In the years after the First World War, Satie's style moved towards what was to become known as neo-classicism. Although his reputation was based on his humorous works, Satie's later music sometimes has a more serious character. His neo-classical masterpiece is the 'symphonic drama' Socrate (1924). Following his death in 1925, Satie’s music fell into neglect until the 1950s when there was a revival of interest in his music in the United States, particularly due to advocacy of the composer John Cage.

31 Alfred Fruch Portrait of Erik Satie Poster, Paris 1920

32 Erik Satie Marche de Cocagne

33 John Cage On Erik Satie

34 Erik Satie and the Ballet

35 Satie Concert

36 Satie Exhibition

37 Satie in words, pictures and music

Cabinet 8

Erik Satie, Socrates and John Cage

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Erik Satie (1866 – 1925)

The French composer Erik Satie enjoyed posthumous fame and influence that far exceeds his impact during his lifetime. His piano music, notably the Gymnopédie No. 1, has entered the world of popular culture and become universally familiar. Composers, artists and writers of the 20th and 21st centuries continue to draw inspiration from his unique and idiosyncratic work, which includes not just music, but a substantial output of literary works and visual art.

Satie was born in Honfleur, Normandy, to a French father and a Scottish mother. He was expelled from the Paris Conservatoire for being ‘incoherently lazy’ but found a congenial milieu in the Bohemian world of Montmartre, where he earned a living as a pianist at the celebrated cabaret Le chat noir. It was there that his friendships with artists, poets and musicians (notably Claude Debussy) developed.

The satirical and irreverent attitudes typical of the Parisian avant-garde—perfectly matched Satie’s own absurdist streak. This flowered in the humorous works that dominated his output in the years 1908 – 1914, including works such as Desiccated Embryos, Things seen on right and left (without glasses) and Automatic Descriptions. The unique proto-Dada character of these pieces brought him fame (though little money) and led to a series of collaborations that marked his later years — with Picasso, Cocteau, Massine and Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes for Parade (1917); with Charles Martin for Sports & Dis divertissements (1922); with Francis Picabia, René Clair and the Ballets Suédois for Relâche (1924). He also became a mentor for young French composers, including those known as Les Six: Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger and Germaine Tailleferre.

This exhibition is presented by the J M Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice to complement the concert in Elder Hall on June 24, 2011, featuring two major works by Erik Satie: Sports & Divertissements and Socrate, performed by Stephen Whittington (piano), Robert Macfarlane (tenor) and Ken Bolton reading Satie’s texts in translations by John Cage.

**Exhibition**

**Level 1 & 3, Barr Smith Library**

**9 June until 24 July 2011**

By using a system derived from the practices of French Impressionists, Satie’s music began to develop an international style. One of the first published works of Satie’s music was ‘Indispensable’. Cage organized performances of Satie’s music, including the first ‘complete’ performance of Satie’s music, the first ‘complete’ performance of Satie’s music at the Pocket Theater in New York in 1963. Cage’s article ‘On Erik Satie first appeared in Art News Annual in 1958 and was subsequently published in Cage’s most influential book, Silence (1961).

**Level 3**

**Erik Satie and the Ballet**

From the Theatre Collection, Rare Books & Special Collections, Barr Smith Library

**Erik Satie**

Mélodie Franchomme and Tatiana Volodina

The Act of the Ballets Russes: The Russian Seasons in Paris 1909-29


Programme: Serge Diaghilev’s Seasons of Russian Ballets 1910-1929

Wednesday April 30th to July 22nd

André Levinson: La danse d’aujourd’hui

Paris: Ed. Poche, 1927

Richard Buckle In Search of Diaghilev

London: Sudwick and Jackson, 1955

Il y a cent ans le bal du jewels

Francis Picabia, édition intégrale présente par Michel Samouiloff

Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1966

Bengt Hjuler Ballets Suédois

London: Thames and Hudson, 1990

**Art & Heritage Collections**

**Cultural Musing**

**Rare Books & Special Collections in collaboration with the J M Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice and Art & Heritage Collections present:**

**Things seen on right and left**

**Erik Satie in words, pictures and music**

30 John Cage’s print for Vexations

31 Alfred Fruch’s portrait for Erik Satie

32 Erik Satie’s Marche de Cocagne

33 John Cage’s print for Erik Satie

34 Erik Satie and the Ballet

35 Satie Concert

36 Satie Exhibition

37 Satie in words, pictures and music
Erik Satie in words, pictures and music

**Cabinet 1: Satie’s Faction**

Erik Satie, Bath Academy of Art, May 1976. 11 loose leaves and four cards in folder 17.5 x 23 cm.

