INTERMEDIAL AND AESTHETIC INFLUENCES ON ERIK SATIE’S LATE COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICES

A Thesis in
Music Theory

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2013
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ABSTRACT

Artistic works involving a variety of mediums tend to be approached and analyzed from a single artistic viewpoint, failing to consider the interactions of the different mediums that define the work as a whole. The creative process is influenced by the types of mediums involved, individuals participating in the collaboration, and the overall aesthetic climate of the period.

Erik Satie (1866-1925) created numerous intermedial works in the last decade of his life where the medium impacted the compositional practices contained within his music. Satie was also tangentially involved in a number of artistic and aesthetic movements, such as Cubism, Dadaism, and early Surrealism, which influenced his integration. His personal relations and collaborations with prominent artists of these movements, such as Francis Picabia, André Breton, and Pablo Picasso. The works investigated in this thesis highlight Satie’s consideration of extramusical influences and include Sports et divertissements (1923), Parade (1917), Relâche (1924), and Cinéma: Entr’acte (1924).

Two additional pieces composed by the Dada artist Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (1884-1974) will also be examined as a point of comparison with Satie’s works. Pas de la chicorée frisée (1920) and Le nombril interlope (1920) are included to highlight the influence of contemporary aesthetics on artists working primarily in nonmusical mediums. In this instance Ribemont-Dessaignes adopts the musical medium as a means to express Dada tendencies.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Taylor Greer for advising me in this venture in musical aesthetics. Without his guidance and suggestions I would certainly still be trapped in a mire of modernist terminology. I would also like to thank Dr. Maureen Carr for being the original source of encouragement for my interest in this topic and her keen feedback through the whole process.

Innumerable thanks go to Dieter Beijersbergen for supplying me with access to the original musical manuscripts of Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes. Without them the comparative goal of this thesis would have been mere speculation.

I should also like to thank my friend Tessa Fox for her editorial feedback, and my friend Alicia Bradford for her constant support all through my program. Of course none of this would be possible without the unconditional love and encouragement of my family, for which I am deeply grateful. Thank you all.
To the memory of Dr. Carl Wiens,
for introducing me to a world within music
I had never known existed.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 OVERVIEW

Intermedial\(^1\) connections between music and other forms of art have long been present, and occasionally explored as a means of drawing parallels between developments in each independent artistic media. A fundamental theory about this relationship usually remains tenuous when considered in most analytical contexts, especially because of the inherent differentiation in the manifestations of expression amongst the arts. However, this does not at all imply that intermedial connections are not present and influencing the way in which works of art are created, given a relatively universal aesthetic, philosophical, and artistic climate they are conceived and created within.

From time to time, artistic developments throughout history can be labeled as outliers or oddities, sometimes relating to the nature of the artist, the function of the work, or the idea driving either of the aforementioned. In Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, he attributes this relegation to the “eccentric or boor[ish]” categories to be based on the social perception of the artists and how they fail to play the aesthetic “game of culture.”\(^2\) To play this game with the requisite seriousness and focus one must be amongst “those who have been able, not necessarily to make their whole existence a sort of children’s game, as artists do, but at least to maintain

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1. Intermedial, for the purposes of this study, shall be defined as the interplay of different artistic mediums (such as music, dance, illustration, film, etc) and how they impact developments in style and genre typically associated with particular mediums.

for a long time, sometimes a lifetime, a child’s relation to the world.”

Some individuals become so invested in this concept that their works become marginalized by their contemporaries; historically, these instances become novelizations of unique ideas or, more often than not, diversions from the otherwise strict and straightforward canon of Western music developments.

The life and works of Erik Satie (1866-1925) serve as a key example, as he proclaimed himself to have “[come] into the world very young in a very old era.”

Though not viewed as a revolutionary force in the course of musical developments, he was held in high esteem by fellow composers such as Debussy, Stravinsky, and Milhaud. His fierce adherence to no musical doctrine or school of composition often left him at odds with critics and composers, earning him a reputation as an eccentric.

The debate around the reception of his music often raises questions of how harshly he was judged as one of the first reactionaries against German romanticism and French impressionism; though his musical materials were often simple, borrowed, or opposing what conservatory compositional practices considered to be in good taste, the resulting works helped to launch musical and artistic explorations into the realm of modernist thinking.

Seminal writings by Robert Orledge, Steve Whiting, Ornella Volta, Mary Davis, and others, have provided strong biocritical overviews and analyses of the various periods within Satie’s life. Many of the writings go far enough to postulate the influences

3. Ibid.


of his contemporary artists and musicians; however, I believe there are deeper
connections to be drawn between Satie, his compositional style, and the prevalent artistic-aesthetic climate surrounding him. The idea of analyzing Satie’s works while only examining to his sketches and the theoretical musical connections has limited our understanding of the organization and function of how these works came to be, as well as the roles they filled within a larger artistic context of the rapidly shifting aesthetic values of the early twentieth century.

1.2 Objectives

The express goal of this study is to investigate the late compositional practices of Erik Satie and precisely how these practices were influenced by extramusical artistic and philosophic ideas present in Paris at the time. This influence will primarily be determined through an aesthetic analysis of Satie’s numerous intermedial collaborations from the last decade of his life. Using the findings from Satie’s collaborations and drawing comparisons between them and the works of contemporary, primarily non-musical, artists (who were critical of the overall philosophical-aesthetic climate present at the time) will provide us with a holistic survey of what helped drive the creative forces behind multiple artistic ideals.

These comparisons will be conducted in a three-fold manner: first, they will seek to examine the late works of Satie from an aesthetic perspective, specifically how his compositional practices in the creation of his music might be defined aesthetically. This also takes into account how any extramusical components may be considered integral to
the aesthetic definition of his works, something that a strict musical analysis may not weigh equally or even consider. The second type of analysis will be to apply what is discovered from Satie’s aesthetic and examine how contemporary non-musical artists may have influenced or shaped this aesthetic in Satie’s works, either through direct collaboration or merely through artistic proximity. The third and final means of analysis will examine the reciprocal nature of aesthetic influences; that is, how Satie’s influence impacted the artworks of individuals with which he was in close contact.

This study of philosophical-aesthetic ideals will focus on larger artistic communities present in Paris at the time, largely the Dadaist and early Surrealist movements, and how they distinctly impacted Satie’s output. Studies looking into the multidisciplinary nature of Satie’s late style already exist and will serve as excellent resources for this analysis, but for the most part they only take into account the developing modernist tendencies as part of an overall trend within music. A keen look into how Satie’s artistic (and specifically musical) materials may have been influenced in this trend towards modernism remains ripe for analysis. Satie was not the only composer at the time to expand upon and reinterpret traditional music practices; neoclassical procedures were surfacing in the works of Stravinsky through deliberate reexaminations and reinterpretations of traditional compositional practices, but Satie’s works are somewhat unique in the respect that intermedial influences played a key role in how he perceived his works beyond the purely musical aspect. The distinct changes present within his late works strongly suggest a deeper connection between his collaborations with contemporary non-musical artists.
The third means, mentioned above, will be to consider how Satie’s mosaic of diverse aesthetic principles influenced the artists working around him; that is, to see how Satie’s music and personal aesthetic came to influence the artistic creations of artists who were not practicing composers or musicians in the traditional sense. There was a large amount of interaction between artistic mediums at the time, and not only limited to the collaborative works involving several individuals. An evening of Parisian entertainment might not only include music and visual art exhibitions, but also poetry readings, plays, dance, and any number of other mediums meant to elicit reactions from the audience. In this sense, analysis of the aesthetic involves aspects of perspective, taste, and culture, all of which shall be considered during the course of these analyses.

1.3 Methodology and Musical Literature

Let us consider more specifically how to go about creating a critical “aesthetic” analysis to discuss musical and non-musical works in the same context. Though Satie’s works ranged broadly in genre, form, and function, they all adhered consistently to his personal aesthetic tenets. It therefore seems more appropriate to approach his music from a broader artistic standpoint and then to solely examine the specific musical practices that were shared in common between the works. Once correlations joining musical and non-musical practices can be mediated then it will be easier to approach each analytically, considering individual aspects without isolating them from a larger context. Satie was increasingly clear about how multiple aspects of a work, beyond just the musical, helped
to determine the concept of the work as a whole. This holistic conception and integration of artistic ideals also led to a broader definition of genre, which will be discussed below.

To gain an understanding of these aesthetic practices this thesis will survey select works from the last decade of Satie’s life, the time when he most frequently interacted and collaborated with other (primarily non-musical) artists. Each chapter beyond this introduction will be devoted to the analysis of a single or pair of works, progressing chronologically.

The first case, *Sports et divertissements* (1914), began as a solo series of twenty short pieces (twenty-one, counting the preface and “Choral inappétissant”) commissioned by Lucien Vogel for *La Gazette de Bon Ton* as a visual and musical work, but its publication was delayed by the outbreak of World War I. It did not reach publication until 1923, after fashion and style had changed dramatically, so the visual aspect of the work was updated to match. This examination will explore Satie’s musical miniatures in relation to the illustrations, as well as set a baseline for a collaborative work where he was not directly involved with creating all facets, but still sought to build a cohesive whole between the mediums.

The second case to be examined through an aesthetic lens was shaped more directly in the spirit of direct collaboration. The ballet *Parade* (1917) grew out of the combined efforts of Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, and Léonide Massine. What resulted was a work that Paris was not entirely prepared for, and that incited a riot. The

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poet, playwright, and critic Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) gave Satie one of the few favorable reviews to come from the work as a whole, describing the music as part of *L’esprit nouveau*, with qualities of “*une sorte de surréalisme*.”

The third case acts as a set of two works that exist as separate entities only in their genres; the ballet *Relâche* (1924) and the cinematographic intermission *Entr’acte* (1924) were both created with the intention of being performed within the same evening. The former was Satie’s third and final ballet score, based on a scenario by Francis Picabia, as well as his final complete work presented to the public before his death in 1925. *Entr’acte* was a film created and directed by Réne Clair especially for the occasion, with members of the artistic team standing in as the actors.

An additional set of piano works will be examined in this analysis for the fourth case: *Pas de la chicorée Frisée* (1920) and *Le nombril interlope* (1920), which were composed by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (1884-1974). Ribemont-Dessaignes worked primarily as a writer and visual artist, but also applied himself to some musical compositions meant especially for the Parisian-Dada soirées held in 1920-23. The first commercial recording of these two works, *Festival Dada Paris* (2008), was by Dutch pianist Peter Beijersbergen van Henegouwen (1947-2011). I am indebted to his rediscovery and recording of the original manuscripts for these pieces, along with the much appreciated generosity of his son, Dieter Beijersbergen, for allowing access to these previously unanalyzed works. Their inclusion is meant to directly consider the impact of Satie’s aesthetics on the creations of a primarily non-musical contemporary artist. They

will act as a foil to gauge the influence of Satie’s involvement with non-musical artists, through the application of the materials discovered by investigating the works by Satie.

Now that we have established the objective for this survey and the scope of musical literature to be examined, the issue of methodology in analysis of musical-intermedial works looms. To use traditional forms of music analysis will fail to capture the nuances present within the works; as Alan Gillmor stated, “Satie’s [music] resists traditional analytical methods... and requires its own analytical framework, one that recognizes the fragile juxtaposition of multiple layers of aesthetic meaning.”

Satie railed against conservatory training, and followed his own rules of harmony and composition. There is not a language to categorize Satie’s distinct humor and artistic convictions, or the manifestations of Dada principles and early Surrealist tenets. That is why a varied survey of Satie’s late works is required, to try to connect major aesthetic themes and the influences upon them. What is ultimately needed is a means to integrate the language, aesthetics, and applications of all the mediums that can describe what occurs not only when an intermedial work is performed, but also does not segregate the nature of the work when examining its various components (in this study, the music). This falls beyond the possibility of being fulfilled within a single thesis, but this study strives to make specific analytical connections in order to better understand Satie’s compositional aesthetic. This leads us to the next topic, developing an inclusive, intermedial language via specific analytical components.

1.4 Analytical Components

Though the works that have been selected for this survey vary greatly in kind, they all share the link of historical context and artistic influences. To better understand what unites the works, each chapter will examine them according to certain baseline analytical components. These components are meant to set forth a new criteria to consider Satie’s compositions, rather than simply interpreting the black and white notes written on the page. The aesthetic intentions behind the works drove the form, content, and presentation as much as any formal musical training.

Medium and Genre

The works in this survey consist of a variety of mediums, which also served as part of the criteria in their inclusion in this study. Satie’s personal infatuation with visual elements in art is apparent from his numerous sketches present in his own writings and notebooks (see Figure 1.1). His calligraphic scores were initially born out of his study of medieval scripting from Rosicrucian period.\(^\text{11}\) The added graphic dimension in his scores can only be truly be appreciated by viewing his work in manuscript or facsimile form, and this graphic element does not transfer to standardized music publications, a sentiment felt by Satie himself.\(^\text{12}\) Modern publications seem to reflect this notion, as a 1998 publication of Sports et Divertissments (sic) alters the layout of the twenty-one original

\(^{11}\) Wilkins, Writings, 20.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 119. “Musical writers, unlike literary authors, do not have the same advantages in the publication of their works. A literary publication seems more brilliant, more logical, more ‘genuine’ than its musical counterpart. Yes. ... A musical work, for its part, possesses none of these precious external trappings; it is classed with academic books to which it seems to be a sort of brother – an ugly brother.”
pieces, strips away the beauty of Satie’s ornamented scripting, and entirely removes the illustrations, nullifying any visual aspect of the work beyond a standard printed score.13

The aesthetic ideal presented here is that some artistic ideas are communicable only through their represented form, in this case described as the medium. Satie had a distinct appreciation for the visual, literary, and, as can be assumed through his later collaborations, broader art forms such as dance, illustration, cinema, and drama. Works contemporary to Satie fit into traditional classifications based on the materials the medium was constructed with. Music was a sonic construction, while the visual arts were painting, sculpture, and the like. Literary arts depended on the use of language, words and text. The obvious exception to this division of artistic mediums was Wagner’s conception of the gesamtkunstwerk. However, this blatant attempt at balancing artistic forces failed to win Satie over to the idea of the “total art work,” given his general distaste of German composers and their idolization of romantic virtues. Satie’s late compositional practices reflected a more natural tendency to create works that bridge the gaps between mediums,


thus expressing new ideas through the form of their components. A piano score with visual and literary components; a ballet score calling for mundane objects to be used as instruments; a cinema score timed and cued specifically for the action occurring within the film; all of these point towards a deeper integration of aesthetic influences.

