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Satie and the British

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This article was written in 1979 for a monograph on Erik Satie, edited by Ornella Volta, in the series *Les Cahiers de l'Herne*; the book was intended for publication in 1980 but has been delayed and is now expected to appear in late 1982 or early 1983. The article as it is published here is a revised version of the original English text.

The impetus to write about Satie's connections with the British Isles arises from several unconnected sources. In the first place Satie is, of course, as much a British composer as he is a French one. In addition there were certain points in his life when his relationship with these islands became particularly close. It is, further, the case that a number of musicians active in Britain during the later part of Satie's life can be seen to have points of contact, whether direct or oblique, with Satie's life and work. It could be argued, too, that substantial and committed writing on Satie, frequently the most original writing, has come from those employing the language of Francis Bacon as their mother tongue. And finally, in the recent past Satie has been of crucial importance to several interesting younger composers in England, composers whose work demonstrates an acute understanding of Satie's music and spirit. But to the beginning . . .

Biographical connections

In an introductory talk to the concerts of Satie's music that he organised in 1949 Constant Lambert said: 'Amongst his many rare distinctions was the fact that he appears to be the only well-known artist with Scots blood in his veins who has not been hailed as a genius by the Scots'.¹ Lambert went on to say, effectively, that since Satie was acclaimed in France only at the end of his life, and then only by a very few people, his neglect by the Scots is hardly surprising. The Scottish connection runs very deep, and it is not entirely true to say that Satie was neglected in Scotland during his lifetime, nor for that matter before it.

It is always mentioned in biographies of Satie that his mother, Jane Leslie Anton, met his father, Alfred, while she was staying in Honfleur. But what is almost invariably omitted is the crucial item of information that it was not in Honfleur but in London that they were married. An announcement in *The Times* of 20 July 1865 reads: 'On the 19th July at St. Mary's Church, Barnes, Surrey, by the Rev. John Jessop MA Chaplain to H. Majesty the King of the Belgians, Monsieur Jules Alfred Satie of Honfleur, France, to Jane Leslie only daughter of Mr. George Anton, of Mark Lane'. Quite what the Belgians were doing in the matter is beyond the scope of this article, but it was the first of Satie's

many productive relationships with that country. (Indeed England and Belgium were the only two countries that Satie visited — except those that he may have visited in his mental wanderings, such as the États Boréens, one of whose principal towns, it might be noted, is Buckingham.) Satie's parents were married by licence and the marriage was witnessed by F. Luard (probably Alfred's best man), Augusta Jane Pierce, Jane Elizabeth Pierce, Henriette Crombie and L. Crombie. A further point that tends to contradict other biographical accounts is that Jane's father is described on the wedding certificate as 'Gentleman' and not as 'Deceased' — which would have been the case if her mother had been a widow, as all biographers have maintained.² Both Alfred and his father are given the same epithet, 'Gentleman'.

Following the wedding Alfred and Jane travelled to Scotland, as most biographers mention, and it is fairly sure that they spent their honeymoon there. Moreover, given the date of Erik's birth in May the following year, it is equally sure that he was conceived in Scotland: 'formed', as Cocteau put it, 'under the influence of joy and audacity, of sea-mists and of penetrating bag-pipe melodies'.³ Harding⁴ refers to a story that Erik's godfather, who was a relative on his mother's side, was a knight, but all genealogical searches have failed to reveal any Anton baronet. Indeed the only Anton mentioned at all in reference works on the peerage and baronetage, whether in England, Ireland, or Scotland, is Christiana Anton, who married the 9th Viscount Falkland in 1802 and who died 20 years later. But none of her children would have had the name or title 'Baronet Anton'. Nevertheless, the British influence was strong enough to cause three surviving Satie children, Erik, Olga, and Conrad, to be brought up as Protestants, even though their father was a Catholic (I exclude Diane, the fourth child, who did not live long enough to encounter the rigours of religious instruction).

In the summer of the year following his birth, that is in 1867 (or possibly in 1868) Erik seems to have made his only visit to England. There is a photograph of him taken against a background of shrubbery (almost certainly a painted backcloth) by the portrait photographer Lombardi. The picture was taken in Brighton, where Lombardi had a studio at 113 King's Road near the West Pier from 1864.⁵ (He also maintained a studio in London). The commonest form in which Lombardi sold such holiday photos was made up as *cartes-de-visite*, usually in batches of twelve. These took about a week to be printed, and it is more likely that the Satie family spent a short holiday in Brighton and collected their cards before departing for France than that they went over for a day-trip and had them sent by post. What is interesting is the picture itself. Erik (strictly 'Eric' — the 'k' came later) looks confidently at the camera with a grin similar to that in the much later portraits by Man Ray and Picabia. The right ear is recognisably the same as that of the man photographed during the summer of 1909 by Hamelle of Arcueil-Cachan. The clothes, with their cluster of crosses, are recognisably the garb of a young ecclesiast and would have been entirely appropriate to a novitiate of L'Église Métropolitaine d'Art de Jésus Conducteur.

It was surely a desire to affirm his Scottish parentage that caused Satie to change slightly the orthography of his Christian name.⁶ But from here on the position of the British Isles in Satie's life is less prominent, though a diligent indexer might note with profit all the English words used (always for particular effect) in the various texts that are integral to much of his music — pieces such as 'Le golf' in *Sports et divertissements* (1914). Another example, though less obvious, occurs in the dedication of *Heures séculaires et instantanées* (1914) to Sir William Grant-Plumot and Louis XI, both of whom have Franco-Scottish connections of a sort. I have found no trace of Sir William Grant-Plumot, and the surname is not known in Britain, but its first part is Scottish and its second part has Norman connotations.⁷ As for Louis XI, it was he who secured the foundation of the absolute monarchy in France, which he achieved by arbitrary and perfidious measures — a pleasantly ironic dedication in view of Satie's own political faith. But the most notable fact, as far as we are concerned, is that his wife (whom he treated very badly) was Margaret, daughter of James I of Scotland. It might be far-fetched to draw too close a connection here, but Margaret was artistic and composed many rondeaus and laments.

The next direct biographical impact of Britain on Satie came in 1916. A fulsome advertisement in *The Scotsman* of 2 December 1916 announced that on the 12th, at the Oak Hall, Prince's Street, Edinburgh, Satie would play his own compositions during a lecture on his work by George Jean-Aubry. However, one week later the same newspaper reported that the organisers, Methven Simpson Ltd., 'regret that owing to the indisposition of M. Satie the Lecture-Recital HAS BEEN POSTPONED'. In the event the performance never took place. Scottish audiences were denied the opportunity of hearing for themselves the 'much-discussed *compositeur ironique*', in whose earlier works 'students will find suggestions and anticipations of the innovations associated with Claude Debussy', and who, in his later works, 'has marked out a new course for himself, and written music that has been variously described as "Futurist", "Cubist", "Ironique"'.⁸

That the event never took place is hardly surprising for two reasons. By the end of 1916 the score of *Parade* was more or less complete and, on 12 December, the day of the projected recital in Edinburgh, Satie told Valentine Hugo that he had written the ‘Petit prélude du rideau rouge’.⁸ It is unlikely that he would have contemplated suspending work on *Parade* for such an event, even in his native Scotland. Indeed, a letter to Jean-Aubry written on 6 November 1916 indicates as much:

My dear fellow, Certainly not: I have work to do for Dyagilev. I cannot leave my work, even for a few days.

I have received an advance from Dyagilev, & he is counting on me for the end of December . . . How sorry I am not to be able to come. I could not have guessed.

Make my apologies to my English friends . . . My poor fellow! Don’t hold this against me. Let’s try to put all that aside; but, at the moment, I am forbidden to go anywhere.⁹

It is evident from this letter that, though Jean-Aubry may have communicated with Satie before leaving for England, he cannot have visited him in Paris, for had they met Jean-Aubry would have seen the situation for himself.

This brief correspondence shows the double edge of Satie’s friendship, for on 14 November he was to write to Roland Manuel: ‘If you only knew what a twat Aubry is. Close up he even looks like an arse.’¹⁰ Given such a feeling for Jean-Aubry, it is hardly surprising that Satie would not involve himself in the venture. But, in part at least, the project failed because of his collaborator and not because Satie felt any hostility towards his maternal country. The two did not remain estranged, for on 19 November 1919 Satie agreed, evidently in response to an invitation from Jean-Aubry, to write an article on Ravel. But he warned him that the article

will not, perhaps, be very much to your taste. The fault lies, simply, with the deplorable and out-of-date aesthetic that our friend holds to. It would be difficult for me to tone down what my understanding tells me. I am very fond of Ravel, but his art leaves me unmoved, alas!¹¹

It would seem that the article never materialised, unfortunately.