The album Erik Satie was created by a group of mainly British artists. At the time of its publication, Ian Breakwell and John Christie who collectively called themselves Satie’s Faction (a pun on ‘satisfaction’). At the time it was reviewed by Satie was held in 1975, the 50th anniversary of his death, to coincide with the centenary of his birth. In France, Erik Satie composed the music in 1904, and after the publication of the score in 1906 by the Brussels firm of A. & F., the first original score was published in 1907. The album scored a success, as its peer. It is part of Satie’s text for a ballet called “Flamboyant”.

**Cabinet 2: Playing Instructions**

Erik Satie and Pierre Alchibycky

Texts by Erik Satie

Published in 1976, Brussels 2002

Two pieces by Erik Satie

76 pages long, 16.5 x 23 cm, limited edition

Belgian artist Pierre Alchibycky (b.1937) has lived in France since 1954. His work is strongly influenced by Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, and is held in the collections of major art museums, including WMAA (New York), the Tate Modern (London) and the Museum Ludwig (Cologne). Various exhibitions (Playing Instructions) in a series of stichs by Alchibycky inspired by the unusual directions that frequently appear in Satie’s scores. With the traditional alegro con moto or allegro expressivo, Satie wrote instructions such as open your head, or with righteous anger.

**Cabinet 3: Erik Satie and Charles Martin Sports & Divertissements, Front Cover**

Erik Satie and Charles Martin

Sports & Divertissements, Table of Contents

The twenty pieces are:

1. Choral prelude (Unappetizing Chorale)
2. Le Balancière (The Swing)
3. Le Chapeau (The Hat)
4. Le Carnaval (Carnival)
5. Le Flambeau (The Torch)
6. Le Flirt (Flirting)
7. Le Fourvoire (The Four-foreside)
8. Le Fleuve (The Water-Side)
9. Le Tangent—perpetual (The Tangent—forever-rolling)
10. Le Tramway—revolutionary (The Tramway—revolutionary)
11. Le Vent (Wind)
12. Le Flute (Fluting)
13. Le Fau—artificer (Fireworks)
14. Le Tricot (Tessera)
15. Choral supplication (Unappetizing Choral) Score

Translation of Satie’s preface in mocksonic form by John Cage.

The text is a poetic form invented by John Cage.

The horizontal text interacts with a vertical word or text in the middle of each line, written in capitals. It is similar to an erasure, in which the initial letters of each line spell a word or text. Each of John Cage’s translations of Satie’s texts for Sports & Divertissements spells E-B-F-I-K-T-L-T-E through the middle of the line, a full translation of Satie’s Preface reads:

This publication embodies two arts, drawing and music together. The growing part of lines, word lines, the minimal part of black dots. These two parts make together an image. I suggest you turn its pages with a tolerant thumb and with a smile for, this is work of pure whimsy. I have added a chord, a sober and beautiful. This makes a success, composed free of fable, a work of beginning wholly artless and unfurnished. This is work of pure whimsy.

For the ‘detractor’ and the ‘multifled’, I have added a chord, a sober and beautiful. This makes a success, composed free of fable, a work of beginning wholly artless and unfurnished.

Satie wrote in his last collaboration:

I dedicate this chore to those who already dislike me. And with whom Erik: Satie.

**Cabinet 4: Erik Satie and Charles Martin, Sports & Divertissements continued...**

15. Le Comédie intime

The Commedia dell’Arte

16. Illustration by Charles Martin

La Comédie intime

lithograph, hand-coloured by Jules Saulle

17. Roland Johnson

Translation of Satie’s text for La Comédie intime. Illustration by John Furnival. From the album Erik Satie, Bath Academy of Art, May 1976. American poet Roland Johnson (1935–1995) took his poetic inspiration from ‘Fred Astaire, Louis Enokské, Tom Pan Alley and the Concord Transcontinental’, to which might be added the Black Mountain poets, the Abstract Expressionist painters and chemist of Satie; notably Bach, Mahler and Satie. The placement of words on the page is an integral part of Martin’s energetic poetry. Here Satie’s texts from Sports & Divertissements were originally published by the Northern Press, founded by the Scottish poet painter, writer and landscape gardener Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006). English artist John Furnival (b. 1935) studied at Wimbledon School of Art and the Royal College of Art. His work lies between poetry and painting and frequently incorporates text.

