocteau) and in Matin d'Anvers (16 March 1924). However, this interpretation does not seem to have been widely accepted, possibly because many people enjoyed the Impressionist period and did not like the idea of its being ridiculed.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the criticism concerning Satie's humor. First, the minimal amount of negative criticism, especially from the years his humorous works were first performed, shows that his humor was more fully accepted than has been realized. Second, some of the criticism indicated that Satie's humor was effective in helping to create a new aesthetic that, in turn, made people reassess their musical values. We therefore learn from the press that Satie's humor was an important aesthetic influence and that it was not simply

\textsuperscript{37}André George, "Erik Satie," Nouvelles littéraires 29 December 1924. Cocteau actually introduced this idea in Le Coq et l'arlequin 1917.

\textsuperscript{38}"Erik Satie est mort," L'Eclair 3 July 1925.
an aspect of his eccentricity as has too often been assumed.\textsuperscript{39}

C. SATIE'S MUSIC

This study will now turn to general comments about Satie's music, focusing on reviews of the following: \textit{Le Fils des Etoiles} (1892); concerts of La Société musicale indépendante (1911) and La Société nationale (1913); \textit{Parade} in 1917 and in 1920; \textit{Socrate} (1920); \textit{Mercure} (1924); and \textit{Relâche} (1924). Both favorable and unfavorable criticism will be reviewed, citing important representative comments.

None of the criticism about the incidental play \textit{Le Fils des Etoiles} contained any detailed remarks about the music. Of the five reviews that were found, three displayed a positive attitude towards Satie's music; two were uncomplimentary. Because there were no similarities in the criticisms each review will be mentioned briefly.

One of the favorable reviews was in \textit{La Nouvelle revue}, in which Louis Gallet stated that the play itself was not worth reviewing, and that it was only "par ce léger lien musical que l'oeuvre du Sår Péladan se rattache à ma chronique."\textsuperscript{40} The article in \textit{Le Ménestrel} gave the background of the Rose et Croix stating that their musical programs included works of all the masters--and specifically Bach, Palestrina, Beethoven, Wagner, and Franck. Thus it might be inferred that the critic was

\textsuperscript{39}Note that contemporary criticism rarely mentioned that Satie's humor was thought to be a mask of humility.

\textsuperscript{40}Louis Gallet, "Théâtre," \textit{La Nouvelle revue} 75 (1892): 657.
placing Satie among the masters. The third positive review merely said that the work was designed for a certain type of intelligent public. Negative comments were more specific than the favorable ones. Maurice Lefèvre thought "le compositeur ne me paraît l'être avec les règles plus sommaires de l'harmonie."¹ Nisque Narcky, critic for Le Temps, wrote that the work put him to sleep.

In 1911 La Société musicale indépendante performed three of Satie's works, all of which were composed about twenty years earlier: Le Fils des Etoiles, La Deuxième Sarabande, and La Troisième Gymnopédie. Three of the articles spoke favorably of Satie, one did not. In 1911, as in 1892, the favorable criticism outnumbered the negative.

Two of the articles containing favorable criticism appeared in the leading publications, La Comoedia illustrée and Musica. The critic who reviewed the Société concert for La Comoedia illustrée believed that "la musique de M. Erik Satie, toute contenue et parfois bégayante qu'elle est, ne manque ni de charme ni de puissance émotionnelle."² The author showed his esteem for Satie by summarizing that "Sachons donc gré à l'Indépendante d'avoir inscrit à son programme ces trois pièces."³ The review in Musica, found under the heading "Informations de Paris," was full of praise for Satie especially

³Ibid.
with regard to his musical foresight: "Ces oeuvres, malheureusement peu nombreuses, surprennent par une prescience du vocabulaire moderniste et par le caractère quasi-prophétique de certaines trouvailles harmoniques."  

The unfavorable review appeared in *Le Courrier musical*. It might well have been quite influential on public opinion had it only been a more substantial review. Marcel Orban wrote a short paragraph on Satie's music as performed at the concert of La Société musicale indépendante, and his opinion was made quite clear when he wrote: "Je ne demande pas mieux, mais le vocabulaire musical de M. Satie, fort curieux peut-être il y a vingt ans, n'offre plus, à l'heure présente, qu'un intérêt rétrospectif . . . beaucoup d'harmonie, et peu de musique."  

Two of Satie's later works, the *Véritables préludes flasques* and the *Morceaux en forme de poire*, were performed at a concert of La Société nationale in 1913. Judging from the criticism it appears that Satie had maintained his popularity, as both reviews were complimentary. Calvocoressi, writing in *La Comoedia illustree*, referred to Satie's works as "la plus belle musique."  

Charles Tenroc, in *Le Guide musical*, called the new pieces "délicieux!"  

Four years later, in 1917, *Parade* was premiered. The

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reactions were mixed with two complimentary and two critical reviews. This split opinion also reflects the audience's reaction which the critics noticed and remarked on in their reviews. As Michel Levray wrote: "pendant qu'une bonne partie de la salle applaudissait—j'oserai dire chaleureusement—l'autre sifflait non moins énergiquement."

Favorable comments were found in *La Revue des oeuvres nouvelles* and in the program note by Apollinaire. In the former, Levray wrote that he could not understand why people hissed, as he thought the work showed the highest originality. Apollinaire's program notes were, understandably, very positive, describing the work as "un poème scénique que le musicien novateur a transposé en une musique étonnamment expressive, si nette et si simple qui l'on y reconnaîtra l'esprit merveilleusement lucide de la France même."

Jean Marnold, music critic for *Le Mercure de France*, spared no feelings in his review of *Parade*. He too mentioned that the work received "une égale moisson d'applaudissements ovationnels et de huées ponctuées de sifflets." Marnold believed that "cette production saugrenue" merited neither applause nor hissing, referring to the work as childish and silly "à un

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51Ibid.
52Ibid.
degré, à la vérité, des plus rares." Satie, he wrote: "se révéla tout jeune un amateur talentueux duquel des musiciens novateurs et devenus fameux ont apprécié très haut l'originalité d'imparfaites prémices."

The reviews of Socrate as performed at the Festival Erik Satie in 1920 reflect a change in opinion about Satie's work. For the first time the unfavorable reviews outnumber the favorable ones (five to two). This change was, however, not a true indication of a change in public opinion about Satie, as much of the negative criticism stemmed from the inferior performance of Socrate rather than the music itself.