As well as being meticulous in his compositional practice, Satie was very particular with the language he used to describe his works. In the written preface of *Sports et divertissements* he describes the work as “two parts combined – in a single volume – form a whole: an album.”¹⁵ This practice of pointed descriptions was not so unique, as many of his other works bear fairly specific descriptors and subtitles, such as “Ballet instantanéiste,” and “Ballet réaliste,” and also contain some rather cryptic, comedic, or satirical program notes. These examples help to highlight the second area of this analytical component, the concept of genre. When discussing musical composition Satie states:

> In composition, the various parts, between themselves, no longer follow ‘school’ rules. ‘School’ has a gymnastic aim, nothing more; composition has an aesthetic aim, in which taste alone plays a part. Make no mistake: the understanding of grammar does not imply the understanding of literature; grammar can help or be set aside as the writer pleases, and on his responsibility. Musical grammar is nothing but grammar. One cannot criticize the craft of an artist as if it constituted a system. If there is form and a new style of writing, there is a new craft.¹⁶

The way in which Satie conceived of his works, and the ultimate criteria which they fulfilled, constitute what define this instance of genre, or as he stated “a new style.”

His conception of an idea informed his compositional choices (not only in the musical

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sense, but also in the composition of the medium). He was broadening the traditional
definition of genre to be something more inclusive. This allowed the process of creation,
the expression of an idea, to operate outside of the restrictions of conservatory training
and comparative judgements against canonical works by “the masters.” The first
component of a work, medium, helps to inform the second, genre, based on the way in
which the former more clearly helps to express the latter.

**Musical Characteristics**

Satie’s primary artistic training was in the realm of music, so this analysis will not
strictly forego characteristics inherent to the musical medium. As mentioned above, a
traditional analytic approach will only shed light on part of the total aesthetic influence.
Not only will the notes, rhythms, phrasing, key, tonality, consonance, dissonance,
quotation, form, and so on, be considered in the readings of these pieces, more global
analytical ideas will be used to expand the scope of the musical analysis. Consideration
will be paid to more idiomatic ideas, such as style, gesture, and metaphor. The goal is not
to attempt to channel Satie’s intention or translate meaning from the works, but rather to
examine the musical characteristics in relation to the parts of the whole.

Satie had a penchant for borrowing musical ideas and integrating the highbrow
with the low.\(^{17}\) The music of the concert hall appealed to him in ways that seemed more
liberating than literature of the canon. Satie blended musical idioms and styles in new
ways, such as his direct incorporation of jazz elements in *Parade* even before
Stravinsky’s early jazz-influenced compositions, like *Ragtime* (1917-18), *Histoire du

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17. Steven M. Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall* (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 1999), 1.
soldat (1918), and Piano-Rag Music (1919). In this vein, the blending of styles is also highly pertinent in discussions of musical characteristics.

Extramusical Characteristics

For everything else that falls outside of the realm of being directly musical there will also be the broader category of the extramusical. Satie’s works incorporate some revolutionary practices contemporary to the time, such as written narration within the score, odd performance directions and tempo markings, highly ornamented scores, and non-traditional objects used within an orchestration, to name a few. These extramusical characteristics reflect another manifestation of Satie’s drive to work beyond traditional musical means to express the “idea” of a work. It is this inherent impulse within him that led to the unique nature of the collaborations that resulted when he combined his music with other mediums and artists.

1.5 Historical Context

This paper strives to be theoretical in its approach but considerations of historical context will be considered as a matter of fundamental importance. Following this aim a brief discussion on the prevalent artistic movements of the time as well as the key individuals involved seems appropriate to situate some of the later analytical comments within a larger context.

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Dadaism was born in Zürich, Switzerland in the wake of the mounting hostilities from the First World War. The meeting of Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara, brought together by the circumstances of the war at a time when artists were seeking a means to express the anxiety and tension of living through it, led to the formation of Dadaism in early 1916. It was Hugo Ball who laid down the initial tenets of the movement, and from there arranged various artistic events at the Cabaret Voltaire exhibiting the Dada aesthetic.\textsuperscript{19} Another fortuitous meeting occurred when Francis Picabia made the acquaintance of Tzara in 1918, and the two discovered a “spiritual kinship.”

Through internal disagreements of the original organizers of the movement, and the relaxation of tensions following the war, Tzara sought more fertile artistic grounds. His meeting with Picabia would serve as the direct personal link between the Zürich Dada movement and the Parisian branch of the movement, as Picabia had invited Tzara in 1919 to join him in Paris. On January 17, 1920 Tzara took him up on his offer and made the journey to France, transporting the Dada movement with him.\textsuperscript{20}

It is at this point that Tzara first met Satie in person, though the two were previously aware of one another and their respective endeavors. Tzara had helped initiate music at one of the final Dada soirées in Zürich, presumably one of Satie’s earlier works for piano. Satie, likewise, had received some of Tzara’s Dada revues from Switzerland,


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 6-8.
and was present at Tzara’s first public appearance in Paris on January 23, 1920.\textsuperscript{21} Though Dadaist ideals had been communicated to Paris prior, this marks the official start of Dadaism in Paris.

**Surrealism**

The origins of the surrealist movement are considerably more convoluted than those of Dadaism. The term *surréalisme* was first used by Apollinaire in the program notes to *Parade* in 1917; heralding in the new spirit, he believed the Parisian avant-garde capable of “bring[ing] about profound changes in our arts and manners through universal joy.”\textsuperscript{22} However, Apollinaire’s definition differed from the views held by other artists in what is considered the more formal founding date of the movement in 1924 with the publication of André Breton’s *Manifeste du Surréalisme*. Breton defines Surrealism in a much stricter fashion:

> Surrealism, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.\textsuperscript{23}

It is because of this fundamental difference in what constituted Surrealism that there were so many artistic disagreements between Breton and other avant-garde artists (namely the Dadaists) that he began publishing disparaging remarks about them.\textsuperscript{24}


the Dada movement began to decline in its popularity in 1922-1923, Breton took it upon himself to organize the “Congress of Paris,” where current schools of artistic creation and aesthetic philosophy would help define the future path of the “modern spirit.” However, the event was met with much ire and suspicion of Breton’s personal motives and a letter signed by Éluard, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Tzara, and Satie was sent to Breton requesting his presence at the Closerie des Lilas on 17 February 1922. The resulting affair put Breton on trial for manipulating the larger artistic community and having “the will to destroy anything living, and reaction in all fields.” It was at that point that Breton began work on his own aesthetic ideals and agenda, ultimately resulting in the formation of the early Surrealist movement in 1924. It is of no surprise that Breton bore such a grudge against many of his contemporaries, as evidenced through his scathing publications and resistance to any challenge to his thoughts on “psychic automatism’s” role in the creative process.

1.6 Artistic Aesthetics

Erik Satie was considered an oddity when it came to his musical works, which is supported in abundance not only by the critical reception of his works, but also by his explicit agreement (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) in his own writings.

Everyone will tell you that I am not a musician. That is correct. From the very beginning of my career I classified myself as a phonometrographer. My work is completely phonometrical. Take my *Fils des Étoiles*, or my *Morceaux en Forme de Poire*, my *En habit de Cheval* or my *Sarabandes* – it is evident that musical

26. Sanouillet, *Dada*, 243-244.
ideas played no part whatsoever in their composition. Science is the dominating factor.\textsuperscript{27}

The personal aesthetic ideals of Satie often garnered him criticism for not taking his music seriously. It is evident that he took his works seriously, as demonstrated in an unpublished article written about Debussy for \textit{Vanity Fair}, describing how to break free of the weight of Wagnerian romanticism. “Why not use the means of representation exhibited to us by Claude Monet, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, etc.? Why not transpose these means into music? Nothing could be simpler. Are they not expression?”\textsuperscript{28} Though Satie was known for his original creations, he was uniquely considerate of other mediums of expression. His connections to the Dadaists and Surrealists (amongst other artistic movements not examined specifically in this study) are a means of considering, analyzing, and exploring the depth of his works. In the examination of each of the works selected for this thesis a short portion of each chapter will be dedicated to examining how the general tenets and artistic tools of Dadaism and Surrealism might have had significant implications in Satie’s compositional process. Additionally, these aesthetic examinations can connect how these movements played into the overall interartistic climate that encouraged the creation of unique works from this specific period.

\textsuperscript{27} Wilkins, \textit{Writings}, 58.

\textsuperscript{28} Satie, \textit{A Mammal’s Notebook}, 123.
CHAPTER 2

SPORTS ET DIVERTISSEMENTS

2.1 Conception

The first intermedial work we shall examine was not initially conceived of by Satie. Its original conception falls prior to his involvement with any distinct Parisian aesthetic art movement. The reason for including Sports et divertissements is to highlight it as one of Satie’s earliest involvements in an intermedial collaboration. The impetus for Sports grew out of literary and fashion publications contemporary to the time. Lucien Vogel, then the publisher of La Gazette de Bon Ton, sought to unite common social pastimes that the public was accustomed to (leisure activities, sports, art) with a format they were already familiar with, that being a publication highlighting fashion and culture.29

However, rather than deliver this in the typical forms of visual and literary media Vogel chose to include another form of art into his publication—music—and a type of music that reflected contemporary taste as much as visual and literary media. It is at this point that he fortuitously made the acquaintance of Satie through a mutual friend, Valentine Gross, and was invited to join the project.30 Anecdotally, it is noted by Mary Davis (among others who have written about the origin of Sports) that Satie might not have been the original musician approached for the collaboration; according to “legend” Stravinsky is said to have refused the opportunity due to the commission offered being

29. Davis, Erik Satie, 94-95.
30. Ibid., 93.
below his normal fee. By contrast, Satie was then consulted and nearly refused the same opportunity due to the commission being too large.\textsuperscript{31}

For the illustrations to be used in the work, Vogel called upon his most talented artist from the \textit{Gazette}, Charles Martin (1884-1934). The direct connection between Martin’s illustrated component of the work and Satie’s music, calligraphy, and text becomes complicated for a few reasons. First, there is the interaction between the artists and their respective contributions, raising the question of how one medium may have influenced the other, which will be discussed below. Second, we must consider the fact that there are two sets of illustrations created to go with the work. Martin drew the first set in 1914 for the initial publication, but with the outbreak of World War I and the dissolving of Vogel’s first company he sold the rights of the work to a competitor.\textsuperscript{32} Following the war he repurchased the rights under a newly formed company and sought about bringing the work to the public through its official publication in 1923. However, fashion, culture, and taste had changed in the intervening decade, so Vogel had Martin create a new set of illustrations in 1922. The contributions of Satie, however, remained unaltered from the original.\textsuperscript{33} It is clear that Satie was not involved in the interplay of elements between the initial 1914 version and the final 1923 publication where only Martin’s illustrations were changed. However, it remains unclear whether he had seen Martin’s original 1914 sketches while he was composing, or visa-versa, if Martin had

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 94-95.


based his sketches on the calligraphic scores and narration of Satie.\textsuperscript{34} Much of Davis’ discussion operates under the assumption that Satie was familiar with Martin’s illustrations, but details as to when or where Satie may have seen them are notably missing. Lacking any further evidence, the question of influence cannot be resolved.

*Sports et divertissements* signifies a milestone in Satie’s aesthetic developments. As Davis notes, “*Sports et divertissements* represents a point of culmination, the moment at which the challenge of these boundaries [between high and low culture] evolves from stylistic feature to raison d’être.”\textsuperscript{35} Satie had previously included elements of an intermedial nature in his “humoristic” piano works (namely his textual narrative written into the scores) dating from 1913-1914,\textsuperscript{36} though his affinity for integrating popular elements can be traced even earlier to his *Trois morceaux en forme de poire* (1903).\textsuperscript{37} But this degree of openness to an integration of media is somewhat unprecedented from the standpoint of a primarily musical artist. Davis recognizes the wider aesthetic connection to the visual arts, labeling it a foray into the aesthetic idea of *simultaneity*, or artistic “efforts to synthesize time, materials, form and color in artistic works.”\textsuperscript{38} This application is made in reference primarily to the visual arts, but her application and association with later movements of Cubism, Futurism, and Dadaism are apropos given the future collaborations Satie would become involved with through the next decade of his life.

\textsuperscript{34} Volta, “Le rideau,” 16-17.


\textsuperscript{36} Gillmor, “Musico-Poetic Form,” 2-4.

\textsuperscript{37} Davis, “Modernity,” 433.