**Cabinet 5: Erik Satie and Charles Martin, Sports & Divertissements continued...**

18. Le Carnaval (Carnival)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage. A large letter ‘S’ (for Satie) which also worked as an index point.

19. Le Tango — perpetual (The Tango — perpetual)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage.

20. Le Teuvo (Tessera)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage.

21. Le Basin de mer (Sea Bathing)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage.

22. Le Balancière (The Swing)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage.

23. Le Tangent—perpetual (The Tangent—forever-rolling)

Translation of Satie’s text by John Cage.

**Cabinet 7: Erik Satie, Occultist and Cabaret Artist**

During the Second Empire, Satie lived a Bohemian existence in Montmartre, earning his living as a cabaret pianist and composing popular songs for two of his songs, which were very much in vogue in Parisian artistic circles.

24. Erik Satie

Souvenirs de la Rose + Croix (Fingerprints of the Rose + Cross), for piano I. Air of the Order II. Air of the Master, St. Joseph Pélissier III. Air of the Grand Prize, Count Antoine de la Rochefoucauld. Published at the expense of Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, “by permission of the Rose + Cross.” E. Dupuy printers, Rue du Delta, Paris 1902. Cover illustration with the representation of a sanguine-drawing—a fragment of “War” by Puvis de Chavannes. 12 leaves on wooden paper, 28 x 22.5 cm.

Satie was for a time the official composer to the Catholic and Aesthetic Order of the Rose + Cross of the Temple of the Grail, and an esoteric cult based on Rosicrucian traditions, founded in 1891 by ‘Sâr’ Joséphin Péladan. The following year Péladan initiated the first artists’ salon of the Rose + Cross at the Durand-Ruel Gallery. It was huge success, with sixty painters and sculptors contributing work (including Hodler, Klee, Schwitters and artist Martin Kippenberger) to this landmark exhibition. The exhibition was also the grand opening the Prelude to Wagner’s Parsifal and Erik Satie’s Fingerprints of the Rose + Cross (in a version for trumpet and harp) were performed. The Preludes were published in a programme, with a cover by the painter Thomas Chansonnier (1824—1899), whose paintings Satie greatly admired.


This little handbook was produced for tourists coming to Paris for the great 1900 Exhibition who wanted to experience the Bohemian life of Montmartre, which was about as far from their bourgeois lives as could be imagined. The guide contains Satie’s numerous articles Les musiciens de Montmartre (The musicians of Montmartre), one of the earliest of Satie’s articles to be published. It is accompanied by an illustration by Charles Lucien Léandre (1929–1991), one of the best known comic artists and illustrator of the day. His poster advertising cabaret artists rival those of Leonetto Cappiello and Montmartre’s leading chromoartists at a table in a bar or café—their home ‘Europe is looking at us! It is proclaiming territorially: the past, the wake past, displaying little interest. Erik Satie is seated at front left, facing away, dressed in his then fashionable dark fedora hat and cachalot, with shoulder-length hair.

27. Erik Satie

Je te veux, Paris 1904

Printed on card, 14 x 9 cm.

Advertizing postcard issued to the publishers Belfond, Ponscare & Co illustrated with an extract from Satie’s score of the song ‘Je te veux’ (I want you) with a value change written over it, with a portrait of the singer Pauline Daisy, the Quiche of the slow waves. It is one of Satie’s most successful cabaret songs, and remains one of his best known works.

28. Erik Satie

La Divine l’homme. Images et Textes de Paris 1919

16 pages, 15 x 26 cm.

Cover design by Natalie Ganchovska. The jacket is a collage of the artist’s earlier work, with references to his other personal projects, as a painter, a set designer (for the Ballet Russe among others) and illustrator...