In 1921 Satie was approached again from Britain, this time by Leigh Henry, a composer and critic who wrote widely on issues surrounding contemporary music. He had been director of music at the Gordon Craig School in Florence from 1913, and had written a number of theatre pieces between 1916 and 1921, some of them during his wartime internment in Germany. His music, especially a spirited *Tango* of 1910 and other early pieces, has a slightly satirical edge, on the strength of which he was encouraged by Granville Bantock; his later works, written in the 1920s, show a deep involvement in Welsh affairs — he wrote test pieces for the Eisteddfod and so on. He was appointed ‘press adviser on musical matters and director of the musical information bureau’ for the Russian Ballet in 1926.¹²

Henry had occasion to contact Satie over the founding of his magazine, *Fanfare*, which appeared twice monthly from 1 October 1921 until its demise with volume 1 number 7 in January 1922. His vowed aim was ‘to enfranchise the British musician among the other European artists’, and he termed his campaign the ‘Fanfare Movement’. This attempt to urge British musicians away from an insular outlook reflected what had already been happening for some years among younger composers — certainly from the end of World War I, and slightly earlier in the case of Lord Berners. Henry gave the magazine a slogan every bit as feeble as those adopted by popular newspapers, though here the puniness was conscious: ‘We like its sound and we know it’s sound.’ (Readers of Jarry will note with delight that the pun depends on the use of the apostrophe.)

Among the messages printed in the first issue was one from Satie: ‘Tous mes voeux pour *Fanfare*’ (All good wishes for *Fanfare*). More important, he sent a piece of music, the *Sonnerie pour réveiller le bon gros Roi des Singes (lequel ne dort toujours que d’un oeil)*, written on 30 August 1921. It is worth pointing out that of all the dated fanfares sent to the magazine Satie’s is the earliest, showing perhaps the willingness with which he responded. The title, too, is not without significance. It could show a knowledge of Kipling, in whose *Jungle Book* the monkeys are an anarchic community (the same monkeys appear in Koechlin’s *Les bandar-log* (1939)). Kipling’s monkeys, of course, have no leader, but a cue to the identity of ‘le bon gros Roi des Singes’ may be contained in Satie’s claim ‘Je ne dors que dun oeil’ (I sleep with one eye open).¹³ *Fanfare* published four fanfares in each of its issues in 1921, but there were none in the last issue which appeared on 1 January 1922. Satie’s connection with the magazine continued, or no. 2 included a drawing of him by Cocteau and the text of the lecture that Cocteau had been unable to give earlier in the year (see n. 3). In the final issue Henry published a short text by Satie called ‘Il n’y a pas de vérité en art’,¹⁴ and there were many other references to him in the magazine — an article by Cocteau on Les Six appeared in no. 6, and Poulenc contributed a review column ‘Paris Note’ to nos. 4 and 6. It is clear that Satie took *Fanfare* seriously during its brief but vigorous existence.

In his last years Satie had few obvious links with Britain but one or two small details confirm its continuing influence. Reference is frequently made to the apparently uneasy relationships that Satie had with women (apart from Suzanne Valadon). He did admire the wife of Pierre de Massot, who was one of the few women, I imagine, who could keep pace with him in drinking calvados; it is not surprising to find that, like so many athletic drinkers, she was a Scot. Then there is the story of Satie's meeting with Man Ray on the occasion of the latter's first Paris exhibition in 1921, when the American was particularly struck by Satie's fluent and idiomatic English. Sybil Harris, also an American, was a close friend in his final years; she visited him frequently during his last weeks and attended his funeral.

Finally, from the biographical point of view, we come full circle and find the British-Belgian axis entering into play once more. On Satie's first visit to Brussels in April 1921, where did he stay? Why, in the Hôtel Britannique, of course. And when he talked with E.L.T. Mesens, a Belgian friend, whom did they discuss? None other than Leigh Henry and Lord Berners. Satie had clearly heard of Berners and probably knew something of his work, as Mesens's report of the conversation shows:

An Anglophile from his youth, he loved to show off about some of his English friends: 'Do you know this chap Leigh Henry?' he asked. 'He's a great fellow, interested in everything.' But when I mentioned to him the fact that the composer Lord Berners was giving his works 'Satiean' titles he seemed irritated and said abruptly, 'He's an amateur professional. He hasn't understood anything.'¹⁵

Lord Berners

Although Leigh Henry may have enjoyed a better personal friendship with Satie, the musician with the strongest claim to Satiety, Satie's disapprobation notwithstanding, was Lord Berners. In Cecil Gray's *A Survey of Contemporary Music* Berners was dubbed 'the English Satie'. The full passage is worth quoting; it appears in a late chapter on 'minor composers' in which English composers are compared, usually unfavourably, with Europeans — a favourite ploy of English critics:

In the same way that Stanford and Parry provided us with second-hand Brahms, Cyril Scott provides us with imitation Debussy; Holbrooke and Bantock have followed Strauss, and in the music of Goossens, Bliss and Berners we find our English Ravel, Stravinsky and Satie . . . these three latter share a Franco-Russian technique in common. The outcome of their combined efforts, like that of their forerunners, is precisely nil.¹⁶

Berners's own copy of this book is revealing, being heavily annotated. On the title-page he wrote 'One of the silliest books about music ever written', and in a section where Gray rambles on about Stravinsky's being a synthesis of all the 'various conflicting tendencies which constitute . . . the spirit of the age', Berners added a single word: 'BALLS'. Curiously, however, there is no annotation on the page where his own name is juxtaposed with Satie's although he almost certainly read it; this does not necessarily mean that he agreed with the linking of their names, but that at least he did not find it worthy of derision. On close analysis the number of parallels with Satie is very striking, but to call Berners 'the English Satie' is to do both composers a disservice. Berners is simply one of the great originals in English music — just as Satie is in French music — and he is well able to stand on his own feet without Continental support. However, like certain other English composers active in the early years of the century, his outlook was cosmopolitan rather than insular, and in fact his earliest music was written while he was working in Italy. A side effect of this is that, as with other composers who are not easily located in a particular national mould — Sorabji, Tcherepnin, Grainger, Busoni, Goossens, and Van Dieren, for instance — his work is less performed than that of his stay-at-home compatriots.¹⁷

It is obvious from Mesens's conversations with Satie, quoted above, that Satie knew about Berners; and it was at a crucial time in Berners's musical development that he became aware of Satie. While he was still plain Gerald Tyrwhitt and a diplomatic attaché to the British Embassy in Rome (before he succeeded to the baronetcy), he acquired a copy of the *de luxe* Vogel edition of *Sports et divertissements*. The work was published in a limited, numbered edition of 900, of which nos. 1-10 were not for sale but were reserved for the Librairie Meynial. Given that the first one for sale was no. 11, it is striking that Berners's own copy is no. 12. It is probable that this copy reached him through the offices of Alfredo Casella or Stravinsky, who both moved to and fro between Paris and Rome at that time. Interestingly, Berners's music of this period has certain Satiean qualities. His first published pieces were the *Trois petites marches funèbres* (1916), which appeared under the name of Gerald Tyrwhitt first in Italy and then in England.¹⁸ The music itself does not resemble Satie's in any way, but the quality of irony is close. The three marches, 'Pour un homme d'état', 'Pour un canari', and 'Pour une tante à héritage', are respectively pompous, genuinely sad, and joyously ebullient. Their performance in Paris drew a comment from Julien Tiersot in *Le courrier musical*, which Berners regarded as one of the best critical notices he ever received:

I will not stop to inquire whether the period through which we are passing is one that permits of the railing at death, and making it the subject of jokes which are, moreover, out of fashion. I only draw attention to the first title as a contrast to the other two. It is evident that to the composer's idea it is as gratifying to celebrate the funeral of a statesman as that of canaries or wealthy aunts — and all that at a time when these men devote and exhaust themselves to serve their country and secure its victory. But no such considerations seem to have touched the young composer (a neutral, no doubt).¹⁹

A work that predates these pieces, but which remained unpublished until recently, is the short *Dispute entre le papillon et le crapaud* (c 1914-15) for piano.²⁰ Like a number of Berners's manuscripts, this one has a watercolour cover,²¹ and there are anecdotal remarks in the music. In bar 10, where the upper part imitates the previous bar's bass phrase, there is the note 'le papillon répète avec indignation les dernières paroles du crapaud' (the butterfly indignantly repeats the toad's last words). The piece ends with a light arpeggio at the top of the piano, followed by a series of muddy chords at the bottom, and Berners adds, 'Le papillon, indigne, s'envole. Le crapaud ne s'est pas laissé convaincu.' (The butterfly, indignant, flies away. The toad remains unconvinced.) The point here is not to suggest that Berners modelled his narrative music on Satie's but to ask why, given that the purely musical element is just as strong as in his other works of this period (such as *Le poisson d'or*), the *Dispute* was not published. Could it not be that, having obtained a copy of the fine edition of *Sports et divertissements* — arguably the most perfect synthesis of music, text, and design — the young Tyrwhitt felt that there was little point in bringing out his own essay in the genre at that time?