All the unfavorable reviews mentioned the monotony of the performance, some critics saying the singer was at fault. For example, in Le Courrier musical Pierre Leroi wrote: "Reconnaissions, d'ailleurs, que Mme Freund enterra sous sa monotonie tout ce qui aurait pu retenir notre attention." Two reviews found in Essais critiques also mentioned Socrate's monotony: one blaming it on the inability of the performer, the other observing that one could not deny the work was monotonous. Jean Marnold's review contained the strongest criticism as he once again referred to Satie's amateurism: "En dépit de ses études tardives à la Schola d'indyste, la musique de M. Satie fut toujours, et n'a pas changé, un parfait spécimen de

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l'indigence et de l'impérétie qui dénotent l'amateurisme."^55 He described the "drame symphonique" as being "confectionné d'un chapelet d'incises de deux ou de quatre mesures implacablement ressassées, égrenant sans relâche des réminiscences affadies et flagrantes de Boris et de Pelléas sous un texte de Victor Cousin récité sur le ton d'une conversation saloneuse."^56

In light of this criticism the favorable comments made by Prunières are somewhat surprising: "Qu'une telle musique ne soit pas un instant monotone, ni languissante, c'est le miracle. Une émotion profonde y est enclose."^57 Prunières went on to call Socrate a masterpiece and a classical work.

Reviews of the 1920 performance of Parade indicated that a sociological change had taken place. In 1917 there were four reviews of the ballet and the opinions were equally good and bad. Three years later all five reviews of Parade were quite favorable. As with the 1917 performance, critics commented on the public's reaction to the work. Now, as André Billy noted, "les gens qui sifflaient naguère ont applaudi."^58 He also went on to mention that everyone applauded, and the acclamations did not cease. Another critic to mention the reception of the work was Henry Bidou, who opened his review with the following: "Parade avait fait scandale in 1917. En 1920, le même ouvrage est acclamé."^59 Georges Auric felt that "le triomphe réel et

presque imprévisible de cette reprise de Parade paraît bien être un clair symptôme de l'esprit qui anime maintenant tout un public."\(^{60}\) From these comments it is clear that the public now accepted and enjoyed the Dadaistic trends initiated by Parade in 1917.

A singular example of the criticism of Satie's music for Parade is the important review written by Louis Laloy for Comoedia. This article, like André Billy's, mentioned audience reaction. Laloy noted that "la salle est en joie. Elle a bien raison."\(^{61}\) He went on to say that "M. Erik Satie a l'oreille sensible, et sa musique, toujours harmonieuse, est aussi opposée que possible à ces rapprochements forcés qu'amène le contrepoint."\(^{62}\)

Until the premiere of Mercure in 1924 criticism of Satie's music was primarily favorable (the exception being the performance of Socrate in 1920). Mercure received mixed reviews, however the negative comments outnumbered the favorable. Of the eight reviews found dealing with Mercure, only three contained favorable responses, those being in Le Figaro, Comoedia, and Paris-midi. The articles in the first two papers were somewhat similar, each author referring to Mercure as a work "unique en son genre" writing that Satie's music was


\(^{62}\)Ibid.
charming, subtle—and delicious. Souday's remarks in Paris-midi were even less specific about the music, though he did say the work was pleasant.

Criticism of Mercure emphasized a lack of invention in Satie's music, which resembled nothing more than "le flon-flon ordinaire du Music-hall." Georges Auric's articulate criticism also followed this line of thinking when he wrote that "les mélodies sont déroulées toujours de la même manière, par menus fragments, aux rythmes calqués sur des mètres de café-concert, et qui se répètent, banalement transposés, sans une seule fois prendre un ampleur quelconque. L'Harmonie et l'orchestration n'existent plus."

Relâche, on the other hand, was the recipient of overwhelmingly negative criticism: out of thirty reviews only five were complimentary. The favorable reviews were found in Le Crapouillot and Paris-midi (both papers printed two reviews), and in Le Petit journal in which Paul Achard mentioned the audience's reaction to Relâche: "Il y eut un ou deux accrochages, rapidement noyés dans les bravos." In Le Crapouillot Lucien Mainssieux wrote: "La musique d'Erik Satie est comme toujours admirable et pleine d'esprit."

However, these examples of favorable criticism are strongly

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64 Georges Auric, "La Musique," Nouvelles littéraires 21 June 1924.
negated by the other reviews, and opinions of the work were, in
general, that it was a charade, a stupid farce, and a nullity in
two acts. Roland-Manuel wrote, "ce spectacle et cette musique
ne sont pas scandaleux, mais moroses sans raffinement, ennuyeux
avec minutie, incohérents avec affectation." 67 A comment made by
Maurice Boucher lends some insight as to why Relâche was such a
failure: "M. Picabia a dû être ennuyé, personne n'a sifflé.
C'est que tout cela est déjà devenu bien vieux." 68 Apparently
the public had begun to tire of this type of musical satire.

Most of the reviews criticized Satie's music for its lack
of invention (just as with Mercure), saying it was merely a
collection of popular themes. Emile Vuillermoz described
Satie's music for Relâche in the following manner:

La partition de Satie est écrite économiquement. Elle
est composée surtout de cette formule commode que l'on
appelle au café-concert le 'café-au-lait' et qui
consiste à répéter les yeux fermés une seule mesure
jusqu'au moment où le chef d'orchestre fait un signe
convenu pour prévenir ses subordonnés qu'ils peuvent
attaquer la mesure suivante. Ici encore, nos
novateurs n'ont utilisé qu'une très poussiéreuse
tradition. 69

Roland-Manuel also had some harsh remarks about Satie's
disappointing contribution to the ballet. He wrote:

La musique de M. Erik Satie accompagne sans rigueur
les péripéties de Relâche. Le prodigieux annonciateur

67 Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine musicale," L'Eclair 9
December 1924.
68 Maurice Boucher, "La Musique. Les Ballets suédois,"
L'Avenir 9 December 1924.
69 Emile Vuillermoz, "Ballets suédois. Relache," L'Excelsior
6 December 1924.
du debussysme, la compositeur des Sarabandes, de Jeux et divertissements et de Socrate n'a pas rougi de produire une imitation des flonflons les plus éhontés qui renchérit sur ses modèles et s'en distingue surtout par une construction plus lâche, une harmonie plus plate, une instrumentation plus opaque. Comment pardonner à M. Picabia d'avoir entraîné M. Satie dans une aussi détestable aventure? Comment pardonner à M. Satie de l'y avoir suivi?  

The sentiments of the two authors quoted above were shared by many critics. Relâche, Satie's final work, was truly the composer's most poorly received work.

Having surveyed the reviews of Satie's major works it is now possible to discuss the trends of the criticism and what they signify. The first trend was, until 1924, to view Satie's music favorably. There were a couple of exceptions to this: one was the equally split opinion of Parade in 1917, the other was the negative criticism stemming primarily from the disastrous performance of Socrate in 1920. It was not until 1924 that the trend shifted and Satie's music was viewed negatively. What is most significant is that Satie's music was admired by the majority of his contemporaries for all but the last year of his life.

