

Bennington College Presents:

SATIE

SATURDAY



an entertainment/concert with music and
dance performed by faculty and students



■ Costume for a ballet on Erik Satie's *Trois morceaux en forme de poire* (Three Pieces in the Form of a Pear, 1890–1903) for piano four hands.
(PARIS, ARCHIVES DE LA FONDATION ERIK SATIE)

April 24, 2004 / 7 PM
Deane Carriage Barr

Program

2nd Sarabande		1887
	John Van Buskirk	
3rd Sarabande		1887
	Erik Satie (?)	
Three Chansons played on the violin		
Sylvie		1886
Chanson		1887
Les Fleurs		1886
	Heather Sommerlad	
Le Statue de bronze		1916
	Megan Schubert	
“Course” from Sports et divertissements		1914
	Jeff Lindberg	
Sonatine Bureaucratic		1917
	John Van Buskirk	
3 Morceau en Forme de Poire (à 4 mains) avec une Manière de Commencement, une Prolongation du meme & un En Plus, suivi d’une Redite [Three Pieces in the form of a Pear (for four hands) with a By Way of a Beginning, an Extension of the Same, and an In Addition, followed by a Repetition]		1903
	Tim Whitehead & John Van Buskirk	
	Pause	
Gymnopédie, arranged by Eric Taxier		1888
	Emilee Lord, danseuse Rachel Berk, Eric Taxier, JVB	
Cinema by René Clair		1924
Entr’acte Symphonique de “Relache”		

*With special thanks to Suzanne Jones, Rachel Berk, and Helen Gassenheimer, programs
Kristen Scheer for her poster, Erin Briggeman for her Cocteau replications,
and Emerald Catron for her satiesfying impersonation.*

NOTES

Erik Satie (1866-1925) "was an enigmatic, disconcerting figure always disguising under eccentricities his real sensitivity. Full of inspiring ideas about the destiny of music, he was content to offer a kind of condensation of them..." (Pierre Bernac)

He is best remembered as the composer of music which is deliberately modest and inconsequential, and of bizarre titles. He was however an innovator in his earlier pieces, where unusual progressions are presented with quasi-archaic simplicity; much of his music contains a highly purified poetry that is more than merely facetious. Although his work may have been severely restricted in scope, he had an important influence as various as Debussy, Ravel, Milhaud, Poulenc and Cage.

Satie's *Sarabandes* probably owe a debt to Chabrier, but they in turn influenced Debussy's *Pour le piano*. The free use of seventh and ninth chords was certainly taken to heart by Debussy. Satie and Debussy met in 1891 and were close friends for 25 years. The two were drawn to each other but it was not a simple relationship. Debussy was prepared to make his superiority felt; Satie became the jester to hide his humiliation.

In doing so Satie could be said to be adopting his most characteristic role. He knew his technique was severely limited; but pride and determination, coupled with great sensitivity, led him to bypass his deficiencies with intricate technical systems of his own devising. It also made him allow his natural humor to develop a protective shield. This conflict, together with the opposing pulls of nature and upbringing, not only shaped his fascinating, complex and prickly character; it also molded much of his music, giving it sometimes incongruous traits that are part of its individual charm.

For about 15 years beginning in 1898, Satie was forced to earn a living as a *café-concert* pianist, which he considered 'a great lowering', and as composer of music hall-songs and incidental music. At this time, he also became a student again and studied counterpoint, fugue and orchestration. *Trois morceaux en forme de poire* are the main monument to this sad period and consist for the most part of arrangements of cabaret melodies. They were also an oblique response to Debussy's stinging criticism that Satie's music had no form.

Les Courses is from a work called *Sports et divertissements*. These pieces are brilliant thumbnail sketches of various outdoor sports and amusements written to accompany an album of charming, sophisticated drawings by Charles Martin, a well-known illustrator of the day. (A few of these are displayed around you.) Satie added droll verbal commentaries and wrote both words and music in an exquisite calligraphic hand.

In April of 1915 Satie had his greatest single stroke of good fortune when *Trois morceaux* were heard by Jean Cocteau. Satie's meteoric rise to fame after WW I was entirely Cocteau's doing. (Therefore the display of four masterly replicas of Cocteau by Erin Briggeman.)