Apart from an occasional insertions of texts later, Berners never developed this anecdotal approach. One verbal note occurs in 'Strauss, Strauss et Straus', the third of the *Valses bourgeoises* for piano duet (1919), where, over a limpid waltz phrase, Berners wrote 'mais je connais ça' (but I know that). In a number of pieces, such as *Le poisson d'or* (1919) and 'Du bist wie eine Blume' (the first of three songs in the *Lieder Album* (1920), the music itself frequently has a precise narrative sense, but this is an aspect of Berner's generally humorous attitude. In 'Du bist wie eine Blume' he fastens on the eccentric scholarly discovery that Heine was addressing a pig in his poem, and he illustrates this with onomatopoeic grunts in the piano accompaniment (each of the three songs in this group deals with the presence of animals in human emotions). It is noteworthy that the *Valses bourgeoises* were first performed in London by Darius Milhaud and Eugene Goossens in May 1920, and that Berners was on friendly terms with younger French composers: in his appointment book of 1920 there is the entry for 18 December 1920, 'dine Les Six'.

Like Satie, Berners invested his music with a strong satirical edge and had a fondness for musical forms that lend themselves to parody. This shows itself in a continuing affection for the waltz, parodied mercilessly in the three *Valses bourgeoises* and insidiously in the 'Valse sentimentale'²² (second of the *Trois morceaux* (1918) which exist in piano duet and orchestral forms). The *Valse bourgeoises* veer from time to time into a kind of delirium inspired by mounting exaggeration and the incessant heavy waltz rhythm, and Stravinsky went so far as to say that they contained 'the most impertinent four bars in music'.²³ (Incidentally, in these and others of his piano duets Berners employs a texture that is markedly French — a similar lay-out of parts may be found in duets by Satie, Poulenc, and others.) Also like Satie, Berners parodied national styles in music — the 'Chinoiserie' and 'Kasatschok' from *Trois morceaux*, the *Fantasia espagnole* (1920), the 'Schottische' and 'Polka' from *The Triumph of Neptune* (1926), the 'Tango' from *A Wedding Bouquet* (1936), and the 'Habanera' and 'Farrucca' from *Les sirènes* (1943-6) — though often with affection rather than malice. In the first of these pieces it is interesting to find that, faced with a choice of approaches to *chinoiseries*, Berners opted for that of the Chinese *prestidigitateur* in *Parade* rather than Ravel's more urbane version in *Ma mère l'oye* (1908-10). 'Chinoiserie' has an even closer link with *Parade*, for it features an extended repeated figure strikingly like that in Satie's ballet;²⁴ Berners may have heard something of *Parade* when Dyagilev's company was rehearsing in Rome early in 1917 (though the *Trois morceaux* are dated 1918 'Chinoiserie' may have been written in 1917).

Berners had other tastes in common with Satie. Just as Satie enjoyed the heraldry of 'sonneries', so Berners relished fanfares — he used them extensively in *The Triumph of Neptune*. Both men wrote idiosyncratic fugues (Satie's 'Fugue litannique' and 'Fugue de papier' from *En habit de cheval* (1911), among others; Berners's orchestral Fugue (1923)). Further, both were equally at home in the musical 'low life' of their time: in Satie the café-concert inspired songs in popular style such as *Tendrement excentrique* (1920); and Berners wrote the music-hall song 'Come on Algernon' (for the 1944 Ealing film *Champagne Charlie*) and the salon pastiche *Red Roses and Red Noses* (1941). And most important, they both became known to a wider public through music written for ballet and the theatre.²⁵ Of particular importance to them both was their connection with Dyagilev, for whom Satie wrote *Parade* in 1916-17 and Berners *The Triumph of Neptune* in 1926; Berners was one of only two English composers commissioned by Dyagilev (the other was Constant Lambert, a champion of Berners and Satie). Berners's second ballet, *Luna Park*, though written after Dyagilev's death (for C.B. Cochrane's 1930 revue), was choreographed by Balanchine (who had prepared *The Triumph of Neptune*) and

used dancers from the company; its story, of fake freaks performing in a fairground, has overtones of *Parade*, and the music is deliberately ‘light’ (to suit the revue public), parodying in the gentlest way possible the conventions of 19th-century ballet and the music of Delibes and Minkus.

Both Berners and Satie, as I have written elsewhere,²⁶ were self-taught amateurs who utilised many outlets for their creative talents: music, writing, painting, drawing, as well as personal eccentricity — though the forms of this eccentricity were quite different. At a time when each had achieved a significant measure of success (and in Berners’s case his fame with the general public was considerable) he decided to undertake a study of compositional technique — more precisely 16th-century counterpoint — and their surviving notebooks demonstrate the diligence with which both men approached this discipline.

The greatest disparity was in their financial means, though the poverty of one and the wealth of the other had the curiously unifying effect of preventing such matters from being an abiding concern. This is not to say that either was indifferent to money, merely that, unlike successful businessmen—composers, neither found it of overriding importance. One result of this is what Raymond Roussel designated the gap between ‘conception’ and ‘reality’.²⁷ During the course of his life Satie made many beautiful drawings of imaginary edifices, especially towers: ‘quiconque habite une tour est un touriste’, as he put it.²⁸ Berners, on the other hand, had the means to have a tower erected for him: Faringdon Folly, built in 1935, one of the last follies to be raised in England, was designed by Lord Gerald Wellesley (later the 8th Duke of Wellington).²⁹ While Lord Berners did not ‘inhabit’ his tower, he could, from its summit, view with equanimity his own lands and four neighbouring counties.

Bliss, Lambert, Grainger

There are no other composers of Berners’s generation who invite such detailed comparisons with Satie, but in some cases particular pieces or periods of activity resonate sympathetically with Satie’s work. As we have seen, Cecil Gray grouped together Berners, Bliss, and Goossens as a trio of modern Europeans. Other critics linked the names of Berners, Bax, and Bliss, and another bracketed Berners and Bliss.³⁰ In fact these two are the composers most commonly featured in such assemblages of ‘advanced’ artists. From 1918 to 1926 Bliss’s work consisted of piano pieces, songs, and chamber works, one of which, a set of five pieces for strings and wind called *Conversations* (1920), demonstrates the ironic nature of his wit. Each movement (except for one, ‘Soliloquy’) is a ‘conversation’ of some sort; in the first, ‘The Committee Meeting’, a monotonously droning viola represents the insistent chairman who is constantly interrupted, and who, by the end of the movement has gained no ground at all. The other movements are ‘In the Wood’, ‘In the Ballroom’, Soliloquy’ (for solo cor anglais), and the hilarious “In the Tube at Oxford Circus’. In addition to the many highly original works of this period, Bliss wrote two fine, ‘light’ piano pieces *The Rout Trot* (1927), a wonderful ragtime number, and *Bliss, One-step* (1923), which show that he, like Satie and Berners, was thoroughly at home in popular idioms. He too was included in the *Fanfare* project, contributing a piece to the second issue.