In this chapter we have studied contemporary opinions of three facets of the composer Erik Satie: Satie's personality, his humor, and his music. With respect to his personality, we now know that he was not, during his lifetime, truly regarded as an eccentric and isolated composer. His contemporaries

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70 Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine musicale," L'Eclair 9 December 1924.
understood, appreciated, and accepted his brand of humor, and they admired his music. It seems that Erik Satie was not a controversial figure until 1924, by which time the public had begun to outgrow and to tire of the innovations he had so successfully introduced.
IV. SATIE'S SIGNIFICANCE AND THE EXTENT OF HIS IMPACT

While Satie's impact on French music has been acknowledged in modern literature, a clear picture of the extent of his impact on his contemporaries has not. This final chapter will examine this problem by attempting to ascertain the degree to which Satie's impact was recognized in the contemporary press. First, general acknowledgements of Satie's significance will be examined, followed by statements concerning his influence and his musical and aesthetic innovations. The latter will demonstrate exactly what critics thought made the most impact. As in previous chapters, only a selection of the comments examined will be discussed, though the total amount of articles fitting each category will be mentioned in order to provide an accurate account of the extent to which Satie's impact was recognized.

A. SATIE'S SIGNIFICANCE

Seven articles written while Satie was alive accorded him an important place in music history; four others did so less than five years after his death. It is surprising to find that five of these articles were written during Satie's first years of recognition (that is before 1917). This seems to indicate that his early achievements were regarded as being very significant. Several other articles noting his place in history were found: two in 1924, one in 1925, one in 1926, and two in 1929.

The first author to express that future musicians and
historians should remember Satie was Jean Ecorcheville (1911):

C'est la singularité outrancière et paradoxale qui a empêché le succès direct de ces efforts, mais c'est bien elle aussi qui eut le mérite de la découverte. Si l'absurde de 1886 est devenu la réalité de 1910, si les trouvailles d'un simple ont rénové le langage des habiles, l'histoire de la musique doit le savoir, comme le savent quelques initiés.¹

Another article from 1911 contained this remark: "Erik Satie occupe dans l'histoire de l'art contemporain une place véritablement exceptionnelle."² In 1914 Gabriel Grovlez, critic for Musica, wrote about Satie's newly published piano pieces. He opened his article by stating that Satie "occupe une place à part dans l'évolution musicale moderne."³ Roland-Manuel wrote two articles about Satie, one in 1913 and another in 1916. In the first of these the author summarized Satie's work by saying "il fut le premier à les cueillir à l'arbre neuf. La musique française se doit de ne jamais l'oublier."⁴ In 1916 Roland-Manuel clarified Satie's status, once again granting him an important position in musical history:

En cinq années tout [sic] une bibliographie est née qui traite de Satie. Son oeuvre est devenue familière aux musicologues de France, d'Angleterre et d'Amérique. Si ce n'est pas la gloire, c'est le succès qui, bien timidement encore, vient couronner les efforts d'un petit maître, dont il serait malséant d'oublier le passé pour le moins étonnant, et auquel il serait tout à fait injuste de refuser une place

important dans le mouvement musical d'aujourd'hui.\textsuperscript{5}

Eight years passed before another author praised Satie's contribution to the development of French music. Paul Collaer, after citing both general and specific cases of "L'Influence d'Erik Satie," wrote: "Nous ne pouvons que nous incliner bien bas devant un artiste qui, depuis trente ans, a raillé. Satie n'en a pas moins continué sa route, avec une sûreté, une décision qui sont d'une importance capitale pour l'avenir de la musique française."\textsuperscript{6} Another article from 1924 containing a remark on Satie's importance was written by Guy Davenet. He first mentioned "la place importante qu'Erik Satie occupe dans l'évolution de la musique supra-moderne;"\textsuperscript{7} he then remarked it was "l'esthétique particulière de ce musicien, qui marquera dans l'histoire de la musique."\textsuperscript{8}

Turning to articles written after Satie's death, we find there was no major difference in their approach to this subject. The obituary in \textit{Le Monde musical} reprinted what Ecorcheville wrote about Satie in 1911 (that historians should know him, as they had known other initiators). In 1926 Pierre de Massot wrote that Satie "occupe, dès aujourd'hui, la plus belle place dans l'histoire de la musique contemporaine et que son nom, par le merveilleux enrichissement qu'il symbolisera, rejoindra, dans

\textsuperscript{6}Collaer, "L'Influence d'Erik Satie," p.85.
\textsuperscript{7}Guy Davenet, "Au Cercle Français. Soirée Erik Satie," \textit{Matin d'Anvers} 23 March 1924.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid.
l'avenir, celui du divin Bach." The two articles from 1929 were written within days of each other, both inspired by the festival held to commemorate Satie's death. The sponsors of the festival, among them Robert Caby, author of the article in Humanité, "à lui accorder une place considérable à tous points de vue." A few days later Georges Pioch expressed his respect for Satie:

N'eût-il composé que Socrate, où cet inventeur amusé d'harmonies inouïes a, grave et mesurée, épanoui une humanité peu commune et une émouvante excellence à changer en musique un esprit tout proche de celle que mon bon maître et ami Anatole France appelait "la bienheureuse ataraxie", Erik Satie mériterait une place choisie dans l'histoire de son art.

Though not particularly plentiful, these contemporary statements about the honours Satie deserved demonstrate that substantial recognition of his impact was made both early in his career and then at its end. For a more specific idea of Satie's impact, we turn to statements recognizing his influence, and then to those concerning his musical and aesthetic innovations.

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10Robert Caby, "La commémoration de la mort d'Erik Satie aujourd'hui à Arcueil-Cachan," Humanité 30 June 1929.
B. SATIE'S INFLUENCE

Considering now specific contemporary statements about Satie's accomplishments, we focus first on those concerning his influence. These fall into four basic categories: his influence on Debussy and Ravel (on Impressionism in general); on Les Six; L'Ecole d'Arcueil; and on other musicians. When dealing with the first category, comments such as "précurseur de l'impressionnisme" or "précurseur du debussysme" are included as inferences to Satie's influence on the composers representing this musical style, namely Debussy and Ravel. This was possibly his most important influence as it was the most widely recognized. Fifteen major articles, appearing rather evenly over the years, plus several obituary notices mentioned his contribution to Impressionism.

In 1911, as Satie was beginning to be recognized by a larger musical public, three articles in major publications referred to him as a precursor. Le Guide musical's article described a musical program which included three works "du précurseur Erik Satie, debussyste avant Debussy, raveliste avant Ravel . . ." The author of the article in La Comoedia illustrée wrote about Satie's role as "le plus significatif et le plus direct des précurseurs de M. Debussy, de M. Ravel, de toute la petite pléiade . . ." Musica's article, covering the same concert as the two reviews above, wrote that Satie was "un

génial précurseur" who had exercised "une influence considérable."\(^{14}\) It then went on to discuss Debussy's and Ravel's admiration for Satie.