\textsuperscript{38} Davis, *Erik Satie*, 92-93.
2.2 Analytical Components

Medium and Genre

This self-described “album” by Satie integrates a number of creative mediums, impressive for the compact nature of the work. Each medium involved (text, illustration, music, calligraphy) contributes equally to the expression of the work as a whole. Martin’s illustrations play a direct role relating the function of Sports to fashion publications, with Satie’s music adding a novel touch. “Just as the fashion magazine relies on the simultaneous presentation of interconnected texts and images to convey its messages, so Sports et divertissements depends on correspondences among art forms, adding music to the established mix.”  

The key feature here, being the criteria for examining this work, is the “interconnected” nature of mediums to create a novel genre.

Satie’s music comprises but one facet of the work as a whole. He additionally supplied narrative text, which may or may not have been requested by Vogel, and to this day its role in the performance of the work has been debated. Though Satie was unclear about the function of his sometimes poetic and satirical inscriptions, he stated directly how the text should be handled. “I forbid reading the text aloud in the course of musical performance. Any failure to observe this requirement will incur my righteous indignation against the presuming party. No special cases will be allowed.” This statement, noted on the original edition of his 1917 *Heures séculaires & instantanées*, could itself be taken as another display of Satie’s chastising satire directed towards overly-literal performers.


However, he left little room for debate about how (or even if) these texts should be received by audience members, stating, “These indications are a secret between the performer and myself.” Given the size and nature of the album it seems better suited to practices of *hausmusik* rather than the concert hall; only in this instance the audience consists of one, the performer, rather than select guests of the host.

Satie’s stylized musical calligraphy, though technically unnecessary for the conveyance of the “musical” aspect of the work, acts as a visual balance to Martin’s illustrations. The 1923 publication reproduced Satie’s scores in facsimile (examples provided in Appendix A), rather than leaving it to an editor to strip away the natural artistry contained within his scripting. Once again, this practice speaks more towards involving an intimate relation with the work, rather than a mass produced and standardized product of published scores. This ideology refers back to Satie’s writing on printed scores and how they “[possess] none of these precious external trappings” that are communicated through the labor of his handcrafted scores. Satie takes great care with the details of his scripting, as well as with the overall layout of each piece across the staves, much in the same way that a visual artist might invoke negative space to complement the content they do place on a canvas. Satie’s text and dynamics are lavishly scripted, while the notes, slurs, and beams not only fulfill the functional requirements of notation, but convey the same qualities as his ornamented handwriting.

42. Ibid., 16.
Musical Characteristics

Despite their intrinsic interdisciplinary character, Satie’s musical miniatures within *Sports* also can be viewed as musical commentary in isolation from the other media of the work. He achieves this through musical quotation, allusions, and stylistic references through the purely musical medium. The pieces within the collection abandon entirely the use of time signatures, key signatures, and bar lines, adding an allure to the minimalist layout of the scores. However, Satie’s note groupings, beamings, and phrase markings, are so immaculately scripted that there is little confusion about the proper means of performance, despite frequent shifts in register and transferrals across staves and Satie’s artful layout of the music across systems.

Throughout the twenty-one pieces, Satie repeatedly makes references to musical style. The most blatant example being the first piece, “Choral inappétissant” (reproduced in Appendix A, Figure 1), which he insisted upon including along with a short written preface stating, “For the shriveled up and stupid I have written a serious and proper chorale. I have put into it all I know of boredom. I dedicate this chorale to all who do not like me. I withdraw.” Davis describes the preface and chorale as “deliciously ironic” due to the fact that he was clearly drawing on his formal training and compositional exercises from his time at the Schola Cantorum, conveying it in the form of a Bach chorale with an ironic musical treatment.\(^{43}\) Satie likewise imitates Italian operatic styles in “La Comédie italienne” (Appendix A, Figure 2) through the use of dotted rhythms in the main melodic line while progressing through a series of highly ornamented cadential gestures.

\(^{43}\) Davis, *Erik Satie*, 97-98.
Satie invokes these styles through his music for more than musical effect and variation within the work. He composes in these styles, often twisting them to highlight a particular musical device to satirize. In his parody of chorales Satie’s disdain is palpable through the sometimes painful inclusion of chromatic passing tones, blatantly exposed in the choral texture. The fermati above the ends of the “phrases,” typically points of repose within a chorale setting, instead serve as somewhat forced points of resolution. The heavy use of chromaticism throughout hardly helps to confirm any semblance of a tonal scheme. In “La Comédie italienne” his overt ornamentation deceives his usually subdued compositional style when crafting melodies. His melodies, when not filled with running thirty-second notes, also mimic the lyricism and contour so typical of Italian operatic styles. Likewise, Satie’s incorporation of syncopated rhythms in “Le Tango” (Appendix 1, Figure 3) could be seen as an incorporation of exotic dance music, but Satie inserts one of his not-so-surreptitious witticisms in the form of an endless repeat. What originally may have been indicated by the choice of musical material, a foreign musical influence, immediately takes on the nature of something repetitive and tedious.

This last instance of directed ad nauseam repetition casts a judgement on the style of the tango (then a sweeping popular dance trend new to Paris), but Satie’s typical use of repetition in his music is actually a trademark of his compositional style. Small motivic gestures, repetitive accompanimental figures, and minute variations and transformations are frequently at work in Satie’s compositions, giving them a distinct ambiguity of form and function, but retaining their overall unity. “Le Flirt” (Appendix 1, Figure 4) incorporates all of these compositional tendencies, beginning with a small melodic
motive (Figure 2.1), supposedly borrowed from a piece of the same name written by Charles Windsor. This fragment, viewed alone, gravitates towards the key of the source of the borrowed melody, E natural minor (noting the D♭). However, an ostinato accompaniment is simultaneously introduced at the beginning (Figure 2.2).

This ostinato figure, on its own, might suggest a tonal center in G major, somewhat reinforced when considered in conjunction with the F♯ in the melodic motive, and also given that the beaming of the eighth notes emphasizes the tonic and dominant scale degrees. However the close of the scalar material placed above the ostinato (Figure 2.3a) fails to confirm this tentative tonal center with any finality before a transposed statement of the melodic motive (in C major/A minor) sounds where the text reads “Comment allez-vous?” From there the melodic motive is immediately repeated in the register of the original statement (where the text reads “Ne suis-je pas aimable?”), but this time transposed down a whole step to the key of F major/D minor. The second apparition of the scalar material (second system) begins on F and consists of entirely stepwise motion. Despite the slight alteration of the material, it, like the first use of the octaves, fails to confirm any sense of tonal stability through its pairing with the ostinato.

44. Davis, “Modernity,” 460.
pattern. The only sense of contour and finality is provided by the phrase markings and the grace notes embellishing the final notes differentiated through rests.

![Figure 2.3a. Transposition/variation on scalar material, “Le Flirt,” Sports et divertissements, first system.](image)

As has been seen, Satie frequently borrowed musical material in the form of styles and idioms, as well as allusions to the works of other composers. To achieve a true sense of integration with popular culture Satie likewise incorporated well-known folk tunes into his miniature compositions. A rather somber alteration of *Au Clair de la Lune* makes an appearance at the beginning of the third system (Figure 2.4). This quotation coincides with two other important events signifying a distinct change. The first one is Satie inserting some of his literary commentary, which shall be addressed more fully below when considering the extramusical characteristics. The second, and more directly musical, event that occurs at the time of the quotation is a degradation of the ostinato figure. The ostinato had run continuously since the beginning of the piece and consistently outlined relations of a perfect fourth, both above and below a centralized pitch (moving from G, C, F, A). However, the quotation begins a more rapid descent of fifths (with one augmented fourth) below “Au Clair” and ultimately moves the piece to the closing gesture which alters the ostinato and centers the close of the piece around G.
We have noted instances of stylistic and direct quotations within *Sports*, but it should be noted that Satie also incorporates instrumental allusions. The work is written for piano, but Satie refers to readily recognizable characteristics of other musical instruments. This empowers the piano to express sonic ideas beyond what might normally be considered when listening to a work for piano. Instances of such references can be seen in “La Chasse” signifying hunters horns, or the brief competing sets of fourths at the textual mention of guitars in “Le Réveil de la Mariée.”

Satie’s musical scores, rather than relying on the absolute abstract qualities that the medium could provide, are highly referential to aspects of culture and style *beyond* pure music. His attention to minute musical details and (sometimes not so well disguised) use of quotation and musical borrowing convey his integral understanding of how the music relates to, and portrays, media beyond the immediate aural perception of music.

**Extramusical Characteristics**

As has been discussed, the musical medium involved in *Sports* is but one facet of the whole work (something Satie even notes in his preface). The text, calligraphy, and illustrations, each bestow their own levels of meaning when considered in tandem with the music. In the pieces that have been discussed to this point it has been mentioned how Satie’s textual narrative adds a level of consideration for the performer. Short, prosaic,
scenarios are outlined by the texts which Satie sparingly inserted into each piece, sometimes commenting on the nature of the title, or sometimes reflecting the music within the piece. An example of this would be the quotation of “Au Clair de la Lune” in “Le Flirt” when the accompanying text reads “Je voudrais être dans la lune.” On its own the text of the piece would seem nonsensical, barely providing enough context to form a coherent description or story. Likewise, if only the quotation of the folk song in the music is considered it fails to express anything beyond a mere referential quotation. However, when both aspects are considered, the aural experience of the music and what it is quoting paired with the loose story implied by the text, they can add a new level of creative comprehension to the work.

Another example of connections between text and music involves the transposing melodic motive examined above, each instance stated in Table 2.1. This short melody occurs a total of four times, all of which are accompanied by statements of Satie’s text. The relationship of text to music (and furthermore, illustration) is clearly one of intentional design. It might be stated that these connections are what gives the work its allure, and the art is contained in considering the meaning implied by the relations between the particular media. To postulate the exact meaning behind these connections veers too far into subjective speculation and falls outside the limits of this investigation.
Table 2.1. Transpositions and text of melodic fragment in “Le Flirt”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Melodic Fragment</th>
<th>Starting Pitch</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Ils se disent de jolies choses, des choses modernes.</td>
<td>They say nice things to themselves, modern things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Comment allez-vous?</td>
<td>How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Ne suis-je pas aimable?</td>
<td>Am I unloveable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Laissez- moi?</td>
<td>Leave me?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The role these illustrations played in the development of the work are a somewhat difficult facet to navigate because it was not entirely clear whether Satie had seen Martin’s original 1914 illustrations or had them in mind as he composed. Davis purports this to be the case because of the number of narrative and compositional reflections Satie incorporated into his contribution to the project. These original illustrations are not nearly as well known and many publications of *Sports* do not include either the 1914 or 1922 illustrations by Martin. So the issue of examining the “correct” illustrations comes down to between what was originally illustrated and what was ultimately presented to the public in 1923. Vogel somewhat circumvented this issue by printing a handful of editions that contained both sets of illustrations, but the vast majority included Martin’s 1922 illustrations. For the intents and purposes of this examination there are pros and cons in considering either set as the “authentic” representation, so both shall be considered.

For example, in “Le Bain de mer” (Appendix A, Figure 5) Satie incorporates rolling wave figures and includes dialogue between two individuals discussing the sea. Martin’s 1914 illustration depicts a couple embraced before an oncoming wave (while an individual has already been pulled below in the background). In this instance it would be
easy to see how Satie derived the dialogue and musical events depicted within the score. The 1922 illustration depicts a general view of the ocean, a boatman, a lighthouse, and some swimmers. However, no particular figure or object is given priority in this depiction, so it is more difficult to draw a direct correlation between Satie’s and Martin’s individual contributions, leading to the conclusion that though Satie worked from Martin’s 1914 illustrations, Martin did not pay heed to Satie’s music or text for the 1922 revisions. Davis similarly describes an instance in “Le Golf” where the central figure in the 1914 illustration is male and breaks his club (indicated in the music and text of Satie through text and the use of quartal scalar patterns).  

Figure 2.5a. Martin, “Le Bain de mer” (1914).

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The illustrations for “Le Flirt” (Figures 2.6a and 2.6b) are more ambiguous. The differences between the two illustrations are less dramatic than the drastic shift of focus between the early and the late “Le Bain de mer.” In both instances of “Le Flirt” a couple is pictured reclining on a bed of pillows. In the 1914 rendering their attention is drawn towards a group of people gathered at the entryway; in the 1922 the couples attention is directed towards a sole individual. To say how the difference between a group and an individual might drastically change the meaning of Satie’s music and text is left open for debate.

47. Satie, _Erik Satie: del chat noir a dadá_, 133.
2.3 Aesthetic Implications

Alan Gillmor perhaps states most concisely what can be taken away from an overall aesthetic appraisal of this work. “*Sports et divertissements*... is not only Satie’s


most ambitious piano work but arguably his finest creative achievement, a superb marriage of style and idea, a crystallization of virtually everything that had preceded it, the purest distillation of an aesthetic ideal toward which he had been groping for a quarter century.”

What Satie had become involved with in 1914 had slightly changed by its publication in 1923; nonetheless, the intent and successful execution of marrying typically disparate forms of media into a cohesive artistic whole was innovative in its own right. This work truly was the “distillation of an aesthetic ideal” which Satie had been searching for, and this point forward he would reflect this notion of interdependence and interplay between various forms of media.