The *Sonatine bureaucratique* is interesting in that it paraphrases Clementi, thereby anticipating (and possibly influencing) Stravinski's use of old material.

Mecure and *Relâche* were both ballets, the last works written by Satie. The entr'acte was meant to be shown between the two ballets. Both were scandals, *Relâche* living up to its title ('theatre-closed') on the opening night, owing to the illness of the principal dancer! The music Satie wrote to be played during the silent movie is presumably the first music composed specifically for this purpose.

(Notes are respectfully borrowed from the fine work of Sir George Grove and his minions.)

Les Fleurs

Que j'aime à vous voir, belles fleurs
À l'aube entr'ouvrir vos corolles
Quand Iris vous fait de ses pleurs
De transparentes auréoles
vous savez seules dans nos coeurs
évoquer une tendre image
Et par vos suaves couleurs
Vous nous partez un doux langage
Aussi messagères d'amour
Je vous demande avec tristesse
Pourquoi le sort en un seul jour
Vous arrache à notre tendresse.

Le Statue de Bronze

La grenouille du jeu de tonneau
S'ennuie, le soir, sous la tonnelle...
Elle en a assez! d'être la statue
Qui va prononcer un grand mot: Le Mot!

Elle aimerait mieux être avec les autres
Qui font des bulles de musique
Avec le savon de la lune.
Au bord du lavoir mordoré

Qu'on voit, là-bas, luire
entre les branches...
On lui lance à coeur de journée
Une pâture de pistoles
Qui la traversent sans lui profiter
Et s'en vont sonner dans les cabinets
De son piédestal numéroté!
Et le soir, les insectes couchent
Dans sa bouche...

The Flowers

How I love to see you, beautiful flowers,
when your corollas begin to peep open in
the dawning, when Iris' tears become
your transparent halos.
You are the only creatures who know how
to call up a gentle image in our hearts.
Your colours speak to us
in a sweet language.
Messengers of love,
I sadly beg you
to tell me why the fate of just one day
tears you from our tender care.

The Bronze Statue

The frog of the game 'tonneau'
is bored at evening under the arbour
she has had enough of being a statue
who prepares to utter an important
word, the Word
she would rather be with the others
who are blowing music bubbles
with the soap of the moon.
By the edge of the reddish-brown
washhouse
that can be seen yonder shining
through the branches.
a day they ceaselessly throw
fodder of metal discs
that pass through her fruitlessly
and rattle down the compartments
of her numbered pedestal.
And at night the insects go to bed
in her mouth

Sylvie

Elle est si belle, ma Sylvie,
Que les anges en sont jaloux.
L'amour sur sa lèvre ravie
Laissa son baiser le plus doux.

Ses yeux sont de grandes étoiles,
Sa bouche est faite de rubis,
Son âme est un zénith sans voiles,
Et son coeur est mon paradis.

Ses cheveux sont noirs comme l'ombre,
Sa voix plus douce que le miel,
Sa tristesse est une pénombre
Et son sourire un arc-en-ciel.

Elle est si belle, ma Sylvie,
Que les anges en sont jaloux.
L'amour sur sa lèvre ravie
Laissa son baiser le plus doux.

Chanson

Bien courte, hélas! est l'espérance
Et bien court aussi le plaisir
Et jamais en nous leur présence,
Ne dura tant que le désir.

Bien courte hélas! est la jeunesse
Bien court est le temps de l'amour
Et le serment d'une maîtresse
Ne dura jamais plus d'un jour.

Celui qui met toute sa joie
Et son espoir en la beauté,
Souvent y laissant sa gaité.
D'un dur souci devient la proie.

Sylvie

My Sylvie is so beautiful
that angels are jealous of her.
Eros left his softest kiss
on her ravished lips.

Her eyes are big stars,
her mouth is made of rubies,
her soul is a cloudless noon
and her heart is my paradise.

Her hair is black as night,
her voice sweeter than honey,
her sadness is a like the twilight
and her smile a rainbow.

My Sylvie is so beautiful
that angels are jealous of her.
Eros left his softest kiss
on her ravished lips.

Chanson

Alas how brief is hope
and brief also is pleasure
and they never lasted
as long as desire.

Alas how brief is youth
how brief is the time of love
And a lover's promise
never lasted more than a day.

He who puts all his joy
and hope in beauty,
often leaving his happiness with it,
Falls prey to care and worry.