Two of Satie's long-time followers, Roland-Manuel and Georges Auric, wrote articles about him in 1913, both noting his role as a precursor. Roland-Manuel wrote: "Précurseur de Debussy et Ravel, il sut être aussi le précurseur d'Erik Satie, et ce n'est pas un mince mérite."\(^{15}\) Auric referred to Satie as "celui qui 'bien avant Claude Debussy faisait du Debussy'."\(^{16}\) He later called him a precursor and cited a specific piece which "impressionna à un tel point le futur commentateur de Pelléas et Mélisande."\(^{17}\) In his summary paragraph Auric wrote: "Il fut d'abord l'annonciateur de la tempête debussyste."\(^{18}\)

Quite a few years passed before more comments of this sort were published, the reason perhaps being that with Parade Satie had initiated another movement, and thus his influence on Impressionism became a question of secondary interest. The next mention of his impact on Debussy was a brief one, appearing in a 1923 review of the Concerts Wiener. A more extensive commentary was given by Paul Collaer, who gave one of the most specific examples of Satie's influence on Ravel in his 1924 essay "L'Influence d'Erik Satie." Collaer wrote:

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p.139.
\(^{18}\)Ibid., p.142.
Les Gymnopédies de 1888 exercèrent également une influence très féconde. Ravel y a trouvé l'origine, ou plutôt le parfait exemple de ces larges mélodies, tellement belles qu'elles se passent presque de support harmonique. Il s'en est souvenu dans "Ma mère L'Oye." La pièce, qui s'intitule "La Belle et la Bête" est une gymnopédie par tout le détail de son écriture et de son esprit.¹⁹

Henri Sauguet wrote an important essay on "La Jeune musique française" in 1925. In it he had this to say about Satie's influence on Debussy and Ravel: "On sait que Debussy suivit les conseils de Satie pour la conception de Pelleas; on sait que les Gymnopédies, les Sarabandes, les Gnossiennes ont profondément influencé l'art de Maurice Ravel."²⁰

Most obituaries made a general comment about Debussy's respect for Satie, illustrated by his having orchestrated the Gymnopédies. However, a major obituary, written by Maurice Imbert, contained the following remark: "Cependant il faut lui rendre un juste hommage, considérable si l'on veut bien y réfléchir: son influence sur Debussy est indéniable."²¹ Another important obituary contained this inference to Satie's influence on Impressionism: "Les Gymnopédies, commes les Sarabandes, composées il y a trente-huit ans, devancent par la forme et par l'esprit les événements musicaux qui se sont produits entre 1891-1902, entre Le Rêve d'Alfred Bruneau et Pelléas et

et Mélisande de Claude Debussy.\textsuperscript{22} René Lanser made a very similar comment in his obituary in Matin d'Anvers.\textsuperscript{23}

Seven articles written after 1925 contained reference to Satie's impact on Impressionism. Albert Roussel wrote "A Propos d'un recent festival" in 1926, in which he stated:

On sait que les audacieuses harmonies qu'il écrivit vers 1887 dans ces premières œuvres furent considérées à cette époque comme autant de blasphèmes contre les règles sacros-saintes des traités, alors qu'elles n'étaient que de simples anticipations à l'écriture courante du début du vingtième siècle. Il ne faut d'ailleurs pas exagérer leur influence sur le génie naissant de Debussy.\textsuperscript{24}

There was also a brief remark about the impact of Satie's early works in an article from 1928. The author wrote "On sait que dans ses premières œuvres, il a montré la voie à Debussy, les Sarabandes, par exemple, sont de 1887, alors que Pelléas est de 1902."\textsuperscript{25} Four articles from 1929, all concerning the commemorative festival, included several brief references to the important influence Satie had on Debussy and Ravel. The final article of this group was written in 1930 by Maxime Jacob, he discussed those elements found in the music of Ravel and Debussy which reminded one of Satie.

Quand je retrouve chez Ravel des procédés analogues à ceux de Satie (les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête; Ronsard à son âme) ... chez Debussy

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22}R. B., "Mort d'Erik Satie," Le Figaro 3 July 1925.
  \item \textsuperscript{23}René Lanser, "Erik Satie," Matin d'Anvers 9 July 1925.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}Albert Roussel, "A Propos d'un recent festival," Le Gaulois 12 June 1926.
  \item \textsuperscript{25}A L'entour d'Eve et Jean Fazil. Erick [sic] Satie," L'Oeuvre de Liège March 1928.
\end{itemize}
(Cathedrale engloutie, Canope) d'où vient que je n'ai plus cette délicieuse impression de fraîcheur? C'est que . . . chez Ravel, l'intelligence s'est assimilée la langue, mais le coeur n'est presque pas engagé; enfin chez Debussy, le souvenir très net des œuvres de son ami est englouti lui aussi, absorbé par un génie infiniment plus riche.\(^2^6\)

In discussing the next two categories of Satie's influence, two general observations are appropriate: there were quite a few authors who referred to Satie as a "chef d'école" with respect to Les Six and L'Ecole d'Arcueil, and there were many which mentioned his influence on the younger generation of French composers without citing these groups in particular. Articles that did cite these groups constitute our second and third categories; those that did not, our fourth.

Satie's influence on Les Six was not a popular subject with the press. Indeed, there were only six major articles plus several obituaries which acknowledged his direct impact on the composers in Les Six. There are two possible reasons for this lack of recognition. The first is that Satie's influence on Impressionism occurred in the late 1880's and early 1890's, whereas his connection with Les Six was not begun until the 1920's. Second there possibly was less acknowledgement because the group was fairly short-lived. These two reasons also explain the limited acknowledgement of Satie's influence on L'Ecole d'Arcueil.

The first article to acknowledge Satie's influence on Les

Six, in fact the very-first article about them, was by Henri Collet in *Comoedia* in 1920. He wrote in the first of his two-part article:

C'est pour avoir compris la leçon donné [sic] par Erik Satie et suivi les préceptes si purs de Jean Cocteau que les Six Français: Darius Milhaud, Louis Durey, Georges Auric, Arthur Honnegger, Francis Poulenc et Germaine Tailleferre, inséparables ainsi qu'en témoigne le curieux recueil "du groupe des Six," affirment aujourd'hui, par un magnifique et volontaire retour à la simplicité, le renouveau de la musique française.\(^{27}\)

His follow-up article began with these remarks:

Dans notre précédent feuilleton nous avons indiqué les directives du groupe des "Six"—et spécifié les deux influences qu'il subit: celle de Jean Cocteau et celle de Erik Satie.

Disons tout le [sic] suite que la philosophie esthétique de Cocteau et les audaces techniques de Satie ouvrirent la voie aux le [sic] "Six".\(^{28}\)

It was not until 1921 that Paul Landormy wrote about Satie and Les Six under the title "Le Déclin de L'Impressionnisme." He stated that Satie "a une influence indiscutable sur tous les participants du Groupe des 'Six'. Respectueusement ils s'inclinent devant son oeuvre comme devant ses avis et toute cette esthétique nouvelle dont M. Jean Cocteau proclame les commandements n'est sans doute que la Loi du prophète Satie."\(^{29}\)

Paul Collaer also noted that Satie's work influenced Les Six.