Satie also had extensive exposure to popular music from his time working as a cabaret pianist at Le Chat Noir in Montmartre. Having lived and worked with popular tunes of the times in tandem with traditions of French art song led him to be comfortable juxtaposing the two within his works. The lack of division would become essential in the way that he would integrate facets of culture into his compositions, namely through instances of musical quotation, reference, repetition, and minute alterations. His fundamental understanding and ability to integrate these aspects of high and low culture are what give his works the ability to combine so naturally with aesthetic ideas present in mediums beside music, ultimately providing levels of meaning that function between the arts.

CHAPTER 3

*PARADE*

3.1 Conception

The next work we shall examine - and probably the most widely known intermedial work that Satie was involved with - is the ballet *Parade* (1917). The original conception of the project can be traced back as early as 1914 when Jean Cocteau proposed a ballet scenario to Stravinsky. The collaboration between the two fell through and the ballet, then titled *David*, never came to fruition. It was not until the following year that Cocteau would consider approaching the same scenario once again, reusing the main ideas from *David* of the *théâtre forain* as the scene for the work and the idea of the “parade,” or advertisement and sample of the full show entertainment taking place in front of the fairground booth.\(^{52}\) It took until 1916 for Satie to receive the manuscript, as indicated through their correspondence.\(^{53}\) The collaboration became a tour-de-force of avant-garde artists, which included sets and costumes by Pablo Picasso, choreography by Léonide Massine, and direction by Serge Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes.

The work between them continued into March of 1917 where everyone involved in the creative team except Satie travelled to Rome to begin rehearsals with Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe. It was there that Cocteau and Picasso witnessed the décors of the Italian Futurists, Fortunato Depero and Giacomo Balla in the “dancerless ballet” *Feu*


d’artifice.\textsuperscript{54} The music of \textit{Feu d’artifice} was composed by Stravinsky, who became tangentially (and somewhat ironically) involved in the rehearsal process of \textit{Parade}, allegedly by playing Satie’s music during the rehearsals.\textsuperscript{55}

The scenario itself, described by Cocteau, is meant to portray the advertisement for a \textit{théâtre forain} sideshow on a fairground. The three Managers each introduce a different act (consisting of the Chinese conjurer, the acrobats, and the young American girl) in an attempt to persuade the audience inside for the main attraction. The managers ultimately fail in their goal and the conjurer, acrobats, and American girl all return to try to explain that the main performance is inside the tent behind them.\textsuperscript{56}

3.2 Analytical Components

Medium and Genre

The mediums involved in this work are more distinctly aligned towards the ideal of presenting a spectacle to a ballet audience, as opposed to the more personal consumption of the \textit{Sports et divertissements}. Though the work falls into the category of a ballet, the individual mediums themselves play functional roles beyond simply operating in their traditional capacities. The music reflects the costumes and scenery, and the choreography reflects the music.\textsuperscript{57} Satie’s original biographer, when discussing the collaboration of \textit{Parade}, went so far to say “it is difficult to identify each author’s

\begin{itemize}
\item 54. Orledge, \textit{Composer}, 224.
\item 55. Cox, “‘Le théâtre forain,’” 575.
\end{itemize}
contribution to a ballet, an art form which only finds its real meaning once it is complete.”

This joint venture marks many firsts for the collaborators: it would be Satie’s first musical score for ballet, Picasso’s first scenery and costumes designed for the stage, and Massine’s first time choreographing for ballet.

However, the well-integrated final product does not mean that the working process was quite so seamless. The original premise presented by Cocteau intended for Satie’s music to serve as “a background to throw into relief the noises which the playwright considers indispensable to the surrounding of each character with his own atmosphere.”

The previous quote was written by Cocteau, putting words into Satie’s mouth, words meant to downplay the role of the music in the collaboration. This initial, repressive role assigned by Cocteau to the music was overridden by Satie’s natural inclinations towards drawing inspiration from multiple domains and integrating them. This, in turn, began to cause tension among the collaborators. In a letter to Valentine Hugo (née Gross, the same individual who introduced Satie to Vogel of La Gazette du Bon Ton) Satie noted his urge to follow Picasso’s vision:

. . . ‘Parade’ is changing into something better, behind Cocteau’s back! Picasso’s ideas please me more than those of our Jean! How awful! And Picasso has my ‘vote!’ And Cocteau doesn’t know! What shall I do? Picasso has told me to carry on following Jean’s text, while he, Picasso, will work on another, his own – which is fantastic! Prodigious! . . .


59. Satie, Parade in Full Score, viii.

60. Orledge, Composer, 224

The resulting tension was quickly resolved through “an agreement” between Cocteau and Picasso’s ideas. It is also clear from this event that Satie gained artistic insight from Picasso and would compose music that would suit the creation of Picasso’s towering, cubist costumes.62 This continued infatuation irritated Cocteau as indicated in another letter from him to Hugo:

Make Satie understand...that I really do count for something in Parade, and that he and Picasso are not the only ones involved...it hurts me when he dances around Picasso screaming, it’s you I’m following! You are my master! And seems to be hearing for the first time from Picasso’s mouth things that I have told him time and time again.63

The result of this struggle between collaborators resulted in several compromises. For instance, Cocteau intended for the Managers to be “Barkers,” who would shout their advertisements through megaphones at the audience. Diaghilev disagreed with the idea, believing that the shouting would be distracting and ultimately language had no place within a ballet.64 Satie likewise had to make some compromises to his musical scores by including “ear deceivers” within the music, which he did not approve of. Satie wrote to Diaghilev, “I don’t much like the “noises” made by Jean, but there is nothing we can do here. We have before us an amiable maniac.”65 These ear deceivers were meant to emulate the sonic impact of Paris during World War I as well as personify the characters within Parade. They included the use of typewriters, a roulette wheel, sirens, pistol shots, and a specially created instrument consisting of fifteen tuned bottles (“bouteillophone”)

65. Whiting, Bohemian, 482.
for the ballet. Though these instruments were meant for inclusion in the work, most were not actually used in the 18 May 1917 premier of the work. The same was the case for the 1920 Opéra revival and the full range of extramusical noises was not included until the 1923 Théâtre de la Gaîté production.

This overall conglomeration of media was conceived by Cocteau toward the work being a “ballet réaliste.” In an article appearing the day of the premier, Cocteau wrote:

What has hitherto been called “realistic art” is in a way a pleonastic art, especially in the theatre, where “realism” consists in admitting onto the stage real objects which lose their reality the moment they are placed in nonreal surroundings. The elements of trompe-l’oeil and trompe-l’œille in Parade create reality—which alone has the power to move us, well disguised though it may be.

Gillmor aptly identifies that Parade also exhibits a realistic quality in the way that it “rejects the myth, legend, and fairy tale, as well as the traditional narrative perspective,” which had largely dictated representations and creations of traditional ballets. It is this utilization of media with the distinct intention of creating something novel that helps clarify the genre of the work in this instance quite clearly. However, in the program notes, Apollinaire describes the work as possessing a certain “surréalism,” championing it as an example of the l’esprit nouveau. So how can the ballet be both realist and surrealist? Daniel Weiser explores the distinct connection between Satie’s “interdisciplinary philosophy” of composition and compares his use of quotation and

67. Whiting, Bohemian, 481.
68. Ibid., 481.
69. Gillmor, Erik Satie, 197.
70. Ibid.
borrowing of popular idioms within his music as a translation across mediums to Picasso and Braque’s uses of found materials within their collages. These artistic techniques associated with the Cubist art movement would later play a pivotal role years later in the creative “psychic automatism” of André Breton’s conception of what constitutes surrealism. In essence, the work simultaneously looked forward through the juxtaposition of the realist premise and intention of Cocteau’s scenario against the surrealist utilizations and implementations of the music and sets. Templier notes this as, “a certain opposition between the music and the sets on the one hand, and the subject matter on the other. The latter is the work of a poet, very compelling indeed, but the symbolic ramifications of which are seldom in harmony with the simplicity, the ‘cubism’ of Jean Cocteau’s collaborators.”

Musical Characteristics

Satie’s construction of the score for Parade has drawn much consideration in terms of its organization and structure. There exist two versions of the work: first, the four-hand piano reduction of the 1917 premier and second, the full orchestra revised in 1919 for Parade’s intended revival. The differences are limited, mainly pertaining to some added musical material and the removal of stage directions from the 1919 revision. Given below in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are the formal breakdowns of each version based on


73. Templier, Erik Satie, 86-87.
information and tables by Whiting\textsuperscript{74} and Orledge.\textsuperscript{75} These tables, along with the discussions presented by Whiting and Orledge, help to highlight the block-like and mirrored construction of the work.

The 1917 version (Table 3.1) begins with the “Prélude du Rideau rouge,” composed in the style of a fugue, and then moves in to the presentation of the Managers theme. From there each of the performers have their own section dedicated to the presentation of their act. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 also provide brief descriptions of the music accompanying particular stage directions for when characters enter and exit the stage as well as particular tricks within their acts. The organization of the musical blocks often follows a very organized structure, often on multiple levels. For example, the overall form of work constitutes an mirrored arch structure, presented in different parts as the Prelude, Managers’ theme, the three acts, a return of the Managers’ theme, and the return of the Prelude. The Little American Girl’s “Ragtime du Paquebot” music, as a compositional variant on Irving Berlin and Ted Snyder’s “That Mysterious Rag,”\textsuperscript{76} is presented in ABA form. The Acrobats’ musical sections are both presented in ABA form. The Acrobats’ act contains an embedded ABA structure with their entrance and exit music surrounding their actual (ternary) performance material.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{74}] Whiting, \textit{Bohemian}, 474.
\item[\textsuperscript{75}] Orledge, \textit{Composer}, 173.
\item[\textsuperscript{76}] Davis, \textit{Erik Satie}, 110-111.
\end{itemize}
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<td></td>
<td>16-25</td>
<td>Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>301-316</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>325-344</td>
<td>The sinking of the Titanic (with giant wave effect)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>345-360</td>
<td>‘La voix’ (bars 349-57 were originally a short song: ‘Tic, Tic, Tic, le Titanic s’enfonce, allumé dans la mer’)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>394-505</td>
<td>Acrobats perform (subdivided: 394-445, 446-73, 474-505 in a sort of ABA form, with B being a smooth section between two brittle ones)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>531-552</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suite au ‘Prélude du Rideau rouge’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Bars</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-86</td>
<td>Entrée des Managers’ (3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The PARADE Part 1: <em>Predigitateur Chinois</em></td>
<td>87-104</td>
<td>Entrance of conjurer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105-199</td>
<td>Conjuring tricks (disappearing egg: 105-83/breathing fire: 184-99)</td>
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<td>200-217</td>
<td>Exit of conjurer</td>
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<td>Part 2: <em>Petite Fille Américaine</em></td>
<td>218-225</td>
<td>Entrance of American Girl</td>
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<td></td>
<td>226-295</td>
<td>Dance of American Girl (inspired by silent films)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>296-319</td>
<td>Ragtime du Paquebot’ (the Titanic) in ABA form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>320-335</td>
<td>Trio (B)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>336-343</td>
<td>Reprise of bars 312-19 (A)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>344-364</td>
<td>The sinking of the Titanic (with giant wave effect)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>365-380</td>
<td>‘La voix’ (bars 369-77 were originally a short song: ‘Tic, Tic, Tic, le Titanic s’enfonce, allumé dans la mer’)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>381-388</td>
<td>Exit of American Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: <em>Acrobates</em></td>
<td>389-412</td>
<td>Entrance of acrobats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>413-524</td>
<td>Acrobats perform (subdivided: 413-64, 465-92, 493-524 in a sort of ABA form, with B being a smooth section between two brittle ones)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>525-549</td>
<td>Exit of acrobats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Suprême effort et chute des Managers’</td>
<td>550-571</td>
<td>2/4, 3/8: meter order reversed, and new ostinatos added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: <em>Final</em> (condensed reprise of Parts 2, 3, and 1)</td>
<td>572-587</td>
<td>Condensed reprise of 230-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>588-603</td>
<td>Reprise of ‘Ragtime’: 296-311 (reharmonized in G, theme in bass)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>604-607</td>
<td>Varied reprise of 284-7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>608-623</td>
<td>Varied reprise of 421-8, 409-12, plus augmentation of 413-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>624-655</td>
<td>Reworking of ostinato section 105-63 (cf. 105-8 and 630-33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final appearance of Managers’ theme</td>
<td>656-676</td>
<td>2/4 section only, extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Suite au ‘Prélude du Rideau rouge’</em></td>
<td>677-684</td>
<td>Counter-exposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When comparing the two tables it can be seen that the 1919 version adds a brief “Choral” before the “Prélude du Rideau rouge” as well as a sizable fourth section “Finale” which is constituted of condensed reprises of the three performers’ themes.

These revisions ultimately gave the work a more satisfying linear quality from the perspective of the audience, but altered the initial symmetrical layout Satie intended. The overall work remains balanced, though these revisions were made more out of practical, formal reasoning rather than concerns of balance and aesthetic idealism. 77

One of the most prominent musical aspects of Satie’s score comes through in the use of ostinati and pendulum figures, 78 stratified in various musical layers to emphasize the tuneful qualities of particular melodic segments. 79 In this manner he is able to generate block-like musical modules with an extreme economy of pitch material.

Repetition of this material at various pitch levels and instruments allows him to unite the particular movements. Figure 3.1 is such a short melodic fragment played by the first violins. It is immediately followed by Figure 3.2 which is a transposition of the same fragment, this time echoed by the cello, double bass, trombone, and clarinet parts. This variation on the same material allows Satie to continue to generate new music along the lines of a single idea and suits the block-like construction of the work perfectly.