Constant Lambert, though much younger than Berners and Bliss, shared their interest in jazz and popular music, as may be seen from his *Elegiac Blues* for piano (1927), *Piano Concerto* (1930-31), and *The Rio Grande* (1927). At the age of 20 (in 1925) he was commissioned to write *Romeo and Juliet* for Dyagilev, and in 1927 Bronislava Nijinska gave the first performance of his ballet *Pomona* in South America. And his piano duets — *Trois pièces nègres pour les touches blanche* (1949), the piano-duet version of *Pomona*, and the *Overture* (1925; used in *Romeo and Juliet*), as well as his arrangement of movements from Walton’s *Façade* — can be considered to come within the orbit of post-Satie composers. However, it is as a conductor and writer that he demonstrated most clearly his sympathies for Satie. In *Music Ho!* he writes at length about *musique d’ameublement*, and about *Socrate* (1918), which he greatly admired, and *Relâche*, whose first performance on 6 December 1924 he had attended.³¹ In 1949 he gave a talk on Satie for the BBC and conducted three concerts of the composer’s music (14 and 17 June, 23 September), including, according to the BBC, the first performances (probably, in fact, the first broadcast performances) in England of *La belle excentrique* (14 June) and *Socrate* (17 June). Lambert was also an enthusiastic apologist for Berners and conducted first performances of a number of his works, as well as being a frequent guest at his home. In 1939 he made an arrangement of interludes from Berners’s opera *Le carrosse du Saint Sacrement* (1920-23; rev. 1926) to form the orchestral piece *Caprice péruvien*.

Although Percy Grainger was born in Australia, he was a British citizen and had firm links with the British Isles. The *English Waltz* (sketched 1899-1901, completed 1943) may be mentioned in this connection: it exists as the last movement of the *Youthful Suite* for orchestra, it can be played as a separate piece for orchestra, and there is a two-piano version made in 1947; the last illustrates best the astonishingly satirical vigour of the piece, which begins as a gentle

café-concert waltz and is gradually transformed by the crude interruptions of *glissandi*, off-beat rhythms, ‘false’ harmonies, and so on.

There is one strong connection between Grainger and Satie, whose characters, both musical and personal, were otherwise very different; they shared an interest in the relationship between the composer and his performer through the medium of the performance direction. As Contamine de Latour said:

For musical instructions in Italian — *piano*, *pianissimo*, *dolce*, and *mezzoforte* — Satie wanted to substitute different instructions of his own invention, and of an infinitely less classical character, such as: ‘[to be played] while looking at oneself coming’; ‘with the fear of obscurity’; ‘fabulous and decorous’.³²

Grainger, starting from a similar though differently motivated premise, produced such directions as: ‘Sturdily, not too fast; with “pioneer” keeping-on-ness’ (for *allegro non troppo, ma molto energico*), ‘louden lots’ (for *molto crescendo*), ‘slacken slightly’ and ‘linger’ (for *rallentando*), and the memorable ‘woggle’ (for *tremolando*). This was in reality only one aspect of a much wider concern to rid his language of all ‘French-begotten, Latin-begotten and Greek-begotten words’, and to develop his own form of ‘Nordic’ or ‘Blue-eyed’ English.³³ Suffice it to say that the net effect of Grainger’s musical directions is the same as that of Satie’s, and is intended to be so: namely to galvanise the performer into a quite particular response which the composer wants, and to shake the performer out of all complacency and long-established mental habits in his approach to the music. The true aim is to make absolutely sure of the best possible performance.

Critics

Apart from composers in England sympathetic to Satie’s spirit, and performers who have devoted their energies to authentic performances, there have always been critics on this side of the Channel who have written perceptively about Satie’s work. During Satie’s lifetime M.D. Calvocoressi (dedicatee of the second ‘Danse cuirassée’ of the *Vieux sequins et vieilles cuirasses* (1913)), Leigh Henry, Edwin Evans, Rollo Myers, and Georges Jean-Aubry published articles on him. After his death some of the best writing on him appeared in English: in Lambert’s *Music Ho!* (1934), Wilfrid Mellers’s *Studies in Contemporary Music* (1947), Rollo Myers’s very important *Erik Satie* (1948) and above all in Roger Shattuck’s *The Banquet Years* (1955).

Perhaps the most thorough piece of Satie scholarship to be found anywhere is Patrick Gowers’s doctoral dissertation, *Erik Satie, his Studies, Notebooks and Critics*, submitted to the University of Cambridge in 1965; this contains the most balanced account available of Satie’s period at the Paris Conservatoire (a period that is portrayed almost entirely erroneously elsewhere), as well as a painstaking examination of Satie’s manuscripts. In the third section of the dissertation, in discussing the different approaches that Satie critics have taken, Gowers touches on an important point. He notes that of all writings on Satie (once should remember that this was 1965) John Cage’s argument for Satie’s importance is unique in that it is the only one that bears on the quality of Satie’s compositions. Some writers, such as Cocteau, describe Satie as exemplifying a ‘cult of restraint’,³⁴ some refer to his influence on Debussy, Ravel, and other French composers; but only Cage maintains that Satie influenced younger composers through his new and original techniques, rather than that his ‘maladroit experiments’ led others to write more important works.³⁵ Cage’s argument, as summarised by Gowers, is that modern music will turn out to have been shaped to a greater extent by Webern and Satie than by Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Gowers ‘shelves’ this topic ‘until any possible new influences can be seen in perspective’.³⁶ As for Cage himself, Michael Nyman has shown the extent of his debt to Satie.³⁷ But in general terms I would maintain that a profound, and characteristically more restrained, response to Satie can be found among certain younger composers in England in the last 15 years.³⁸

Howard Skempton

Skempton’s best work is found in a number of small-scale piano pieces written from 1969 onwards. Of these the most notable is the *Waltz* (April 1970) for piano solo; it consists of four 16-bar phrases, played in different permutations, creating an eight-minute piece which is both wholly predictable and very surprising at the same time — partly because of the feeling of disbelief induced by such forms of repetition. The *Waltz* gives the lie to the idea that extended repetition is possible only over extended periods of time. Both Satie and Skempton show that even a piece lasting only a few minutes can be hypnotically repetitive without becoming tedious. A number of other short pieces by Skempton involve a considerable degree of repetition — the witty *Rumba* (c1978), which has a dislocating bar of 7/8 within each of its short phrases, the *Two Highland Dances* (1970) and the three pieces called *Quavers* (1972, 1974, 1975). Like much of Satie’s work, these pieces hide their systematic compositional method behind a simple surface, which lulls the unwary listener into thinking that all is well. The *Slow Waltz* (1973) for piano three hands is another, very neat case of this. The

accompaniment consists of the root and third of two chords — A major and D major — while the melody is a simple falling phrase, which, by its totally predictable movement, involves the listener in a kind of constant interior dialogue: ‘Surely he won’t’ and then ‘Yes he has’. This pull between the expectation and the result comes about because of the gap between the melody and the accompaniment, which at times fits quite ‘normally’ and at others lands in the uncomfortable limbo where the harmonisation is neither naively ‘wrong’ nor skillfully ‘disagreeable’. The effect, especially since the whole piece is played through twice, is not unlike that of one of Satie’s *Gymnopédies*. At its best, this technique is entirely successful. At its worst, especially in those pieces written for specific occasions or people (for birthdays and so on), there can develop a cloying, even sickly, preciousness, so narrow is the margin between success and failure (in these terms).³⁹

John White

With the music of John White there is no such equivocation. He has consistently stressed that the composition of much of his music relies on the existence of a model, that each piece begins with a programme, whether self-imposed or otherwise. When he is writing music for the commercial theatre he is required to produce particular goods (Schubert rewritten as though by Mahler, in the case of his music for a National Theatre production of Arthur Schnitzler’s *Undiscovered Country* in 1979). He resembles Constant Lambert in being a highly original composer on the one hand and on the other one who can write music to order without deeming it in any way a lower form of activity. But the way in which he formulates his own briefs for non-commissioned music places him in a much rarer category.⁴⁰ He has a range of composers from whom he draws sometimes stylistic elements, sometimes particular features of instrumental writing, sometimes particular compositional techniques, and these composers are like personal friends to him;⁴¹ they include Satie, Busoni, Medtner, Reger, Alkan, Poulenc, Schumann, and many others. As Dave Smith has written, his piano sonatas (to date there are 107)

are never concerned with intentional nostalgia, pastiche, satire or quotation. There are fleeting references of style, colour or gesture which, particularly in . . . the earlier sonatas, effectively conjure up an imaginary musical seance at which ‘friends’ of the composer make brief appearances.⁴²

White’s musical output is vast and tremendously wide-ranging. His piano sonatas, begun in 1956, form a ‘diary’ (Smith’s term) that fills in the gaps between his other music — written for the different composer-performer groups that he has worked with, for the theatre, and so on. In the world of experimental music, the groups that White has organised have all had elements that reflect his interest in Satie. He has said that what he finds in Satie is ‘the arcane charm of apparently simple musical statement’, and ‘apparent’ simplicity is a dominant element in White’s own work.⁴³ As with Satie, this simplicity can mask quite complex theorising: it is worth, for example, examining the ways in which White uses earlier pieces as the basis for later ones, where the material can emerge in new combinations and distillations to surprising effect. *The Oppo Contained* (December 1977), for two pianos, tuba, and (in its original version) reed organs, takes several short, separate pieces played in a concert the previous month, and reconciles them within a rondo format to a constant quaver pulse; then, just before the very short coda, White inserts a revised version of almost all of a much earlier piece, *Gothic Chord Machine* (1969).