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\(^{27}\)Henri Collet, "La Musique chez soi," *Comoedia* 16 and 23 January 1920.

\(^{28}\)Ibid.

when, in 1924, he wrote:

Satie, en trois lignes, a changé les conventions musicales. Ce n'est qu'après l'époque dite impressioniste... que le problème posé par le "Fils de Etoiles" a été repris, spécialement par A. Honnegger et D. Milhaud... Poulenc, Auric, lui doivent de précieuses indications, spécialement en ce qui concerne l'écriture à deux parties et l'usage de la bitonalité.\(^\text{30}\)

None of the obituaries specifically stated that Satie had influenced Les Six. The typical comment made in the notices was that Satie had given his support to the group and had, in fact, helped to make them popular. The only article from 1925 to make specific reference to his influence was by Henri Sauguet who wrote:

Autour de son nom on retrouve plusieurs générations de musiciens qui ont tous été influencés de son exemple et ce n'est pas là le moindre prodige de son art. ... Georges Auric et Francis Poulenc ont été fortement attirés par Parade, Socrate et toute l'oeuvre de piano de Satie, unique document; Darius Milhaud, dont l'oeuvre paraît pourtant si éloignée de celle du maître d'Arcueil, lui voue un tendre culte.\(^\text{31}\)

L'Oeuvre de Liège printed a brief remark about his influence on Les Six in 1928. The final example was Maxime Jacob's article from 1930. In writing about Satie's influence on Debussy and Ravel, Jacob also said that "Chez Durey il ne s'agit que d'une imitation involontaire mais totale de Satie."\(^\text{32}\)

\(^{30}\text{Collaer, "L'Influence d'Erik Satie," pp.84-85.}\)
\(^{31}\text{Henri Sauguet, "Le Jeune musique française," La Vie des lettres et des arts 19 (1925): 60.}\)
\(^{32}\text{Jacob, "L'Exemple d'Erik Satie," p.131.}\)
As stated earlier, Satie's influence on L'Ecole d'Arcueil was the subject of only very general interpretation. Most articles referred to him as the founder of the school or "le bon maître," or simply made reference to his influence on the young French school of musicians. Very few articles (only three) acknowledged his direct influence on these composers. One of the first to do so was an article in *L'Action française* from November 1923. The author, Marcel Azais, wrote that L'Ecole d'Arcueil was "déjà connue d'un petit nombre par ses deux manifestations de l'été dernier . . .," and that "M. Erik Satie . . . a déjà exercé son influence sur des disciples arrivés à la notoriété. Il continue sur les cadets." One year later a connection was made by Darius Milhaud between "Les Dernières oeuvres d'Erik Satie et les premières oeuvres d'Henri Sauguet." In this essay Milhaud pointed out that "La voie que Satie nous montre est celle dans laquelle s'engage le plus jeune musicien de France. Henri Sauguet est un de ceux qui retient le plus notre attention sympathique." Further into his article Milhaud was more specific about what Sauguet learned from "le bon maître." He wrote that Satie contributed "à lui donner ce sens si exact des proportions et ce goût de la simplicité." The third and final article to mention Satie's direct influence

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34 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p.48.
on L'Ecole d'Arcueil was written in 1928. It refers to Satie's "influence ... dans les dernières années de sa vie, sur le petit groupe de jeunes musiciens français, que l'on a appelé l'Ecole d'Arcueil."  

The fourth category to be discussed, Satie's influence on other musicians, actually subdivides into two groups: (1) references merely noting that he had influenced the younger French musicians, and (2) specific references noting his influence upon other composers. The first of these groups consists primarily of obituary notices and articles written after his death, in which his accomplishments were summarized for the general public, indicating that his influence on younger composers was thought to have been one of his most important contributions to music. There were, however, a couple of major articles written before his death which had some general statements about his influence. For example, in Sélection, Paul Collaer wrote: "Cette puissance est réelle, et la preuve en est que Satie exerce depuis trente ans une influence énorme sur la musique française et même sur la musique étrangère. L'influence est due à l'autorité d'une œuvre fortement et complètement réalisée." Also written in 1924 was an article by André George in which the following was found: "Erik Satie aura joué un rôle considérable et exercé une influence que personne ne conteste."  

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38 Collaer, "L'Influence d'Erik Satie," p. 82.
Eleven of the seventeen obituaries wrote something about Satie having influenced the younger generation of French composers. The six which did not tended to be essays recalling Satie's interesting personal life rather than being summaries of his work. However, it was really not until 1929 that authors began to discuss Satie's role in the formation of the young French school of music. The exception to this was an article from 1926, written by Charles Koechlin and appearing in Journal des débats, in which he stated that Satie's "rôle sur la jeune école est des plus importants." In 1929 five articles about the Satie commemorative festival contained very similar comments about the important role he had played in the development of the young French music. Comoedia carried this statement: "Ce musicien que beaucoup ignorent, et que d'autres raillent, a joué dans le mouvement musical moderne un rôle de premier plan." Le Petit journal printed the identical phrase three days later. Comoedia also ran a short article on July first which told how Milhaud, Caby, Templier and Rousseau "évoqué la vie d'Erik Satie et dit le rôle important que ce musicien a joué dans la formation de la jeune école contemporaine." Other similar remarks were found in Humanité and in Paris-soir.

There were only two articles which gave names and examples

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39 André George, "Les Concerts," Nouvelles littéraires 29 December 1924.
41 "Pour commémorer la mort d'Erik Satie," Comoedia 30 June 1929.
42 "Une cérémonie pour Erik Satie," Comoedia 1 July 1929.
of independent composers (those not associated with any group) whom Satie had also influenced. One text was Collaer's important essay of 1924 in which he wrote:

La troisième Sarabande, de 1887 également, comprend un épisode qui nous apparaît aujourd'hui comme caractéristique de l'art de Gabriel Fauré.

Ces triolets syncopes, où la mélodie et l'harmonie se confondent au point qu'on ne sait si la phrase sort de l'harmonie arpégée . . . ou si l'harmonie surgit de la mélodie, semblable à la chevelure qui luit après le passage des comètes,--nous les retrouverons animés de le [sic] même souplesse dans les œuvres de piano de Gabriel Fauré, mais un peu plus tard seulement, à l'époque de la 6e Barcarolle (vers 1896) et du 7e Nocturne (1898)."  

Collaer also found some similarities between the Morceaux en forme de poire by Satie (1903) and the Suite Francaise of Roger-Ducasse (1907). "Dans l'Air de cette dernier [sic] œuvre (trop peu connue) se retrouvent des phrases entières conçues et écrites dans l'esprit de la partie centrale de IIIe Morceau de Satie. Même occupe mélodique et contrapartique."  