Ultimately the entire work is united as a series of non-developing variations utilizing these techniques of ostinati, pendulum figures, and orchestral stratification. Orledge notes

77. Whiting, Bohemian, 475-476.
79. Ibid., 115-125.
there are a total of fourteen themes in *Parade* which act as the “musical backcloth to the theatrical spectacle.”

![Figure 3.1. First violins, “Dance of the Little American Girl,” *Parade*, mm. 215-218.](image)

For material that falls outside of this realm of thematically unifying “musical backcloth” we are left with transitory passages that are equally distinct but lack any clear motivic and melodic drive. Much like the melodies of Figures 3.1 and 3.2, however, their composition is still dictated by the devices of transposition, ostinati/pendulum figures, and colorful orchestration. Figure 3.3 shows the highly dissonant and sequential treatment of the musical material. The material proceeds downwards in a series of alternating fourths then fifths, settling somewhat uneasily into the first melodic theme of the “Petite fille Américane” act.

![Figure 3.2. Cello, double bass, trombone, and clarinet parts, “Dance of the Little American Girl,” *Parade*, mm. 219-222.](image)


Figure 3.3. Piano Reduction, “Entrance of the American Girl,” *Parade*, mm. 199-206.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the same concept given at the beginning of the “Prestidigitateur chinois” act. Rather than defining the entrance music by dissonant, sonic transpositions (as in Figure 3.3), Satie relies more on tuneful fragments supported by an ostinato figure to associate musical traits with the character of the Chinese conjurer. A rather bombastic, ascending melody sustained by the brass is complimented by a brief, chromatic grace note passage. Measures 82-85 rely on a fragmentation and repetition of the iconic opening brass, before the entrance music moves on to a more complicated series of layered ostinati.
This act of distinguishing musical character traits is what makes Satie’s score so integral as a single medium amongst the various art forms used to complete the ballet as a whole. As has been mentioned, Satie derived inspiration from Picasso’s costumes, which connects his musical fragments to the cubist construction. Not only is there an aural-visual connection, the theatrical stage actions dictated by Cocteau, though not the determining force in Satie’s compositional style, still dictated the overall formal nature of the separate entertainment acts.

Focusing more specifically on the idea of associative musical connections, Satie incorporated cultural associations within his music. In Figure 3.5 we are presented with the first melodic presentation of the Little American Girl’s act, following her entrance music. This fragment is indicative of contemporary American ragtime idioms through its
syncopation and articulation, and is said to have been used by Satie because of his impressions of American silent film,\textsuperscript{82} as well as by the scenario dictated by Cocteau with his wide array of distinctly American cultural signifiers.\textsuperscript{83} These connections helped to drive the musical influence and impetus for Satie’s stylistic choices in each of the distinct sections of the ballet.

![Figure 3.5. Melodic fragment, “Dance of the Little American Girl,” Parade, mm. 207-210.](image)

**Extramusical Characteristics**

Cocteau’s “ear deceivers” are the most apparent extramusical association which Satie was forced to contend with. Their inclusion in the score is often misattributed solely to Satie; even his critics berated him based on their inclusion and called his music “infinitely more stupid than ingenuous, more boring than droll, more senile and antiquated than audacious and innovative.”\textsuperscript{84} The purpose of the devices, according to Cocteau, were to assist in transporting the audience into the realism of the work. Typewriters, gunshots, and the sinking of the Titanic were idiomatically connected with a Parisian conception of America, and therefore were utilized as means within the ballet to establish this realism through their inclusion.

\textsuperscript{82} Orledge, *Composer*, 173.

\textsuperscript{83} Whiting, *Bohemian*, 472. “Cocteau’s American girl—who plays cowboys-and-Indians, cranks up her Model T, and goes down with the Titanic—was equally inspired by Hollywood heroines like Mary Pickford and Pearl White, whom he was known to adore.”

\textsuperscript{84} Gillmor, *Erik Satie*, 208-209. One particular critic prompted Satie to respond to him with a rather curt letter stating, “You are nothing but an asshole, and an unmusical asshole at that.” The letter in question resulted in a libel case against Satie, nearly landing the composer in jail.
The influence of culture and society was mentioned briefly while discussing the inclusion of ragtime in the “Dance of the Little American Girl,” but bears repeating as an extramusical characteristic. Cocteau’s aim to create a realist work succeeded on several counts, at least according to his own criteria. His goal was to utilize ready-made acoustic objects and perceptions of culture to simultaneously engage the public in a new genre of ballet. However, the premise of the work, with its multiple layers of immersion (the street parade acting as an advertisement for a larger, unseen show within a ballet) ended up alienating the spectators and confusing the initial audience’s reception of the work.

3.3 Aesthetic Implications

*Parade* is a multi-individual collaboration where the individual contributions are truly surpassed by the whole. Meaning is imbued among the various mediums through the nature of the artists’ interactions. Satie, Cocteau, Picasso, and Massine each had a particular concept of how their contribution to the work would ultimately shape the presentation of *Parade* to the public. As has been seen, Cocteau’s original vision for his scenario was not greeted with the same enthusiasm from the other collaborators, though the alterations (e.g., the replacement of the “barkers” with the Managers, the inclusion of “realist” objects and sounds) and compromises were what ended up defining the work as a whole. Satie saw the need for this direct process of artistic collaboration, and though he had finished his contribution of the score in spring of 1917 he wanted to organize a
meeting so all the current materials could be combined and evaluated before the rehearsals began in Rome.\textsuperscript{85}

Once again, as was seen in \textit{Sports et divertissements}, societal influences played a predominant role in uniting the mediums to create the ballet as a complete work. Satie’s score united elements of high and low musical cultures by utilizing compositional devices and styles traditionally seen as at odds with one another, such as the opening fugue and the inclusion of ragtime and music hall inspired melodic fragments. This idea of blending different levels of culture and reinforcing their usage through intermedial collaborations became particularly indicative of Satie’s late works, and will be developed to an even greater degree in his later works.

One final thought on the aesthetic influence of Picasso’s cubism, Apollinaire’s surrealism, and Cocteau’s intended realism. The act of applying aesthetic labels to these different artists’ works is particularly symptomatic of the developing tendencies of early twentieth-century modernism. The overall path of Parisian modernism sought to react against the French impressionists who were largely influenced by German romantic trends. However, different individuals arrived at different conclusions, though the means very often overlapped. Aspects of cubism relied on the hyper-realistic portrayal of everyday objects. Picasso did away with the traditional ideal of perspective to simultaneously represent all aspects everyday objects. Cocteau’s realism similarly sought to engage an audience through a novel manipulation of ballet by inserting everyday sounds to create an illusionary realism. Satie’s score, influenced by Picasso’s cubist

ideals, created a collage of musical meaning which was juxtaposed with Cocteau’s realist intent. It is this ultimate juxtaposition of means and ideals that resulted in Apollinaire’s perception of the work being surreal, because together the different facets transcended the collaborating artists’ original intentions.
CHAPTER 4

RÊLACHE AND CINÉMA: ENTR’ACTE

4.1 Conception

Satie’s final collaboration was, in itself, the ultimate expression of his intermedial aesthetic leanings. Following the completion of the ballet Mercure (1924), Satie began work in late May of the same year on what was to be his last artistic endeavor at which he would make a public appearance. The scenarios for both the ballet and cinematographic intermission piece were written by Francis Picabia, who expressed through his letters that he gained great inspiration from working with Satie: “Even though I had decided never to write a ballet, Erik Satie persuaded me to; the single fact that he was writing the music for it was the best reason I could have.”86 René Clair became involved with the spectacle because he was the only “person in the house concerned with the cinema.”87 Having only just begun his acting and film career, Entr’acte became one of Clair’s early claims to fame and also acted as a model for the emerging avant-garde cinema in France (ironically for many famous surrealist films in the following decade). Both works were premiered on 4 December, 1924 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, one week after the advertised premier due to the illness of Jean Börlin.88

The process by which Satie conceived and constructed the ballet score for Relâche was different from some of his previous collaborative works, in that he was in consistent contact with Francis Picabia and the “musical structure took shape in a close

87. Ibid., 201.
sympathetic exchange of thoughts.” Multiple drafts of the main ballet scenario were postulated as seen in Picabia’s early writings, and Satie, being as detail oriented as he was creative, sought to construct the ballet music in a mirrored form through the arrangement and reuse of musical materials. Orledge also makes note of the proportional divisions evident through Satie’s working process exhibited in diagrams Satie constructed for the work, even though some of the most exact models were not considered by Satie until he was nearing the end of the project and working on the orchestration in August and September. This is evidenced through scalar line models labeled Relâche amongst his sketches, dated from those months. Whiting aptly describes the result: “Satie’s twenty-two unassuming dance pieces were organized into an unusual complex of mirrored and interlocking structures, more refined and (somewhat paradoxically, for a work of such Dadaist and hedonistic spirit) more logically unified than anything he had produced before.”

The nature of the music that Satie selected for this ballet was likewise reflective of the Dada aesthetic, in that through its application it came to combat the institutionalized, bourgeois conception of ballet. In a letter to Milhaud he describes Relâche as an “obscene ballet,” where he used “risqué” melodies as the basis for his musical material, thus reminding the audience of their origin without using the actual text

89. Whiting, Bohemian, 552.
90. Orledge, Composer, 180-184.
91. Whiting, Bohemian, 552.
in the performance. Ultimately this acted as a continuation of his personal aesthetic of uniting the highbrow and lowbrow musical styles through direct juxtaposition.

True to Dadaist form, obscenities and insults were still explicitly present as a means of shocking the audience. In the second act backdrop, inscriptions read along the lines of “Satie is the greatest composer in the world,” “Poor unfortunates, would you rather see the ballets at the Opéra?,” and, if the audience was not enjoying the ballet, they were “allowed to fuck off.” The response of the public and critics to the ballet was, predictably, negative and aggressive in its criticism, but in this sense the Dada aesthetic aim was a complete success.

The intermission film, Cinéma: Entr’acte, shown between the acts of Relâche, was a novel take on the traditional idea of inserting a shorter work to act as a palate cleanser to break up the larger work. Though the original source of the idea remains speculative, the scenario definitively grew out of ideas proposed by Picabia. Clair notes in his recollections of working on the film that Satie was rather apprehensive of not being able to finish his work on the score for the film, as he had not yet seen the material. This was indicated by “friendly and urgent appeals” for Clair to “send details of [his]

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94. Whiting, Composer, 536.

95. Manfred Kelkel, La Musique de Ballet en France de la Belle Époque aux Années Folles (Paris: J. Vrin, 1992), 211. “Ceux qui ne sont pas contents, sont autorisés à foutre le camp.”

wonderful work quickly.” Picabia ultimately gave Clair free range to bring his scenario to life and was greatly pleased with what Clair contributed.

4.2 Analytical Components

Medium and Genre

The joint medium of these works, when properly viewed in the artistic and historical context, clarifies their Dadaist (or at least Dada-influenced) nature, which may otherwise be easily overlooked as simply two separate works premiered at the same event. Both works enact a sense of immediacy to the aesthetic climate and the physical location. Cinéma includes scenes set outside of the theater, such as the theater’s rooftop, or a roller coaster, giving the audience the experience of being outside of the theatrical setting without actually leaving their seats. Relâche was created with the intent of shocking and offending the audience through its mockery of traditional arts. The dancers of the ballet were choreographed to strip out of their formal attire down to decorated undergarments. However, it is clear that Cinéma was specifically created for the occasion, intended to be shown at the intermission, and resembles the films shown at intervals during café concerts. This serves as yet another example of high art forms and venues merging with the low. Satie’s music, though not thematically joined between the two works, is compositionally derived from the same ideas, as will be examined below in the musical characteristics of the works.


The genre of the work is more difficult to pinpoint; René Clair himself admits that “no one has ever known exactly why this ballet was ‘instantanist.’”99 The qualifications of what classifies a work as being specifically “instantanéiste” are unclear, but can be understood in the context of Picabia’s ill will towards Breton with the publication of his First Surrealist Manifesto. Instantanism was intended to be a movement without followers (perhaps mocking Breton’s attempt to forge a new aesthetic) and was merely an extension of Dadaist ideals.100 Picabia’s instantanist “manifesto” was published on the final issue of 391, with bold slogans such as “L’INSTANTANÉISME: BELIEVES ONLY IN TODAY,” “L’INSTANTANÉISME: BELIEVES ONLY IN PERPETUAL MOTION,” and “IT IS NOT A MOVEMENT, IT IS PERPETUAL MOVEMENT!”101 This publication preceded Relâche by several months (and even contained an advert announcing the ballet), but does not help to categorically describe what distinguishes the work as being specifically “instantanéiste.” Considering that Relâche was the only work to bear the nomenclature, there is the distinct possibility that the assignment of the new “movement” was a Dada ruse in itself.

**Musical Characteristics of Relâche**

The music of Relâche, taken in isolation from the aesthetic context, could almost be confused as a step in the direction of neoclassicism, considering the myriad of traditional composition devices Satie incorporates. Comparisons of passages have been drawn to Stravinsky’s “Russian Dance” from Petrouchka, through the similar musical

99. Ibid.

100. Whiting, Bohemian, 535.

treatment of a folk melody. However, Satie’s aims went beyond the mere incorporation of familiar tunes; he sought to use them as a device to, in alignment with Dadaism, shock and possibly offend the audience. Robert Orledge observes and postulates on some of the double meanings inherent in selecting such songs, and will be considered shortly.