According to Brian Dennis,⁴⁴ White organised a group called the Composers Ensemble while he was teaching composition at the Royal College of Music. It consisted of White and three of his pupils (Dennis, Roger Smalley, and William York) and lasted only a short time, but it formulated ideas that were to reach fruition in his later ensembles. It was essentially a vehicle for works by the four members, but they also played music by Cardew, Ives, Stockhausen, and Satie to supplement their own material and to place it in a clearer perspective (which is something I have done with both White and Smith in more recent collaborative concerts).

Later, in 1969, a new group evolved, comprising White, Christopher Hobbs, Alec Hill, and Hugh Shrapnel, which White named the PTO (Promenade Theatre Orchestra). These four provided the bulk of the music and there was little need for other works since their collective output was so prolific. The group met every Sunday for three years and new pieces appeared almost weekly. It was in its outlook, as much as the music itself, that the ensemble was Satie-like. The PTO’s advertisement gives an idea of this:

Restful reed-organs, tinkling toy pianos, soothing psalteries, suave swanee whistles, jolly jaws harps — NO noisy electronics. (Just the job for that lazy Sunday afternoon). All musical material guaranteed thru-composed — NO hit-or-miss improvisation.

The music tended to be written for homogeneous groups of instruments: four toy pianos, four reed organs, and so on. Much of it fed off existing material, whether by using musical readymades — as in Hobbs’s realisation of Skryabin’s *Poème de l’extase* (1905-8) for reed organs and toy pianos, and White’s *Early Tudor Head-ons* — or through applying what

White calls ‘machine’ processes to musical material — the working through of more or less predictable, systemic, and always inevitable, processes; this sounds rather formidable, but the finished result can be as polished and deliriously pleasant as, say, the writings of P.G. Wodehouse. The PTO were happiest working outside the concert format, preferring to play in the canteen of an art college, for example, during luncheon, creating a form of muzak akin to Satie’s *musique d’ameublement*.

Following the dissolution of the PTO in 1972, White worked for four years in a collaborative duo with Christopher Hobbs, writing a great deal of systemic music for small percussion instruments (which is strictly outside the scope of this article), as well as music for piano duet, tuba and piano, bassoon and piano, and bassoon and tuba. In November 1977, after the break-up of the Hobbs–White duo, White organised a concert at the AIR Gallery, London, given by White, Smith, myself, Amanda Hurton (a pupil of White’s at the Yehudi Menuhin School), and Arthur Suthill (a percussionist who has frequently worked with White in theatre bands). The music, by White, Smith, Hurton, and myself, was all required to fit the concept of ‘garden furniture music’ that is, by definition, more rough-hewn, less comfortable, more likely to survive severe changes in the surrounding climate. Each piece included a reference to garden furniture in its title: my own *Poglioli in Zaleski’s Gazebo* (strictly garden *architecture*), White’s *Visigoth Porch-Swing*, and so on. A most important result of this concert was the formation of another group, the Garden Furniture Music Ensemble, whose title makes a very clear and, in the light of the thinking behind the first concert, precise reference to Satie’s *musique d’ameublement*.

After a period of shifting membership the group eventually settled down to a quartet consisting of White, Smith, Ben Mason, and Pat Garrett, with occasional guest appearances by myself and, in the early days, the pianist John Lewis. The instrumentation was tuba, tenor and baritone horn, viola, and percussion — the members’ respective instruments — with many additions (piccolo violin, piccolo, glockenspiels, pianos, toy pianos, mouth organs, voices). White described the music as ‘containing elements of preternatural brevity, studied repetitiousness and discreetly deliberate grotesquerie expressed in the nature of the themes, their treatment, instrumentation and entitlement.’⁴⁵ The titles do indeed give an idea of the group’s flavour: (to take arbitrary examples, all from 1978) Smith’s *Albanian Surprise* and *Siberian Sunset Serenade*; White’s *Soirée musicale*, *Patriotic Song*, *Mimosa Snowball Rock*. But curiously enough the music itself is much more arresting, less suitable for background listening, in short less like *furniture music* than the music produced by the PTO. This is partly accounted for by the distinction between furniture music and garden furniture music given above. But it is also a question of the different durations of individual pieces (PTO pieces were seldom shorter than ten minutes, and occasionally lasted a couple of hours, those of the Garden Furniture Music Ensemble were rarely as long as five minutes), and more particularly of the nature of the music itself, which was always insidiously pleasant, though with clear ironic pointers and unexpected humorous quirks. This group has now disbanded and White works more frequently with myself as a duo, with myself and Smith as a trio, and with other players in ensembles of flexible size.

A number of White’s piano sonatas depend quite specifically on Satie and take works by him as their models. Sonata no. 53 (14 April 1972)⁴⁶ is based on the *Airs à faire fuire* (the first set of *Pièces froides* (1897)), to which is added in the coda, in left-hand octaves, the ending of the *Prélude de la porte héroïque du ciel* (1894) (from the point marked ‘rideau’ in Satie’s score). White says that ‘the range of associations is “semi-limited” in that the thematic units undergo limited transformation in gesture extension and accompanimental material’.⁴⁷ Sonata no. 60 (22 February 1973) adopts the spirit of ‘La mystérieuse baisée dans l’oeil’ (the third movement of *La belle excentrique*), though the piano lay-out and the ambiguous rhythms of the opening bars suggest the *Cinq nocturnes* (1919). At bar 30, after a delicate rising E-Aeolian scale, the music settles into a gentle E major phrase, the kind of effect that peppers the slow movement of Ravel’s G major Concerto. To avert connections of this sentimental kind White adds on the score ‘limpid Guinness wouldn’t melt in the mouth’. Sonata no. 63 (dated on the manuscript 11 April 1972, but surely intended to be 1973) is a perfect example of White’s ability to make a lot out of very little material without resorting to development; it takes as its model the dances from *Le piège de Méduse* (1913).

Sonata no. 67 (1 May 1973 — yes, there were three sonatas between 11 April and 1 May) follows the *Trois véritables préludes flasques* (1912). In the choice of material to accompany an arbitrarily transformed ostinato the range of associations is ‘part limited, part unlimited’. Throughout this piece White adds comments which serve both as performing instructions and as personal remarks on the quality of his own composing, as though he were teacher and pupil at the same time. It opens with a phrase marked ‘irritatingly ingenuous’. Where his compositional ‘logic’ leads him to unpalatable conclusions, rather than alter the music to fit his taste he appends remarks ‘Oh dear’, ‘Oh no’, ‘ugh’. One isolated bar is marked ‘impersonation of a French composer’, and when the ‘irritatingly ingenuous’ C major

phrase comes back at the end, following a period of staccato chromatic chords, he marks to moment ‘as if nothing had happened’. Sonata no. 75 (8 September 1973) is based on the *NOcturnes*, the range of associations being

unlimited, in that thematically anything might (and does) happen. The reference is to a kind of unargumentative, non-progressional harmony, and the use of moments of ‘warmth’ as punctuation rather than musical emotional environment.

Sonata no. 78 (12 September 1973) has two models, the introduction to the first movement of *Jack-in-the-box* (1899), which colours the general mood of the entire sonata, and *Sonatine bureaucratique* (1917) which influenced the passages of

curiously bleak and unrelated material, like the interruption of the music by a telephone bell in the 1st movement and unrelated bars of rocking 4ths and deep octaves in the 3rd movement.