Without citing musical examples, Collaer stated that several other composers had also been influenced by Satie. He wrote:


Ibid., p.84.
les différences de races et de tempérament.⁴⁵

There was just one other article which gave the name of a composer Satie reportedly influenced. This being by Yves Dautun for *Le Petit parisien* in 1929, in which he wrote that Satie's influence on Stravinsky had been profound.

Thus these articles have shown that Satie's influence on Debussy and Ravel was regarded as the single most important influence (covered in fifteen articles). Yet when the amount of criticism discussing Satie's influence on Les Six, L'Ecole d'Arcueil, and on younger French composers in general, is combined (a total of twenty-three articles) it is clear that this too was considered one of Satie's major contributions to French music.

C. SATIE'S INNOVATIONS

Contemporary acknowledgment of Satie's innovations falls into three categories: (1) articles which stated that Satie was connected with a new conception of art; (2) articles which recognized Satie's innovative musical techniques: and (3) articles which credited him with the introduction of a new musical aesthetic.

Comments quoted in this first category may seem appropriate to either the second or third categories as well. However, first-category comments are distinguished by general rather than specific remarks. They include inferences to Satie's

innovations in the musical or the aesthetic domaine, yet they do not fit well in either section discussing these elements. A complete idea of the extent of Satie's impact would not be possible without the inclusion of these comments.

There were twelve articles which fit the description of the first category, dating from the beginning of Satie's career (1911) to 1930. In the first example, from 1911, Calvocoressi believed that through Satie's discoveries he "collabore par là à cette évolution nouvelle de l'art des sons." 6 Georges Auric wrote in 1913 that Satie "a orienté vers une voie toute nouvelle la musique et les musiciens." 7 A less direct example occurred in connection with the Festival Erik Satie (1920), where Jean Cocteau talked about the renovation of art using Satie's music as the primary example for his theories. Le Courrier musical was one source to have reported on this lecture. Parade also elicited remarks about Satie's contribution to modern art. André Billy stated that "avec Parade ... l'art moderne acheva sa première décennie." 8 In 1923 this brief reference to Satie's effect appeared: "Il a déclenché un mouvement qui pourrait bien être fécond." 9 One year later Charles Koechlin wrote an important article for La Revue musicale. His opinion was that "Erik Satie ait semblé prévoir et qu'il ait préparé à sa manière cette conception nouvelle de l'art d'après guerre--qui n'est pas

9L'Action française 16 January 1923.
tout l'art musical d'aujourd'hui, tant s'en faut,—mais qui n'en a pas moins créé des mouvements d'une certaine importance." 50

Two articles written shortly after Satie's death also acknowledged his close ties with the growth of modern art. Boris de Schloezer wrote: "ce fut certainement un créateur, un inventeur dans le domaine des sons et de l'émotion musicale; il avait, me semble-t-il, entrevu un monde nouveau." 51 Georges Auric's memorial article on Satie contained observations about two different times Satie had affected the musical world. He first mentioned the effect Descriptions automatiques had had on the public: "On éprouvait à les écouter un rafraîchissement indicible. La grande vogue d'un tel art date de cette révélation." 52 This remark indicates that Satie's work had also affected change in the public's thinking. In the same article Auric also made this significant comment about Parade: "Grâce à Jean Cocteau, il fit représenter aux Ballets russes sa Parade, où il faut voir le point de départ fécond de tout un renouveau esthétique." 53

Three articles of the same nature appeared after 1925. Guy Davenet called Satie "le Père de cet extraordinaire Renouveau, qui porta la musique française à l'avant-plan du modernisme artistique contemporain." 54 A memorial written in 1928 contained

53 Ibid.
54 Guy Davenet, Matin d'Anvers 9 May 1926.
Davenet's belief that it was Satie "qui inspira, sans sortir de l'ombre où il se complaisait, les plus importantes révolutions musicales de notre époque." Darius Milhaud completed his essay on "Erik Satie et l'Art de la Fugue" by writing it was the "esprit de discipline et de méthode pour permettre à son inspiration de s'appuyer sur la technique merveilleuse qui transforma la pensée musicale contemporaine."

In the second category we begin by examining opinions concerning Satie's musical techniques. There was one primary area which the contemporary press recognized as innovative: Satie's early works such as the Gymnopedies and the Sarabandes. Only seven articles were found to contain comments of this type. One of the first was a review of La Société musicale indépendante concert in which Satie's early works were performed. The critic wrote "il a écrit nombre d'œuvres... qui révèlent non seulement une grande ingéniosité à inventer des tours mélodiques, et harmoniques, indentes à ceux qui constituent l'idiome musical d'aujourd'hui..."

Roland-Manuel's pamphlet from 1916 contained this assertion: "Je voudrais que l'on comprît bien que ces Sarabandes marquent une date dans l'évolution de notre musique: voici trois courtes pièces d'une technique harmonique sans précédent."

Not until 1924 was there more recognition of the harmonic innovations

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58Roland-Manuel, Conférence, p.3.
Satie made in the works composed before 1900. In the spring of 1924 Matin d'Anvers ran "Notes sur Erik Satie," which included this paragraph:

En 1887 paraissent trois "Sarabandes" pour piano, qui constituent une date mémorable dans l'histoire de la musique, car "avant" Debussy il rompt le dualisme majeur-mineur et risque les premiers enchaînements de neuvièmes par quintes, sans préparation ni résolution. C'est tout le problème harmonique impressionniste, résolu d'emblée par Satie. Les trois "Gymnopédies" parues de 1888 à 1890, sont plus prophétiques encore, en ce sens qu'elles mettent en œuvre des thèmes absolument dépouillés, et tous opérant par leur seule valeur mélodique, et non par la "sauce" qu'on met autour.59

Although Paul Collaer wrote about the influence of Satie in his article from 1924, he also discussed some of the harmonic qualities which made Satie's early works so unusual. For example:

Dès 1887, les Sarabandes, premières compositions de musicien, prennent de l'ascendant par la nouveauté de leur langage. Dans la deuxième de ces pièces, d'une écriture purement harmonique, les accords de neuvième s'enchaînent par quintes et se reposent sur eux-mêmes, ne cherchant pas à se résoudre. Des cadences imparfaites viennent de temps à autre changer, d'une façon imprévue, la signification habituelle de ces harmonies sonores et somptueuses.60

André George reviewed one of the Concerts Jean Wiener in December 1924, which included Satie's Sarabandes. One of George's comments was that "l'écriture somptueusement harmonique des Sarabandes révélait des vocables étrangement neufs, en cet

60Collaer, "L'Influence d'Erik Satie," p.83.
âge où le jeune Claude-Achille Debussy n'était pas même encore l'auteur des Arabesques."  

The final examples were both in obituaries. In *Le Monde musical* the author acknowledged that "Tout jeune, entre 1887 et 1892, il créait véritablement un langage harmonique nouveau, dans ses Ogives (1886), ses Sarabandes, ses Gymnopédies... ses Gnossiennes, sans parler du Fils des Etoiles, des Sonneries de la Rose-Croix, etc."  