Before we consider the meaning of the melodies selected, we must consider what struck him to use these particular songs. Satie states in the program notes for the ballet, “The music for Relâche? I was portraying people ‘out on a spree.’ Using popular themes for the purpose. These themes are powerfully ‘evocative’ . . . . Yes, very ‘evocative.’ ‘Special,’ even. ‘Faint-hearts’ – and other ‘moralists’ – will reproach me for making use of these themes.” As usual, Satie shrouds his prose with not so veiled jabs at critics, but the intent is still clear: Satie’s goal was to incorporate popular themes that the public would recognize. This is worth drawing attention to because of the juxtaposition of ballet, associated with a highbrow social gathering, against popular melodies known to the general public that could gain him “reproach” from “moralists.” These borrowed melodies, though not exact quotations, are certainly linked and identifiable, as Whiting has discussed in some depth.

In Satie’s quest to emancipate musical creation from the strict confines of tradition and simultaneously battle the imposition of German Romanticism he expressed his views on melody and harmony on the cover of the notebook of his 1917 work, Mort de Socrate. The writing is earnest, which is rather uncharacteristic of Satie to express

102. Whiting, Bohemian, 546.
103. Häger, Ballet Suedois, 256-57.
104. Whiting, Bohemian, 537-539
himself with such a level of seriousness; furthermore, this is worth noting because he rarely ever discussed his views on composing. “To have a feeling for harmony is to have a feeling for tonality. The serious examination of a melody will always, for the pupil, be the essence of an excellent harmonic exercise. A melody does not imply its harmony, any more than a landscape implies its color. The harmonic character of a melody is infinite for a melody is an expression within the overall Expression.” This explanation helps to clarify some of Satie’s tendencies towards what were considered “simple” melodies and rather unorthodox harmonic and accompanimental treatments.

This practice is especially apparent in the ballet score for *Relâche* and the way in which Satie generates material surrounding his selected melodies. Figure 4.1 provides the main melody of the “Overture,” in itself rather compact, with a parallel periodic phrase structure, centralized tonal quality in D major, and articulation that helps to define the character of the phrase. Recall, however, that for Satie the relative simplicity of the melody does not solidify the possible manifestations of the harmony as being “simple.”

![Figure 4.1. Extracted melody, “Overture,” *Relâche*, mm. 8-16.](image)

In figure 4.2 this approach to harmonization is abundantly clear in the unorthodox choice of accompanimental figures. Satie highlights stepwise chromatic motion in the bass voice, a theme used extensively throughout the *Relâche* and *Cinéma*. Additionally, the motion of the bass voice results in accented chromatic gestures on the downbeats of

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mm. 9, 10, 13, and 14, resolving after a short duration to more traditional triadic sonorities. He further capitalizes on these accented gestures by adding half-step wedge gestures in the inner voices which add a level of tension before their parsimonious resolutions to chordal tones. The ultimate result of the bass motion and chromatic voices leaves us with an unorthodox progression of chords. Though the isolated melody centralizes around D major, the resolving consonant chord in m. 9 is F♯ minor. The following measure resolves to a G major sonority, but m. 11 produces a series of sonorities that fall outside the scope of functional harmonic analysis. The voice leading guides the formation of nontraditional sonorities: the bass line descending and the inner voice harmonizing below the melody in thirds. The second phrase repeats the same harmonies and gestures, except for mm. 15-16, which lead to a harmonically ornamented cadence. The downbeat of m. 15 is decidedly functioning as a dominant moving to the tonic on the downbeat of m. 16, but the intervening harmonies are, once again, nontraditional. The rhythm of this first setting is also worth mentioning because the accented downbeat chromatic gestures and their resolution continue the rhythmic continuity of eighth notes, carrying the phrase forward. This, as we will see in other harmonizations of the melody, is not always the case.

106 Gm7 chord and a C7 could easily be applied labels, but would serve no functional purpose in the cadential gesture, attributing them more as a result of the voice leading, as in m. 11.
The “Overture”, constructed in a rondo form as suggested by Whiting, brings about the return of this main theme twice more.\textsuperscript{107} The third iteration (mm. 40-48) is an exact repetition of the first statement; however the second iteration (figure 4.3) provides one of the alternate “infinite” harmonies of which Satie spoke. This harmonization occurs with relatively few changes to the original melody; it remains in D major but is moved to center on the dominant scale degree. The accompaniment itself is distinctly different in style and function. Rather than consisting of the eighth-note stepwise bass figures and chromatic wedges it is a much more functional progression leading the phrase forward. The downbeat wedges are replaced by a more functional bass line, in m. 25. It ultimately acts as a transitioning phrase which moves to the subdominant key area beginning at mm. 33 (not shown).

The next examples are reappearances of the same melody in the sixth movement, “Entrée de l’Homme,” where yet again Satie proposes alternate harmonizations of the

\textsuperscript{107} Whiting, \textit{Bohemian}, 553.
same melodic material. Figure 4.4 shows us the opening measures of the movement heralding the entrance of l’Homme (the Man). The “Overture” theme is presented in augmentation because the main male lead is confined to a wheelchair, yet another Dada jab at the ballet establishment.\textsuperscript{108} The accompaniment itself is largely chromatic, beginning with a two-measure introduction, while the rhythmic eighth-note pulse alternates, giving the march a lively, cabaret-like character despite the augmentation of the main melody. The harmonization has become even more convoluted through this passage. Rooted in B\textsubscript{b} major it moves from the tonic (m. 2) through inversions of V7 (mm. 3-4), but then the function harmonic intent begins to become obscured. Satie introduces descending chromaticism in the bass line (B\textsubscript{b}-B\textsubscript{b}-A). The natural seems to act as a chromatic passing tone, leading to a B\textsubscript{b} major sonority on the offbeat, but continues its descent to the submediant harmony by the pickup to m. 6, and is somewhat confirmed by the octave leap on the downbeat of the next measure. I state this somewhat tentatively because the melody has progressed to the lower neighbor A (m. 6) conflicting with the delayed metric confirmation of the subdominant harmony.

The rest of the phrase continues this pattern of obfuscation through the use of a chromatically altered bass line and off-beat accompaniment that only lines up once again for the consequent phrase at m. 10, which reconfirms the tonic. The second phrase begins with similar chromatic disguises, first delaying V6/5 moving to the tonic (m. 10) and then the tonic moving to V4/3 (m. 11). Measures 14-15 are particularly interesting because the bass line sustains a F pedal tone, while the inner voices seem to take over the chromatic

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 542.
outwards to form a perfect fourth. The cadence is unorthodox because the dominant is
new take on the same idea. Chromatic wedge figures have made a reappearance, but
melody is yet again used and the rhythm is similar to the first iteration, it is an entirely
embellishments and resolving functionally by half step. In this manner, though the same
phrase.

Figure 4.4. Piano reduction, “Entrée de l’Homme,” Relâche, mm. 1-18.

Figure 4.5 occurs not long after Figure 4.4, but in this instance it has been
returned to the original rhythmic proportion. The accompaniment is new, but reminiscent
of Figure 4.2 because of the behavior of the chromatic tones, acting as harmonic
embellishments and resolving functionally by half step. In this manner, though the same
melody is yet again used and the rhythm is similar to the first iteration, it is an entirely
new take on the same idea. Chromatic wedge figures have made a reappearance, but
rather than moving to one central pitch they form a diminished fifth (m. 27), which
resolves inwards to a major third, and an augmented second (m. 28), which resolves
outwards to form a perfect fourth. The cadence is unorthodox because the dominant is
weakened on the downbeat as a minor minor seventh (Fm7), moving through a passing
dominant seventh (G7) and arriving on the weak beat at the dominant seventh in first
inversion (F6/5). The weakened cadence then actually confirms the key with a short, four
measure coda.

These three examples show how Satie unites the overall movements of the ballet,
but does not compromise the nature of the work by simply redeveloping the same
material. Rather, he harmonizes a melody to highlight the idea imagined in different
contexts, using the same rhythmic and chromatic devices. This makes the material
recognizable, as Dadaists used found materials in their works, though he re-appropriates
this material for use in a nontraditional fashion. Furthermore, his use of popular melodies
and melodies written to imitate popular music of the time gives the listener something
fleeting and familiar to contend with before the other mediums of the work disrupt their
initial perceptions. A simple melody is transformed by the harmonic setting around it.
This treatment hints towards parody. However, his treatment of melody refers back to his
unique views on the manifold means of expressing a single idea. The various
harmonizations are simply different aspects of the same idea, perhaps the juxtaposition of
a simple folk-like melody against the function of an overture within a ballet. Though he is not musically parodying his own music, he is, through his music, parodying the traditional idea of the ballet.

Related to Satie’s affinity for the juxtaposition of highbrow and lowbrow forms is the way that he manipulates traditional compositional devices and idioms. The fugal nature of the melodic material driving “Les Hommes regagnent leur place et retrouvent leurs pardessus” is rather conspicuous considering how Satie openly wrote about the dry results of following strict contrapuntal practices in composition (Figure 4.6). It is not difficult to discern that, rather than following conservatory dictums, in this short piece Satie sets up the expectation for a four-voice fugal exercise, but even before the completion of the second answer (beginning in m. 21) Satie’s free interpretation of fugal practices begins to show through. The alto line at m. 22, rather than staying within the tonic-dominant relationship sustained up until this point, recalls the chromatic wedge elaboration from the overture accompaniment, and is drawn out into a double neighbor figure around F.

The result of this momentary chromatic figure spreads to the other parts, leading us away from the fugal key of Bb major to a cadential gesture on an A major chord (mm. 25-28), but then is followed by a similar cadential gesture bringing us back to Bb major for one final dominant-tonic iteration of the fugue themes. However, the final tonic iteration (mm. 33-34) is truncated (by a chromatic descent, C-C♭) and leads into a horn arpeggiation that began the movement. Rather than follow through with a complete repetition, Satie employs a short chromatic descent and brings the piece to a close,
somewhat abruptly with the material it began with. In this sense, he robs the listener of a complete fugue, but draws upon fugal practices to generate his material.

Figure 4.6. Expanded voice leading, “Les Hommes regagnent leur place et retournent leurs pardessus,” Relâche, mm. 9-32.
In the following movement, “Danse de la brouette,” Satie similarly adopts a classical compositional technique, in this instance invertible counterpoint. Though the music does fit the technical specifications for the term, the organization is nothing more than transformations and inversions of two sets of material through a series of keys. The overall key structure and inversions are given in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase (Measures)</th>
<th>Modulation</th>
<th>Inversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (mm. 1-8)</td>
<td>D major → A Major</td>
<td>Phrase over bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (mm. 9-16)</td>
<td>E major → B major</td>
<td>bass over phrase, phrase over bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (mm. 17-24)</td>
<td>A major → E major</td>
<td>phrase over bass, bass over phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (mm. 25-32)</td>
<td>G major → D major</td>
<td>bass over phrase, phrase over bass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why adopt these devices within the music for a Dadaist ballet, an aesthetic that overtly frowns upon established, elevated forms of artistic expression? The answer may not be so much a matter of Satie adapting to the tenants of Dada aesthetics, but more simply that Satie’s compositional practice incorporated high and low forms of art, simultaneously using the more “advanced” devices of the higher to transform those of the lower.

**Musical Characteristics of Cinéma: Entr’acte**

The musical structure of Cinéma: Entr’acte takes a much more additive and repetitive approach, largely built on four and eight-bar phrases with little musical development. The film score has been likened to an extreme case of musique d’ameublement, a nontraditional assigned function to music “meant to be heard, not listened to.” The concept was invented and premiered by Satie in 1920 as an intermission.
decoration operating solely in the medium of music. Conversely, there is no mention or writing by Satie as to whether Cinéma qualified as musique d’ameublement, and Martin Marks argues for a more integrated function between musical and visual elements, which I am inclined to agree with given his compelling comparison between the two through his article. Additionally, Satie’s careful attention to the musical idioms he synchronized between the music and the content of the film implies that it serves a more integral “dynamic relationship” than the strict utilitarian function that musique d’ameublement aimed to fulfill.

The piecemeal compositional construction of Cinéma makes it impossible to distinctly label it within traditional analytical terms (another prominent marker of the novel function emerging from the joining of mediums). Marks and Gallez have developed independent, comprehensive analyses of the orchestral scores and piano reductions of Cinéma and both analyses focus on particularly salient features of the music; namely, the elements of rhythm, form, cadence, idiom, and tonality. Marks makes note of possible ironic and parodic nuances between the musical and visual components of the work, which certainly are worth considering given Satie’s personal humor as well as the Dadaist nature of the work.

However, both of these studies consider Cinéma in a rather stringent context. Indeed, both authors comment on the Dadaist nature of Relâche and Cinéma as well as the contributions by Picabia and Clair, but they examine the latter score strictly as a piece


of film music, serving as either subservient to the film (as musique d’ameublement) or acting as an “[imitation of] the film’s content.” They do not make critical connections between Satie’s distinctive compositional processes, resulting in rather interpretive and ambiguous summaries of Cinéma’s function, either as an oddity or as a revolutionary step in the early emergence of film music. Interestingly enough, Marks mentions at a few points the non-cinematic nature of Satie’s score as neither a “series of mood or action pieces (as was the convention),” or the musical incongruence to the function of typical film music. Looking more directly at the music elements, while considering the analytical contributions of Marks and Gallez, let us consider the implications of Satie exploring the possibilities of new media and genres, as has been approached with Sports and Parade.