Over the final cadence White adds the words ‘quietly prosaic’. The only other sonata to make specific reference to Satie’s music is Sonata no. 96 (1977), which related to *Dances gothiques* (1893), for which White has a special affection. He says that

the range of associations is ‘limited’ in that the thematic units are shown in varying juxtapositions but without gestural transformation on repetition. Some of the units are transposable some are not.

And he adds that the lack of traditional development in the piece serves to maintain an emotional climate of ‘beefy exuberance’, which was inspired by an article in *The Observer* on Scottish (where else, for Satie?) football supporters.⁴⁸

Just as Satie exercised a Socratic magnetism on younger composers (Ravel, Les Six, L’École d’Arcueil), but without placing a stranglehold on their work, so White has often played a similar role for composers who have worked with him: pupils like Dennis and Smalley, younger collaborators such as Hobbs and Smith. One might almost see a kind of parallel between the flow and ebb of the working relationship of Satie and Debussy and that of White and Cardew. Indeed, the extent to which the public, musical and otherwise, erroneously identifies the latter partner of each pair as being the more important and influential partially confirms the analogy. White fulfils quite perfectly the requirement that Jean-Aubry wrote: ‘When shall we see a campaign opened in England against Brahms?’⁴⁹ The musical sound that White finds the least palatable is the kind of earnest rumbling ‘the development noise’ that proliferates in Brahms, both in and out of development sections.

Christopher Hobbs

A close colleague of White from 1969 to 1976, Christopher Hobbs has had a long involvement with the music of Satie. In order to obtain copies of his music for detailed study he copied by hand works that were ridiculously expensive and hard to find. Together he and I performed *Vexations*,⁵⁰ an occasion I have written about elsewhere,⁵¹ and which Michael Nyman points to as showing the spiritual importance of Satie for younger English composers, and also the rightness of their approach to performing.⁵² In 1972 Hobbs and I played a programme of Satie’s piano duets (it included all of them except the *Trois petites pièces montées* (c1920) and for this he produced a completed duet version of *Parade*, reinstating those sections that Satie omitted from his arrangement.

It was Hobbs who introduced into the PTO the idea of the musical readymade, which he extended in works not written for the group: for example, the two-piano *Pretty Tough Cookie* (1970), based on the love theme from Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*; and the recomposition of Myra Hess’s arrangement of Bach’s *Sheep May Safely Graze* into his own *The Remorseless Lamb* (1970). (I should like to put on record, too, the fact that his may have been the first British performance of the fourth (1891), fifth (1889), and sixth (1887) of Satie’s *Gnossiennes*, which he played at Portsmouth College of Art during the afternoon of 22 January 1970.)

John White feels that some of the music Hobbs wrote during the later stages of their collaboration, especially the pieces for bassoon and piano, show evidence of his commitment to Satie at its beat. Since the dissolution of their partnership, however, Hobbs has chosen to concentrate on writing in what Michael Nyman calls ‘the expressive modes of Romantic music’,⁵³ and in doing so he has effectively moved away from the Satiescape to the area that Jean-Aubry saw as the territory of the arch-enemy, Brahms. In the recent past he has written a Wind Sextet (completed 27 September 1980) — the instrumentation is that of the standard wind quintet plus tenor saxophone — based on a fragment from the first of Satie’s *Trois sarabandes* (1887). As White puts it, there are many parental aspects to this piece, of which Satie is only one, and in fact that work reflects Satie neither in idiom nor spirit. I do not mean to imply, of course, that Hobbs’s later music is ‘wrong’, merely that it moves away from the scope of this article. Hobbs retains his affection for Satie and his great love and knowledge of the music, but it is no longer a strong musical influence.

Gavin Bryars

In my own case the love for Satie's music goes back to the earliest periods of my musical studies with Cyril Ramsey in the late 1950s. It was Ramsey who first told me about Cage's work in a serious way (he talked about the prepared piano, and about *4'33"* — this in a small provincial backwater in Yorkshire), as well as Grainger and Satie.

It was much later that direct musical references to Satie began to occur in my compositions — the first was in *Ponukelian Melody* (1975). This was only my second piece after a gap of two years during which I composed no music but, with Fred Orton, taught a course on Marcel Duchamp.⁵⁴ Aspects of that period of study led me to the work of Raymond Roussel and to the Collège de 'Pataphysique.⁵⁵ I spent some time, too, studying Satie in detail: looking at the notebooks, and at harmonic experiments, especially of the Rose + Croix music (which also seems to have impressed Igor Markevich),⁵⁶ and reading dissertations on Satie. *Ponukelian Melody* was written for a concert given by White, Hobbs, and myself, and its original instrumentation was tuba, cello, and reed organ and bells (one player). There are precise links with Satie: the tempo, with its implacable slow beat and uniform crotchet rhythm, imitates that of *Les pantins dansent* (1913), a work I admire immensely; and the harmonic and melodic material was taken from the experiments in the Rose + Croix notebooks. This specifically technical indebtedness to Satie extended to the way in which I put the piece together. The various phrases were composed independently and were fitted into the score (which consisted of 160 blank bars — not counting repeats) as they were written, each remaining in its original place without revision; the process was like putting together the fragments of a mosaic (not as elegant as that which occupies the opening of Chapter 2 of *Locus solus* (1914)) until the score was full. The only gaps in the steady one-sound-per-crotchet occur at the points where pages have to be turned and a measured rest is given to all the players. The work also pays homage to Roussel, whose novel *Impressions d'Afrique* is set in an imaginary Africa and takes place principally in Ponukélé. Impressed by the range of musical imagery in the book (only one of innumerable striking elements), I resolved to make a piece which, while not realising any one of Roussel's images, reflected something of the aesthetic that those images seem to imply. Later, in 1977, I made a realisation of Tom Phillip's opera *Irma* for Obscure Records.⁵⁷ This involved interpreting cryptically allusive verbal fragments in order to recreate some kind of music. Rather than read the letters 'mp' as the obvious 'mezzopiano', I took them to be the initials of 'mélodie ponukélienne', with the result that the third movement of this piece opens with a reworked section of *Ponukelian Melody*, with changed metre, tempo, and registration.

In other of my works the Satie connections are less clear. The Oulipopien title of *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo* (1977),⁵⁸ for two pianos, six or eight hands, points to the literary origins of the subject matter,⁵⁹ but the feeling and motoric energy are a combination of Satie and several other composers, who find their way into the piece for different reasons and different ways (Karg-Elert, Lord Berners, Percy Grainger). The second half of the piece, a fast, repetitive, onward-moving romp, consisting of an ascending sequence of chords in eight-bar phrases, is in the spirit of Satie's music for the 'Entr'acte cinématographique' of *Relâche*. Indeed, John White has said that this section is the nearest thing he has heard to the insistent forward momentum of Satie's masterpiece.⁶⁰ Another two-piano six-hand piece, *Ramsey's Lamp* (1979), written in homage to Cyril Ramsey, identifies a number of musical elements that he demonstrated to me, including some from Satie — in particular aspects of lay-out in the piano duets. It also has strong links with Percy Grainger, but a general tone of *pince-sans-rire*, which natives of Goole share with those of Honfleur binds this, and other works, closer to Satie. I am, though, when all is said and done, only one-eighth Scottish.

Satie and other arts

One final aspect of Satie's connection with the British has to do with the link between visual and literary arts. In 1965 Ronald Johnson published a collection of short poems 'made from Satie's notes, in French to the piano pieces Sports et Divertissements', illustrated by John Furnival.⁶¹ Each of Satie's texts is used except the opening one which precedes the 'Chorale inappétissant'. Some are translated literally, others are more oblique, but Furnival's illustrations are beautifully apt, consisting of seven drawings — one for each page — and the elaborate frames that contain the writings; that for 'Le golf', for example, shows not only a golfer in the loudest and most tasteless of check outfits, but also an obviously Scottish caddie.