A brief comment concerning the harmonic invention in the *Sarabandes* was found in the obituary in *Le Figaro*, in which the author wrote that the works "ouvriraient, dans le domaine de l'harmonie, des voies nouvelles depuis lors assidûment fréquentées."  

It is surprising, perhaps, that more obituary or memorial articles did not point out that Satie had been a harmonic innovator in his very early works. The reason for this seems to be clear: his contemporaries did not consider this one of his most important accomplishments.  

The final category deals with contemporay statements crediting Satie with the introduction of a new aesthetic. Judging from the amount of criticism, this seems to represent the most important of Satie's innovations. Most of the comments concerning Satie's aesthetic were found in articles dating from 1920, the year that many lectures and festivals were dedicated to Satie. Comments fall into two fairly equal groups: those...  

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61 André George, "Les Concerts," *Nouvelles littéraires* 29 December 1924.  
stating that Satie renounced the Wagnerian aesthetic (and introduced Impressionism); and those stating he reacted against Impressionism.

It has already been shown that Satie's influence on musicians associated with Impressionism was widely recognized in the contemporary criticism. Now we can see how widely recognized were his aesthetic ties with Impressionism. Roland-Manuel was the first author to state that Satie broke from the school of Wagner, when he wrote: "Le mérite de Satie est tout entier dans cette phrase: à l'époque où les meilleurs d'entre nos musiciens s'exténuayaient en stériles imitations de Wagner, Satie eut l'audace ingénue et féconde de frayer de nouveaux sentiers à notre musique." In his pamphlet from 1916 Roland-Manuel wrote this about Le Fils des Etoiles: "Il enlumine cette wagnérie d'une symphonie aussi peu wagnérienne que possible, présageant toute l'esthétique contemporaine du drame musical et créant comme un décor sonore immobile." Henry Bidou reviewed a Concert Erik Satie in 1920. His comment shows recognition for both of Satie's aesthetic achievements. He reported that Satie reacted "contre cet impressionnisme qu'il avait fondé, et cherché les formules d'un art plus robuste." Jean Cocteau was more literate about Satie's abandoning Wagnerism. He began by writing that "Satie fut le seul à sortir sans dommages de cette

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65 Roland-Manuel, Conférence, p.3.
vague de gaz qui contamine même-Chabrier." He then related
this rather amusing story about the work Satie did for Péladan:

"Wagner eut-il écrit cet accord?" demandait Péladan
sévèrement à Satie qui lui livrait une sonnerie de
trompes pour la Rose-Croix. "Certes," répondait-il,
sachant bien que non et riant derrière son binocle.

C'est en 1891 que Satie compose la musique d'une
"Wagnérie" de Péladan et ouvre sans que personne s'en
doute la porte par laquelle Debussy va marcher vers la
gloire.68

The respected critic Henry Prunières also wrote about
Satie's contribution to the new aesthetic of Impressionism. He
assured the reader that "il est certain que Satie fut le premier
à renoncer à la rhétorique wagnérienne et à s'essayer dans un
genre nouveau."69 An article which appeared in La Nouvelle revue
musicale was based on Prunières' ideas. In one of the more
original statements from this rather short essay the author
admits "Au temps du wagnérisme, il est vrai, Satie avait prévu
la faillite du leitmotiv et la destinée future de la musique.70
In 1926 Cocteau wrote an article about a concert "Pour la tombe
der Erik Satie." In it he wrote: "Satie! Je rabâcherais en
répétant le prodige de cet homme pur, qui inventa l'esthétique
debussyste."71

In the 1920s, articles began to state that Satie had

68Ibid., p.17.
69Henry Prunières, "Notes," La Nouvelle revue française 14
(1920): 606.
71Jean Cocteau, "Pour la tombe d'Erik Satie," Comoedia 17
May 1926.
created another new aesthetic when he reacted against the Impressionism which he had founded. Of the five articles found mentioning this fact, four were printed in 1920, the year which seems to mark the public's acceptance of the modern movement in all the arts. In one article, a review of the ballet *Parade* published in *L'Esprit nouveau*, Jeanneret made several remarks about Satie's break with Impressionism and his striving toward a new aesthetic. For example: "Recontre ici . . . Satie, sur un point fondamental de l'esthétique musicale: création de rapports nouveaux de sons et d'intervalles, visant à une plus réelle intensité."72 In writing about the simplicity of *Parade*, Jeanneret added, "finie, 'la sauce' où se complut l'école impressionniste."73 Two other articles about *Parade* were published on December twenty-first, both written by Jean Cocteau, who in *Paris-midi* described the orchestration of *Parade* "dont l'audace consiste à être simple, à rompre avec les bouche-trou, les surcharges, les divisions, les dentelles harmoniques, l'estompe, toute la poussière d'or de l'impressionnisme."74 The following clearly suggests that *Parade* introduced a new aesthetic: "Quand nous avons donné *Parade* le dadaïsme était inconnu. Nous n'en avions jamais entendu parler. Maintenant, nul doute que le public reconnaîsse Dada dans notre cheval sans malice."75 Concerning Satie's innovation Cocteau wrote,

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73 Ibid., p.452.
74 Jean Cocteau, "Reprise de *Parade*," *Paris-midi* 21 December 1920.
"L'audace de Satie consiste à être simple, d'une simplicité neuve, savante, linéaire, après une période interminable de musique diffuse et compliquée."\textsuperscript{76} The other article from 1920 to have mentioned Satie's break with Impressionism and his founding a new aesthetic was in \textit{L'Opinion}.\textsuperscript{77} The final example was found in \textit{L'Action française}. Although this article was written in 1923, it reviewed \textit{Socrate}, a work which premiered in 1920. The author believed the work "réagit contre 'le papilliotement impressionniste'."\textsuperscript{78} Later he maintained that Satie had released a movement that could be fruitful.

It is now clear that the innovations which had the least effect on Satie's contemporaries were his musical ones. This is evident not only because recognition in the press was limited to just one of his musical styles (that of his early works), but also because Satie's musical innovations received the least amount of coverage (a total of seven articles). The other two categories researched were actually very similar—one containing general comments, the other being more specific about Satie's contributions to new conceptions of music. The amount of articles treating these two categories (a total of twenty-four) indicates both that Satie's aesthetic innovations were the most widely acknowledged of his innovations, and that they were considered his most important. Therefore, Satie's aesthetic innovations probably had the greatest impact on his

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77}An appropriate quote was used in connection with Satie's having founded Impressionism. See quote from \textit{L'Opinion} on p.87.
\textsuperscript{78}\textit{L'Action française} 16 January 1923.
This chapter has attempted to show the extent of Satie's impact on his contemporaries by examining three different subjects. Examined first were general acknowledgements of his impact, in the form of comments about Satie's place in history. Second we reviewed contemporaries' views on his accomplishments, i.e. influence and innovation. These studies of the contemporary criticism suggest that Satie's aesthetic influence made a far greater impact (as it was acknowledged in forty-five articles) than his musical innovations (discussed in thirty-one articles). In each case we have shown exactly how much recognition Satie's accomplishments received. While the amount of criticism within each of these categories may seem minimal when compared to the overall amount of criticism involved in this study, their grand total (eighty-seven) represents about one-third of all the literature examined. These numbers, along with the dates of the articles and the relative status of the authors, allow us a much clearer picture of the impact Satie had on his contemporaries.
V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to clarify Satie's historical position while also providing a more accurate picture of "Le Cas Satie." Satie's importance has been long overshadowed by his portrayal as an eccentric. His music has not been regarded seriously, and the extent of his impact on his contemporaries though acknowledged, has never been clearly demonstrated. Contemporary criticism provided an opportunity to re-examine the portrayal of Satie's personality and his music, and to establish the extent to which Satie's impact was recognized by his contemporaries.