The most prominent and continuous element of the film music would lie within the incessant, repetitive rhythmic motives. “Satie realized that montage . . . makes the film’s rhythm, which the rhythm of the music must reveal.” Gallez provides an excellent summary of all the rhythmic motives found throughout Cinéma, and discusses in detail the way Satie effectively matches the action of the film to the rhythms present within the score. He also presents the idea of using rhythmic transitions to highlight the transition between certain cinematic ideas portrayed in the film.

111. Ibid., 253.
112. Ibid., 248.
113. Ibid., 263-264. “Thus, even though the theme serves as an ironic counterpoint to the action, it does parallel the film’s rhythmic acceleration, but with a developmental expansion of texture, rather than an increase in tempo. (This kind of audio-visual relationship remains rare even today.)”
115. Ibid., 45-46.
This observed intent to create a correlation between the film’s rhythm and the music’s rhythm can be viewed even more broadly. Rather than simply examine the rhythmic alignment of repetitive and transitional gestures, this view can certainly also include Satie’s melodic fragments. Many of the musical montages transition from key area to key area with little reinforcement of the tonic, through cadence or melodic development. However, as has been observed in the rhythmic domain, so too can melodic and harmonic considerations guide the narration of the film. Incomplete scalar patterns (mm. 9-12, 53-60, 169-172) build intensity and give direction from one scene to the next, but lack the tonal resolution to consider them integral in any thematic sense (Figure 4.7). Conversely, the repetitive rhythmic gestures can sometimes stall the rhythmic motion, as in Figure 4.8, where the unvarying repetition creates a moment of stasis. Not only the rhythmic aspect, but also the undefined, cyclic tonal quality contribute to this perception. The moving eighth notes with the chromatic embellishment seem to be indicating C as a tonal center, but the pedal F and A undermine any true sense of resolution. It is through this rhythmic and tonal ambiguity that Satie is able to moderate and match the pace of the images in the film.

![Figure 4.7. Piano reduction, Cinéma, mm. 169-172.](image)
Satie’s penchant for borrowing melodies and supplying his own tunes continues from the ballet score into the film score. When the storyline of the film emerges as something more linear and traditional with the beginning of the funeral, Satie appropriately borrows from Chopin’s *Marche funèbre* from the second piano sonata (1837), seen in Figure 4.9.

This borrowing would be considered nothing more than a cultural reference to the then well known piece. However, Satie continues his transformation of the borrowed material by inserting his own short melodies (Figure 4.10). These melodies are placed within the 32 repetitive bars, giving variation to the same idea without straying from the original borrowed march (Figure 4.11). One of the phrases (mm. 205-208) is completely devoid of melodic content, so instead Satie retains the rhythmic character but expands the vertical sonority and alters the bass line. Through a simple manipulation of elements he takes the repetitive rhythmic motive from Chopin’s work and builds upon it, altering it only slightly to expand it into a passage of 32 measures, unified by the idea of the funeral march that the audience would already be familiar with.
Figure 4.10. Extracted melodic fragments, “Marche funèbre,” *Relâche*.

Marche Funèbre

189  *Plus lent*

195

201

207

Figure 4.11. Piano reduction, “Marche funèbre,” *Relâche*, mm. 189-212.
It is worth commenting on Satie’s compositional consistency throughout his life. Though his artistic influences may have changed, the musical mannerisms he developed early in his career remained with him through all of his works, simply manifesting themselves in different ways. An excellent example arises from one of his first published works, *Ogives* (1889), the opening of *Ogives No. 1* presented in figure 4.12. They were so named for the ogival arches found within the architecture of gothic cathedrals. He invokes this through the use of modally derived melodies, chordal doubling, notation without bar lines or meter, and stark dynamic contrasts. A simple melody is introduced, harmonized, then harmonized a second time, and finally the first harmonization is repeated (giving the pieces an overall ABCB structure).


In *Cinéma* this approach reappears in mm. 293-313. Though the majority of the score is comprised of repetitive rhythmic and melodic fragments, parts bear distinctive Satiean melodies. In this passage, a seven-measure phrase is introduced, one that is comparable to his *Ogives* though less distinctly modal. After the phrase’s initial introduction it is repeated with harmonization, and the third repetition embodies yet
another manifestation of the possibilities of the melodic idea, realized through harmony. Satie’s notes, presented in Figure 4.13, highlight the instrumentation for the orchestration, as well as make clear the phrasing of the odd seven-measure phrase in cut time. Gallez even notes the conflict between the meter and accent, how it “suggests triple meter, giving an ambivalence to the rhythmic pulse.”

Figure 4.13. Satie’s notes for Cinéma: Entr’acte with indications of orchestral scoring.


117 Volta, Erik Satie, 175.
Extramusical Characteristics

The musical elements presented up to this point in both Relâche and Cinéma, when analyzed simply as musical occurrences, would certainly add credit to the argument of Satie writing beyond his means. He has been dismissed as a composer who was unable to conform to the expectations of conservatory musicianship standards, and because of
this shortcoming, his music reflected his musical and academic failings. However, that judgement assumes that the music is considered independently of the ballet and film he created this music to be combined with. The Dada intent of the ballet is clearly reflected in Satie’s choice of musical idioms and melodic borrowings. The costumes of the dancers consisted of formal evening dress and the majority of the dancers emerged from among the audience. The absurdity and insult of the ballet towards the audience is blatant when the dancers strip themselves down to their undergarments during “Entrée de l’Homme” and “Les Hommes se dévêtissent.” Satie’s music masterfully matches the tone of irony and insult framed by the premise of the ballet, communicating these intentions through the music by juxtaposing elevated forms of art to contrast with music fragments and orchestral arrangements more suited for the music hall, rather than the ballet.

Cinéma likewise breaches the divide of the theater space and the cinema, the former considered entertainment for bourgeois audiences and the latter for uneducated masses. The piece filmed by Clair serves highly experimental and satirical purposes, beginning with a series of non-sequitur images and ending in a fantastical run-away funeral procession concluding with the deceased not even being deceased. The locations and objects contained within the film were easily recognizable to the audience; the introduction beginning on the roof of the theater where they were currently viewing the film; the funeral procession beginning in the Luna amusement park; the rooftop skyline

118. Whiting, Bohemian, 542-549.
119. Karine Bouchard, “Reconstructing the Theatre Place through the Cinematographic Presence: The Film Entr’acte on Stage” (paper presented at the annual conference for Space and Place, Mansfield College, Oxford, United Kingdom, September 3, 2012).
of Paris; a game of chess; a ballerina viewed from below. All of these things (and much more) when viewed in rapid succession of short montages creates a dizzying spectacle. It is for this mundane montage that Satie so masterfully creates a score to help guide the viewer through the array of visuals. His non-developmental musical montage matches the non-development of the film’s presentation of images, and short melodic ideas (explored in the *Marche funèbre*) are only introduced once the formal “plot” of the film begins with the death of Jean Börlin and his funeral procession. The synthesis between the music and the film are what imbue it with its unique aesthetic, defining it as a distinctly intermedia collaboration, rather than a simple musical narration.

### 4.3 Aesthetic Implications

All of these details bring us back to our original inquiry of how the novel joining of media helped to redefine the genre of the ballet, and by extension how Satie’s composing was impacted through this interaction. *Relâche* and *Cinéma: Entr’acte* were certainly novel in their approaches of combining media through the inclusion of a film intermission, traditionally meant for lower cultural forms of entertainment, with the usually esteemed high forms of dance and theater, manifested through the ballet. Satie’s personal aesthetic blended well with the endeavor, as can be seen from the reuse of some his earlier compositional practices (the harmonic elaboration as seen in the *Ogives*, the borrowing and incorporation of popular melodies).

Let us consider this work compared to Satie’s first ballet, *Parade*, which only seven years previously had turned out radically different based upon the Satie’s
collaboration with Picasso, Massine, and Cocteau. Their individual aesthetic contributions for *Parade* were largely pre-Dada, but it was the way in which they interacted during the collaboration that was similar to how *Relâche* and *Cinéma: Entr’acte* took shape. The nature of Satie’s musical contribution in both cases was influenced by both the mediums with which his music would ultimately be united, and also the aesthetic influences that the other mediums would have on his contribution.

The Dada aesthetic was prevalent in the works of Picabia, and, given how he largely determined the scenarios of the ballet and film, it stands to reason that his aesthetic would blend with the contributions of Satie, Börlin, and Clair. However, it is in the individual contributions that the ballet and film are truly defined. The personal artistry of Satie showed through in his integration and manipulation of high and low cultural signifiers through his music, as the cinematographic elements and techniques selected and manipulated by Clair likewise reflected his own interpretation of Picabia’s Dadaist scenario. For this reason *Relâche* and *Cinéma: Entr’acte* truly are an extension of Satie’s intermedial and collaborative aesthetic drive, one we have seen demonstrated throughout each of the works we have examined.
CHAPTER 5

LE NOMBRIL INTERLOPE AND PAS DE LA CHICORÉE FRISÉE

5.1 Conception

The final two works to be examined in this study predate Relâche and Cinéma: Entr’acte by several years and were not created by Satie. Le nombril interlope and Pas de la chicorée frisée were both composed by the Dada poet and artist Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes in 1920. This places their creation during the most active period of the Parisian Dada movement when a number of publications, such as Littérature, Z, Cannibale, and Dadaphone, brought Dadaist creations to the public. However, “publication alone was not enough; it was almost a priority that they perform in public.” Then why consider these particular pieces in contrast to the intermedial collaborations that have been the focus of this study so far? Though these works were not created by Satie his artistic and aesthetic influence and manner of creative integration can be detected within them.

Satie’s particular views of intermedial creation were felt on contemporaries as can be seen in several cases. For example, the Belgian-Surrealist writer and artist (and aspiring composer) E.L.T Mesens (1903-1971) inscribed “Aan Erik Satie” at the top of the fourth piece in his Vier composities voor Klavier after meeting the Satie for the first time in person. Satie’s amicable nature led to his self-introduction to Man Ray at the latter’s first Paris exhibition on 3 December 1921. The serendipitous meeting resulted in

123. E.L.T. Mesens, Vier composities voor Klavier, score, 1921, private collection.
the creation of *Le Cadeau* that same evening, Man Ray’s “first Dada object in France.”

It would be Man Ray who would dub Satie “the only musician who had eyes” and Satie himself stated “painters... taught me the most about music.”

Ribemont-Dessaignes knew Satie personally and wrote:

I knew Satie [during the major Dada period] and had many conversations with him and remember an amazing man both brilliant and spirited, with a thousand magic arrows hidden by his beard, killing particularly cruel music critics of which he had an implacable hatred... Satie is a contemporary man who wielded humor of the most curious, the most caustic, and the most poetic kinds at the same time, that is to say, making use of unusual transpositions to make them fantastic. One must only read the titles of his compositions, especially the indications noted in the margins, to emphasize the expression to give.

The works of Satie mentioned thus far were meant as an examination into the influence of aesthetic movements on intermedial works; that is, visual, dramatic, and literary modes of creation and how they may have influenced Satie’s music. And so, the purpose of examining these two piano pieces by Ribemont-Dessaignes is to consider the third analytical comparison proposed in the beginning of this thesis; how aesthetic influences could act in a reciprocal nature, or how Satie’s influences impacted the works of artists he was in close contact with.

*Pas de la chicorée frisée* and *Le nombril interlope* were written for two Dada events held for the public. These events came about under Tristan Tzara’s direction after an increased amount of public attention from rumors about the smaller, private events the

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movement had previously held. The first event was held on 27 March 1920 at the Maison de l’Œuvre, rue de Clichy, where an assortment of dramatic skits, readings, and musical performances took place.¹²⁸ A copy of the program listing Pas de la chicorée frisée and other works by Tzara, Éluard, Aragon, and Soupault is reproduced in Appendix B: Figure 1. The second event, Festival Dada, took place on 26 May 1920 at the Salle Gaveau, where Ribemont-Dessaignes premiered two new musical works, Le nombril interlope and Danse frontière.¹²⁹ The second musical piece performed at this gathering, Danse frontière, has unfortunately been lost and is only recalled through the program (Appendix B: Figure 2) and its mention amongst Ribemont-Dessaignes’ other artistic works.¹³⁰

5.2 Analytical Components

Medium and Genre

The medium of these two works, when considered with the previous works examined in this study, seems almost traditional by comparison. Both are compositions for piano, Pas de la chicorée frisée for solo piano and Le nombril interlope for piano four hands. They contain no satirical prefaces, no accompanying illustrations, and no direct explicit dramatic contexts (such as a ballet or theater work). They are medially restricted purely to the realms of performance interpretation and reception as a sonic event.

There are, however, several traits that distinguish these pieces from traditional piano literature and help define their genre. The titles chosen for each of the pieces are

¹²⁸ Durozoi, History of the Surrealist, 11-12.
¹²⁹ Ibid., 12-13.
¹³⁰ Ribemont-Dessaignes, Manifestes, Poemes, Articles, Projects, 146-147.
Dada in nature, with no aesthetic or programmatic significance. This practice was typical of naming Dada creations; sometimes the names were meant as commentary against contemporary artistic fancies, or named to mock the idea of “serious” art, or sometimes simply to invoke reactions from consumers of art. A visual parallel can be seen in Ribemont-Dessaignes’ 1920 painting, _Grand musicien_ (Figure 5.1), where the title and text within the painting seemingly signify things totally unrelated to music or the visual representation of the work. (The phrases translate to “Sugar diabetes,” “Continuity of dissolution,” and “He sneezes from the spider’s pepper”).131 Ribemont-Dessaignes further achieves this genre defining effect in his piano pieces through the use of stylistic borrowing and exaggerated uses of musical elements, such as irregular time signatures, rhythmic complexities, and notational oddities.