The 50th anniversary of Satie's death produced a flurry of activity. Ian Tyson made a small print, *A Gift for Eric Satie* (London: Tetrad Press, 1975), which is a small folded sheet with the legend 'One Dozen Handkerchiefs'. The spelling of Satie's Christian name is odd given the period implied by the image. A concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall included a performance of Nigel Wilkins's translated *Le piège de Méduse* and Wilkins also published a collection of writings, consisting of miscellaneous fragments from different notebooks.⁶² This was imprudently done without the

permission of M. Lafosse-Satie and, as a result, there has developed an unfortunate situation in which Wilkins continues to publish material in the face of a certain hostility.⁶³ But on a happier note 1975 also saw the début of a group of artists called Satie's Faction, the prime movers of which were John Furnival and Nick Cudworth. Furnival had worked in musical contexts before, not only as the illustrator of Johnson's poems, but, for example, with Hugh Davies (*The Jack and Jill Box*, 1969-70), a 'feelie box' which has applications not dissimilar to those of *musique d'ameublement*.⁶⁴ Satie's Faction was formed for the express purpose of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the composer's death, its intention being to focus on the whole man rather than only on his music; and, as Furnival says, 'it has been going long ever since in an on/off fashion, mostly off.'⁶⁵ In May 1976 the group published a folder, *Erik Satie*, in an edition of 300, which contained Satie-related pieces by 15 different contributors, ranging from hort poems by Tom Meyer to witty graphics by Tom Clark. It included eight of Johnson's original set of 20 poems, this time with the small designs that appear in the published versions of *Sports et divertissements*, rather than Furnival's illustrations of ten years before. Perhaps the most extraordinary works in the folder are the realisations by Nick Cudworth of some of Satie's imaginary musical instruments⁶⁶ — here the 'alto overcoat in C' and '2 side clarinets in G minor'. Later in 1976 Satie's Faction published a collection of drawings by Cudworth called *Satie's Cephalophones*, which contained more versions of these instruments. John Furnival also made a set of prints in 1976, which further explored elements from 'Le golf' ('Le Colonel est là'; 'Le Colonel est vêtu du scotch-tweed violent'). In 1977 Satie's Faction brought out a kind of visual score by a Frenchman, Christian Rosset; this consists of four pages of drawings which are nothing like the other works of the group and do not, really, represent a facet of the British connection.

Conclusion

After Satie's death in 1925 there came to light his lost 'English Suite' *Jack-in-the-box*, which was choreographed by Balanchine. Given that this was Balanchine's first essay in choreography and *The Triumph of Neptune* by Lord Berners was his second, there seems little doubt that there was a certain mingling of French and English elements in Balanchine's balletic realisation of both works. But perhaps the most apposite illustration of Satie's posthumous connection with the British Isles is contained in Henri Sauguet's recurring dream⁶⁷ in which he finds himself with Satie in Paradise, a Paradise that is effectively (and where else could it be?) the suburb of an English town.

Notes

¹ BBC Third Programme, 8 June 1949.

² Ornella Volta (*Erik Satie* (Paris: Seghers, 1979), p. 35) reports the case of another missing Anton, Erik's maternal uncle, that is Jane's brother. He disappeared without warning and, some months later, sent a portion of his Christmas pudding to his mother (Erik's Scottish grandmother).

³ Jean Cocteau. 'Erik Satie', *Fanfare*, vol. 1, no. 2 (15 October 1921), pp. 21-5. The material had been prepared as a lecture that was to have been given at the Satie festival in Brussels on 12 April 1921, but owing to illness Cocteau was unable to deliver his address.

⁴ James Harding, *Erik Satie* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p. 6.

⁵ Lombardi was successful enough to open a second studio in Brighton in 1884 and he ran the two until 1901.

⁶ I am not sure when 'Eric' became 'Erik', but Satie's heightened consciousness of his Scottish ancestry could well have followed his mother's death or his father's marriage to Eugénie Barnetche. One of the most vigorous proponents of new music in Scotland in the 1920s and 1930s, Erik Chisholm, spelled his forename in the same way.

⁷ I am indebted to Jacques Caumont, a Norman, for drawing my attention to the expression 'envoyer chez Plumeau', which his father used frequently. François Caradec's *Dictionnaire du français argotique et populaire* (Paris: Larousse, 1977) defines 'plumeau' as follows: 'Boisson (mandarin et champagne). — Avoir son plumeau ou son plumet, être ivre. Envoyer chez Plumeau ou chez Plumepatte, éconduire.' I am grateful to Ornella Volta for pointing out that 'plumitif' is a pejorative term for a writer. This tends to support the hypothesis that the 'Plumot' part of Sir William's name could have literary connotations, and this possibility is strengthened by the fact that Shakespeare was known at the Chat Noir as 'Sir Will'. In *Erik Satie, Quaderni d'un mammifero*, ed. Ornella Volta (Milan: Adelphi, 1980), p. 197, there occurs the thesis that Plumot's 'continuelle immobilité' reflects his consistent success. It should be said that, of course, Shakespeare was no knight, though Francis Bacon was . . .

⁸ Nigel Wilkins, 'Erik Satie's Letters to Milhaud and Others', *Musical Quarterly*, vol. 66 (1980), pp. 404-28.

⁹ 'Cher Ami, Mais non: j'ai à travailler pour Diaghilew. Je ne puis laisser mon travail, même pour quelques jours. J'ai reçu de Diaghilew une avance, & il compte sur moi pour fin decembre . . . Combien je suis désolé de ne pouvoir venir. Je ne pouvais deviner. Excusez-moi de mes amis anglais . . . Pauvre ami! Be m'en veuillez pas. Tâchons de remettre tout cela; mais, en ce moment, tout voyage m'est interdit.' Both this letter and that from Satie to Jean-Aubry of 10 November 1919 are in the collections of the Humanities Center, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰ 'Si vous saviez combien Aubry est "con". Il a même l'air d'un cul — vu de très près.' This letter is in the Collection Fondation Erik Satie, Paris.

¹¹ 'ne sera peut-être pas très à votre goût. La faute n'en est qu'à la déplorable & démodé esthétique que professe notre ami. Il me serait difficile d'attenuer ce que ma pensée me dicte. J'aime beaucoup Ravel, mais son art m'indiffère, hélas!'

¹² W.S. Meadmore, 'Leigh Henry', *Musical Standard* (20 November 1926), p. 162.

¹³ 'La journée du musicien'. *Revue musicale de la Société Internationale de Musique*, vol. 9 (15 February 1913); reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits*, ed. Ornella Volta (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1977), no. 11, p. 22-3. (Since this article was written a new, revised edition of Satie's *Écrits* has been published — in 1981; all references here are to the original edition.)

¹⁴ Reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits*, ed. Volta, no. 34, p. 46.

¹⁵ 'Anglomane de jeunesse, il aimait afficher certaines de ses amités anglaises: "Connaissez-vous ce bon Leigh Henry?" questionnait-il. "C'est un curieux bon gros." Mais comme je lui parlais des titres "satistes" que le compositeur Lord Berners appliquait à des oeuvres, il parut irrité et trancha: "C'est un amateur-professionel. Il n'a pas compris.'" (E.L.T. Mesens 'Le souvenir d'Erik Satie', *Revue musicale*, no. 214 (June 1952), p. 150.

¹⁶ Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 251. There was by no means unanimity of opinion about which foreign composer a given Englishman was supposed to imitate: Hannen Swaffer referred to Joseph Holbrooke as 'the Cockney Wagner'.

¹⁷ Berners had an aversion from the folksong-inspired compositions of such as Holst and Vaughan Williams and composed a wonderful parody of this idiom in his song *Dialogue between Tom Filuter and his Man by Ned the Dog Stealer*. Benjamin Britten, it will be remembered, was so tied to home as to have been prevented by his parents from going abroad to study with Berg.

¹⁸ Florence: Gaetano e Paolo Luigi Mignani, n.d. (probably 1917); London: J. & W. Chester, 1917.

¹⁹ Quoted in translation in *The Chesterian*, no. 17 (February 1919), pp. 259-60.

²⁰ The piece was eventually published in *Lord Berners, The Collected Music for Piano Solo* (London: J. & W. Chester, 1982).

²¹ Others are the second of the *Trois petites marches funèbres*, the orchestral version of ‘Chinoiserie’ (from *Trois morceaux* (1918)), and the late song *Red Roses and Red Noses* (1941).

²² Interestingly, an orchestral performance of this piece during the interval of a performance by the Russian Ballet at the Alhambra Theatre, London, in June 1919 caused Ronald Firbank to alter Chapter 8 of his novel, *Valmouth*: when this chapter was published in *Art and Letters*, vol. 11 (Spring 1919), as ‘Fantasia for Orchestra in F sharp minor’, only two composers, Skryabin and Tchaikovsky, were mentioned; but when the book was published later in 1919 Firbank had changed the passage to read ‘But with quick insight the maître d’orchestre had struck up a capricious concert waltz, an enigmatic au dela laden air: Lord Berners? Scriabin? Tschaikowski? On the wings of whose troubled breast were borne some recent arrivals.’