The first portion of the study served the dual purpose of acquainting the reader with the contemporary criticism while demonstrating how widely known Satie was through the press. Chapter one surveyed the criticism of Satie noting the exact amount published. This part of our study revealed precisely when Satie was most controversial, which events received the most criticism, as well as the relative importance of the articles, and helped to illustrate that Satie's public image reached far beyond the elite musical circles. A chronological graph of the criticism made it clear that the number of articles mentioning Satie increased over the years, and a connection was made between the increased amount of attention to Satie in the press and his increased effect on the public. We have been able to determine the extent of Satie's impact by noting the amount of writings in the press on this composer and the extent of the criticism's influence.
An analysis of the literature showed how Satie was generally regarded by discussing three facets of the composer: his personality, his humor, and his music. By studying the criticism it was found that Satie's eccentricity was only associated with his youth, and that it was not at all a controversial subject. The contemporary portrayal of Satie was that of a respected master, unlike the modern depiction of an eccentric. With regard to the image of Satie as a lonely man, the criticism showed he was a proud man ashamed of his meager lodgings, but that he was well-liked and had many associates. The findings in this section of chapter two certainly contradict Myers' biography which described Satie as "an essentially lonely man,"¹ and Anne Rey when she wrote that Satie was "sans ami véritable."² Chapter two also revealed that Satie's contemporaries understood that his humor was a form of his art and appreciated it as such. Some mentioned that it might be a defense against criticism, though the view was not widely held. Contemporary opinions about Satie's humor certainly contradict the typical modern views exemplified by this observation of Myers: "He adopted the role of jester to shield himself from possibly hostile criticism."³ It was also interesting to note that Satie's humorous titles for his piano pieces did not shock the public as Templier suggested when he wrote: "Many critics

¹Myers, Erik Satie, p.120.
³Myers, Erik Satie, p.73.
⁴Templier, Erik Satie, p.117.
long ago were antagonized by his witty titles." The final section of chapter two was devoted to reviews of Satie's major works. Their study showed that until 1924 Satie's music was, for the most part, well received. Certain present-day conceptions surrounding his works were clarified by the contemporary criticism. For example, one modern author wrote that "Parade was too advanced for a pre-war public . . . it met with a very hostile reception," whereas the reviews clearly showed that in 1917 Parade met with equally good and bad response. Templier wrote that at the performance of Relâche the public was wild and screaming, but the contemporary critics said Picabia was disappointed because no one hollered.

Because of chapter two's findings one must continually re-evaluate statements of this sort: "He was the most insulted of musicians during his whole career;" or "Satie had developed a keen sense of the culture in which he lived, an awareness that allowed him to persevere in his separate path despite the legend, scandal and critical fervor which arose around him." Overall, we have demonstrated that Satie was generally thought of as both a serious composer and a gentleman.

Finally, an examination of the contemporary comments about Satie's significance and his accomplishments provided the most direct evidence concerning the extent of his impact. The amount of recognition given to each of his achievements clearly

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5 Myers, p. 52  
6 Templier, p. 114.  
7 Shattuck, The Banquet Years, p. 140.
demonstrated in which areas Satie had made the greatest impact. The anomaly between modern literature and contemporary criticism was striking, for rarely has a composer been so highly acclaimed and been granted a place in the history of French music even before his death, yet been so neglected by the ensuing generations. By reviewing the criticism concerning Satie's influence on various groups—Debussy and Ravel, Les Six, L'Ecole d'Arcueil—it can be concluded that his impact on Debussy and Ravel was, next to that on younger French musicians in general, the most widely acknowledged of his achievements and therefore the area in which his influence was strongest. This clearly contradicts what Myers wrote: "Apart from internal evidence, this [what Satie says about Debussy and what Cocteau relates of the influence] is really all we have to go on with regard to the vexed question of 'influences'."

Contemporary criticism which discussed Satie's innovations, whether musical or aesthetic, was also examined. While contemporary comments about his musical innovations were limited to one area (his earliest works) and were not widely acknowledged, his aesthetic innovations were well recognized. We have attempted to clarify Satie's impact by showing not only the extent of his recognition, but also that his contemporaries believed his influence and his aesthetic were the most important features of his work.

This thesis has thus provided the following: a survey of

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8Myers, p.33.
the contemporary criticism, demonstrating that Satie was widely known through the press; a contemporary portrayal of Satie showing that he was respected; and an assessment of his significance revealing the extent of his impact. These three studies have augmented and clarified modern literature on Satie, and they have proven that Satie had an even greater role in the artistic revolution than has previously been demonstrated.

By presenting contemporary criticism which demonstrated how Satie was regarded, and which revealed the extent of his impact, Satie's historical importance has been set in its proper perspective. A clearer picture has also been drawn of "Le Cas Satie" which posed the problem of the overshadowing of Satie's music. It has been said by contemporary and modern authors alike, that it was not so much what Satie did, as what he caused to be done. Roland-Manuel made that statement in *L'Eclair* in 1923. Boris de Schloezer repeated it in 1924, going one step farther when he wrote: "Ce n'est pas tant par sa musique qu'il a agi sur les jeunes, que par sa personnalité même et l'atmosphère particulière, qui s'est créée autour d'elle."9 Skulsky continued, like other modern authors, that line of thinking when he wrote "Satie's importance lies less in the nature of his own works than in the influence he has exercised."10 These views basically suggest that Satie's influence was more important than his music. They also suggest that his personality was more

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influential than his music. Contemporary criticism agrees in one way with "Le Cas Satie" view. It does show that Satie's influence was the most acknowledged of his achievements, and that his aesthetic innovations were much more widely acknowledged than his musical ones. However, it disagrees with "Le Cas Satie" view in that it shows his music was the subject of attention in the press, much more than was his personality, and that his important achievements--his aesthetic innovations and his influence--were associated with his music, not with his personality. Clearly one should not try to separate Satie's aesthetic from his music, for as Cocteau wrote, Satie's music was the expression of a new aesthetic.
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