²³ Edwin Evans, ‘Lord Berners’, *Musical Times*, vol. 61 (1920), p. 12.

²⁴ Besides the effect of the continuously repeated figure, Berners’s piece has other motifs in common with *Parade*, especially with the Second Manager’s section.

²⁵ Berners’s only opera, *Le carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, was performed in Paris in 1924 at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées as part of a programme devised by Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia which also included Henri Sauguet’s *Le plumet du colonel* and the first stages performance in France of Stravinsky’s *L’histoire du soldat*. In a conversation with the author on 1 September 1979 Gabrielle recalled that because parts of Sauguet’s work needed to be rewritten Ansermet threatened to withdraw the piece. Berners consoled the tearful Sauguet: ‘Si on ne jous pas Le Plumet, on ne jous pas Le Carrosse.’

²⁶ Gavin Bryars, ‘Berners, Rousseau, Satie’, *Studio International*, vol. 192, no. 984 (November-December 1976), pp. 314-18.

²⁷ In a letter of 16 December 1922 to Michel Leiris Roussel wrote: ‘Je vois que, comme moi, vous préférez le domaine de la Conception à celui de la Réalité.’ see Leiris, ‘Conception et Réalité chez Raymond Roussel’, *Critique* (October 1954), pp. 821-35.

²⁸ Quoted in Volta, *Erik Satie*, p. 29.

²⁹ As John Betjeman said (conversation with the author, August 1977), one of the only 20th-century architects to have a movement named after him — the ‘jerry-built school’! Berners wanted a gothic tower, Wellesley’s taste was classical. As a result since most of the building work was done while Berners was away he returned to find a classical tower over 100 feet high, to which he insisted on adding a gothic top.

³⁰ Georges Jean-Aubry wrote an amusing article in *Fanfare*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1 November 1921), called ‘Lettres dansantes’, in which he makes great play with the trend of putting together composers with the same initials.

³¹ Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), pp. 123-37.

³² ‘Satie voulait substituer aux annotations musicales en langue italienne: *piano*, *pianissimo*, *dolce*, *mezzo-forte*, d’autres annotations de son cru et d’un caractère infiniment moins classique, telles que: *En se regardant soi-même venir; avec la crainte de l’abscons; Mirifique et convenable.*’ (J.P. Contamine de Latour, ‘Erik Satie intime’, *Comoedia* (5 August 1925)).

³³ For Grainger the compilation of his dictionary of ‘Blue-eyed English’ represented an achievement for which he had ‘a proud affection’ (John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (London: Elek Books, 1976), p. 53).

³⁴ Gowers, *Erik Satie, his Studies, Notebooks and Critics*, p. 159.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Gowers, *Erik Satie*, p. 151.

³⁷ Michael Nyman, ‘Cage and Satie’, *Musical Times*, vol. 114 (1973), pp. 1227-9.

³⁸ Michael Nyman compares the English and American approaches in *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), pp. 29-31.

³⁹ Michael Parsons (‘The Music of Howard Skempton’, *Contact* 21 (Autumn 1980), pp. 12-16) talks about Skempton’s work almost entirely in the context of the techniques of composition, and systemic ones at that; Skempton himself has also been strongly influenced by the ‘beautiful sound’ egocentricity of Morton Feldman, a far cry from Satie.

⁴⁰ In a long interview with White and myself conducted by Ted Szantó in January 1980 Szantó pointed out that all White’s music is tonal, and he wondered what White would produce if he were commissioned to write a piece of non-tonal music; White replied that it would depend on whether he wanted it in the style of Stockhausen, Berio, Ferneyhough . . .

⁴¹ A concert I gave with White in Amsterdam in January 1980 was called Gavin Bryars, John White and Absent Friends’.

⁴² Dave Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White', *Contact* 21 (Autumn 1980), pp. 4-11.

⁴³ By contrast, what White finds in the music of Reger is the 'sympathetic ability to be simultaneously serious and lost'; see Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White'.

⁴⁴ Brian Dennis, 'The Music of John White', *Musical Times*, vol. 112 (1971), pp. 435 ff.

⁴⁵ Programme note for a concert given by the group at Leicester Polytechnic on 14 March 1979.

⁴⁶ The complete sonata is printed in Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White', pp. 8-9.

⁴⁷ All quotations on these sonatas are from private letters from White to the author.

⁴⁸ The article involved an intrepid reporter travelling from Glasgow to London with a group of Scottish supporters, to the accompaniment of the popping of corks from pomagne bottles. Among the excesses of such supporters perhaps the attempted chartering of a submarine to go to the World Cup football finals in Argentina must rank the most touching.

⁴⁹ Georges Jean-Aubry, 'British Music through French Eyes', *Musical Quarterly*, vol. 5 (1919), p. 196. Note his Oulipopien use of the word 'satiety' in this article.

⁵⁰ This performance followed a period when long pieces were very much part of the prevailing trend. With John Tilbury and Tom Phillips, Hobbs and I played a seven-and-a-half hour version of the percussion parts from Cage's *Atlas eclipticalis* in 1969.

⁵¹ Gavin Bryars, 'Vexations and its Performers', *Erik Satie*, ed. Ornella Volta, Les Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris, in preparation).

⁵² Nyman, *Experimental Music*, pp. 29-31.

⁵³ Michael Nyman, review of the last concert given by the Hobbs-White Duo at the ICA, London, 24 November 1976, in *Studio International*, vol. 193, no. 985 (January-February 1977), pp. 6-8.

⁵⁴ This course involved meeting every Wednesday for four hours over two (academic) years. John Cage says: 'One way to write music: study Duchamp.' ('26 Statements re Duchamp', *A Year from Monday* (London: Calder and Boyers, 1968), pp. 70-72).

⁵⁵ Further discussion of these influences will be found in Keith Potter, 'Just the Tip of the Iceberg: Some Aspects of Gavin Bryars' Music', *Contact* 22 (Summer 1981), pp. 4-15, esp. pp. 10-14.

⁵⁶ David Drew ('Markevitch: the Early Works and Beyond', *Tempo*, no. 133-4 (September 1980), pp. 24-35) refers to the influence of Satie's *Rose + Croix* pieces on the youthful *Noce*s for piano solo (1925).

⁵⁷ *Obscure 9*, reissued as *EGED 29*.

⁵⁸ The attentive reader will notice the resemblance between the title and that of the piece written for the first concert of 'garden furniture music'. This one is 'out of' the other.

⁵⁹ See Potter, 'Just the Tip of the Iceberg', p. 12.

⁶⁰ Conversation with the author, on the Calais-Dover ferry, 9 December 1977.

⁶¹ Ronald Johnson/Erik Satie, *Sports and Diversissements* [sic] (n.p., Wild Hawthorn Press, 1965).

⁶² Nigel Wilkins, ed. 'The Writings of Erik Satie: Miscellaneous Fragments', *Music & Letters*, vol. 56 (1975), pp. 288-307.

⁶³ Wilkins, 'Erik Satie's Letters to Milhaud and Others'; Nigel Wilkins, *The Writing of Erik Satie* (London: Eulenberg Books, 1980).

⁶⁴ The feelie box involves the participants, here two, in inserting hands into a box where an assortment of objects, amplified with contact microphones, can be manipulated: 'ideally they would be installed in places where people have to wait with nothing else to do, such as railway and underground stations, bus stops, airports, dentists' and doctors' waiting rooms, hospitals, government offices, etc.' (David Toop, ed. *New/Rediscovered Musical Instruments* (London: Quartz/Mirliton, 1974), p. 6; see also David Roberts, 'Hugh Davies: Instrument Maker', *Contact* 17 (Summer 1977), pp. 9-13).

⁶⁵ Letter from John Furnival to the author, 3 January 1981.

⁶⁶ Satie's notes on these instruments were first published in Pierre-Daniel Templier, *Erik Satie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1932), pp. 59-60 (Eng. trans. by Elena L. and David S. French (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 64-5) and were reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits*, ed. Volta, no. 358, p. 187.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Volta, *Erik Satie*, p. 22.