Another aesthetic manifestation of Dadaism through this medium arises with how the music was composed. The musical material was derived from a “pocket roulette with a dial on which were inscribed notes, semitone by semitone as dial numbers.”

Ribemont-Dessaignes stated, “Noting the moves [of the dial], I created my melody to the

desired length: it could be infinite. So much for the horizontal direction. For the vertical is the same method that was responsible for presiding over the choice of chords.” He was clearly aware of the creative potential this type of creation held for Dada works, stating, “the continuation of this formula would certainly constitute a new form of musical art. What art is stronger than anti-art? Sent to the cellar, it comes down the chimney.”

The means of composition seems like an early precursor to Cage’s aleatoric methods, but Ribemont-Dessaignes’s manipulation of the random pitches keep the works from being an absolute creation of chance. Though he randomly generated the melodic and harmonic material for these works he mentioned nothing about how he determined elements such as register, rhythm, or meter for the work, leaving these areas open for analysis.

**Musical Characteristics**

The scores used in this study are the original manuscripts, provided graciously by Dieter Beijersbergen. The score for *Pas de la chicorée frisée* exists in its entirety, but the first four pages of *Le nombril interlope* have sadly been separated from the score. In preparing the following figures I have taken care to match them to the original scores as closely as possible, noting Ribemont-Dessaignes’ particular notational quirks when it comes to details such as redundant accidentals, peculiar beaming, and stem direction.

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133. Ibid., 42.

134. This has been confirmed from E-mail correspondences between Peter Beijersbergen and James Nice dating from 22 February 2007. Measure numbers indicated in the excerpts of *Le nombril interlope* in this study will be numbered from the beginning of page five, the first page of the remaining music.
Musical Characteristics of *Pas de la chicorée frisée*

The first work used in the Dada soirées was *Pas de la chicorée frisée*. The piece opens with a short introduction consisting of repeated consecutive half-steps and a short progression of highly dissonant chords. This is followed by the first occurrence within this piece that could be described as being melodic in nature (Figure 5.2). The figure consists of the solo melody line, moving primarily in eighth notes, and a four-bar ostinato accompaniment, moving by quarter note. The melody consists of multiple repetitions of the same pitches; in the case of the F♯ it is repeated twenty-four times, something statistically inconceivable if Ribemont-Dessaignes were operating strictly from the results of his roulette. We can deduce then that he used the roulette to randomly determine pitch order, but used his discretion when it came to repetition and register within the music. The accompaniment likewise adheres to repetition in order to provide the dissonant accompaniment. The emphasis between F or C on strong beats and the half-step B and C on the weak give the impression of a traditional accompaniment. It is regular in meter, but the unresolved half step (continued from the introduction) against the melody results in an imbalanced, dissonant, and somewhat confusing start to the work. The only reoccurring rhythmic gesture within the melody is in m. 13 and then later in m. 22. The ascending minor sixth draws the two measures for comparison, perhaps as phrase endings, but this does little to help associate the structure of this melody with any conventional organization.
The lack of clear phrasing in Ribemont-Dessaignes’ random melodies does not negate his use of musical elements to convey Dada aesthetic ideals. The incessant repetition of the F♯ in the melody and dissonant accompanimental figure could be his use
of musical elements to convey an anti-artistic sentiment. His musical background, summarized briefly by Franck Jotterand, indicates that he was inclined towards challenging musical conventions:

Ribemont Dessaignes, as we know, had studied music since childhood. He composed symphonies, quartets, operas, "carried away by an irresistible current towards modern music, Wagner, Franck, Debussy, Ravel." His opinions scandalized his family. He soon developed a passion for the Ballets Russes. But he was led to a radical critique of the art of music and its means in his conversations with the Duchamp brothers. Why always laws of taste, aesthetics? How to proceed? By the use of random, carefree consonances or dissonances, ranges, etc.135

Another peculiar instance involving a randomly generated melody occurs shortly after our first example. Figure 5.4 begins with another accompanimental figure, now moving in eighth-notes. This continues the half-step dissonance between B and C, while alternating on the offbeats to the D♭ below. When the melody begins, it also is moving in a faster, sixteenth-note subdivision. What is worth noting here is Ribemont-Dessaignes’ unorthodox beaming, as in m. 42 where he segments between the sixteenth notes of beat two (A♯) and the sixteenth notes of the offbeat (F♯). A glance at the rest of the figure shows that these beaming choices continue throughout, not only separating in odd places, but also combining, as in the unaccompanied sixteenth notes of mm. 50-54, which act as closing material and transition into something new.

It is not clear why he chose to divide or combine his beams as such, but it seems worthwhile to consider as these practices are consistent through both pieces. An initial thought is that these beamings are intended to show phrasing, giving an indication to the performer how to shape these randomly generated melodies. Through both pieces Ribemont-Dessaignes rarely uses articulation markings and never uses slurs. The second, and less convincing thought, is that as an amateur musician he beamed the pitches according to his own logic, perhaps guided by the random generation of the material. A third interpretation, which does not necessarily run contrary to either of the previous, is that this is once again an expression of the Dada aesthetic in music, only this time through the visual medium of the score. Ribemont-Dessaignes’ scripting is precise and
neat; though it is not stylized and representative like Satie’s *Sports et divertissements* it still contains the ability to communicate through the deliberate choices in notation.

The form of *Pas de la chicorée frisée* is not dictated by any conventions of large-scale form, but does retain a semblance of being constructed in a sectional fashion. The first ten measures of the piece end with a series of chords that bear a distinct cadential quality due to the dynamics and emphasis through the change in performance indication (“sec”), seen in Figure 5.5. As was discussed, this short introduction is devoid of any melodic material, but then moves into the melody presented in Figure 5.2. This section continues in a similar fashion, with randomly generated melodic material until a literal repeat of mm. 9-10 occurs at mm. 38-39. Once again, the finality of the gesture seems to be announcing an end, but is harmonically unstable enough to warrant a continuation. Following this repeated material at mm. 38-39 the piece moves to the second section of the piece, which we have examined in Figure 5.4. This section bears similarities with the first (the accompanimental alternation focusing on the half-step B and C, randomly generated melodic material) but the increase in the rhythmic subdivision as well as the greater rhythmic intricacy of the melodic material denote a distinct change from the first section.

![Figure 5.5. Chordal cadential gesture, *Pas de la chicorée frisée*, mm. 9-10.](image-url)
The reduction in texture in mm. 50-54, seen in Figure 5.4 heralds the end of the second section and beginning of a third (Figure 5.5). This is apparent from the unusual decimal time signature (\( \frac{4}{5} \)) along with the use of a varying accompanimental left hand. This section is the longest and most involved of the piece, consisting of a number of minute developments throughout. Ribemont-Dessaignes begins with the simple rhythmic alternation of quarter notes and eighth notes, but as this section progresses the melodic line transforms into a stream of consistent eighth notes. His manipulation of meter and rhythm continues; beginning in m. 67 he adds polyrhythmic third voice to the bass in \( \frac{9}{8} \). It is unclear if he forgot to bracket the twelve eighth notes of m. 70, because shortly after in m. 82 he begins to consistently juxtapose twelve bracketed eighth notes with the \( \frac{9}{8} \) and original \( \frac{4}{5} \). This third section sees an overall progression in rhythmic complexity before it transitions to the fourth section.
Figure 5.6. Decimal time signature and rhythmic development, *Pas de la chicorée frisée*, mm. 55-70.

The fourth section begins with another stark change in meter, this time to $\frac{20}{4}$, but lasting only two measures (Figure 5.6). The choice of meter could simply be to emphasize the possibility for another convoluted and cumbersome meter (in the spirit of Dada), but the brief chordal, primarily homophonic voices with a scarceness of bar lines seem reminiscent of Satie’s “Choral inappetissant,” where he was invoking Bach chorales. These two measures follow no recognizable voice leading, with only the left
hand moving in a stepwise fashion. The dissonance of the chords indicates that this would be the “vertical” application of Ribemont-Dessaignes’ roulette wheel.

![Figure 5.7. Homophonic “chorale” texture, Pas de la chicorée frisée, mm. 91-92.](image)

Immediately following this “chorale,” is our next brief section marked “Temps de valse” (Figure 5.7). There is no written change in time signature, but from the written indication and change in note values it is clearly in a triple meter. This waltz invocation lasts a brief five measures before moving into the concluding section of the piece, ending just as it begun by emphasizing the half-step relationship of B and C (Figure 5.8). This brief allusion to a waltz seems to be an accompanimental preparation for a new section, but is humorously cut short by the end of the piece. These invocations of style, an inadvertent chorale and a woefully incomplete waltz, are akin to Satie’s uses of popular music within his works (though not to the same level of musical sophistication). The difference is that in these pieces they are meant to serve more aesthetic ends, mocking and parodying established musical styles. A brief summary of the different sections of the piece along with their defining characteristics is provided in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1. Sectional form and characteristics of *Pas de la chicorée frisée*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>mm. 1-10</td>
<td>Half-step dissonance, “sec” chordal cadence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>mm. 11-39</td>
<td>Alternating accompaniment, half-step dissonance, sonic syncopation, randomly generated melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>mm. 40-54</td>
<td>Alternating accompaniment, half-step dissonance, randomly generated melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>mm. 55-90</td>
<td>(\frac{45}{4}) meter, repetitive bass, polyrhythmic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>mm. 91-92</td>
<td>(\frac{20}{4}) meter, invocation of homophonic texture (“chorale”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>mm. 93-97</td>
<td>“Temps de valse,” invocation of waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda/Closing</td>
<td>mm. 98-103</td>
<td>Half-step dissonance, dissonant final chord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Musical Characteristics of *Le nombril interlope***

The second composition by Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Le nombril interlope*, contains many of the same compositional and musical traits from the first work. As mentioned, the first four pages of the piece have been separated and lost, making an examination of the complete work impossible. However, the work for four hands still contains plenty of
material to analyze. Figure 5.9 makes readily apparent that Ribemont-Dessaignes continued his use of “random, carefree consonances and dissonances.”

The primo part begins with a jarring use of the half step and then takes on a repetitive accompanimental function from mm. 2-5. During those measures the secondo

Figure 5.10. Carefree use of consonance and dissonance material, *Le nombril interlope*, mm. 1-9.

part plays a short phrase consisting of randomly generated pitches. From mm. 6-9 the
primo and secondo parts switch their roles, with the primo playing a melodic figure in
eoctaves while the secondo elaborates on the accompanimental aspect with a chromatic,
embellished bass line. Now that both parts have expressed a melodic and
accompanimental functions, the next measures, mm.10-11 (Figure 5.10), are without
melodic material. Ribemont-Dessaignes uses a syncopated alternation in the primo part
(much like the one seen in Figure 5.3) only he layers the material with a continuation of
the dotted chromatic gesture in the secondo part, top line. Again, this repetition and
layering is used to create a brief sonic interlude that is devoid of any melodic material.

![Syncopated alternation and chromatic gesture](image)

Figure 5.11. Syncopated alternation and chromatic gesture, *Le nombril interlope* mm. 10-11.137

Figure 5.11 shows a return to material derived from a randomly generated melody.

This brief passage is utilized once again in mm. 44-47, but the primo part takes on the
accompanimental role while the secondo part inherits the rhythmic character of the

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137. In the secondo piano, right hand, note the inconsistent labeling of the F#. It is not made
explicit if Ribemont-Dessaignes intended for all pitches to be performed as written and simply assumed the
F# following would be adjusted by the performer, rather than notating each accidental. This could be
intentional, simply because the work was never meant for publication, or it could have been an oversight on
the part of Ribemont-Dessaignes, as he was not a “professional” musician. The remaining examples in this
chapter also contain such instances where it is not necessarily clear whether the omitted accidentals are
intentional or an oversight.
melody, but alters the specific pitches. These four-measure passages in both cases are distinct from the material that preceds and follows each instance, so although they serve a unifying quality in terms of their repetition, they also are transitory, merely passing from one larger musical section to another. Measures 21-23 are also unique because the accompaniment of the secondo part continues, slightly altered and harmonically embellished, leading up to a single measure marked “Passion” and emphasized with a crescendo. The rhythmic and melodic character is repeated nowhere else in the piece, and the following measure abruptly shifts to a new set of musical characteristics. The simplicity of the three pitches played in octaves between parts is somewhat humorous, considering how this is the only measure in the piece marked with any kind of emotionally representative performance indicator, perhaps a joke aimed generally at expressivity in music.
Figure 5.12. “Passion” passage, *Le nombril interlope*, mm. 16-24.

The section following this “passion” gesture is a markedly different idea from the previous melody and accompanimental section. Measures 26-27 (Figure 5.12) show a rhythmically alternating (presumably randomly chosen) set of fifteen pitches followed by a dissonant glissando. Though these measures are simply conceived, Ribemont-Dessaignes again reuses a compositional device from *Pas de la chicorée frisée*. In a series of rhythmic developments he takes this heavy, lurching motive and continues to add rhythmic and harmonic layers which naturally develop and build the intensity of the section. Figure 5.13 shows a mild elaboration with the use of a duple octave ostinato in the primo part and a sub-octave doubling in the lower secondo part. Figure 5.14 shows the culminating measure with each line independently elaborating ideas originally
presented in Figure 5.12. Not shown are additional glissandi Ribemont-Dessaignes uses, also expanded through the addition of more goal pitches and wider registers.

Figure 5.13. Original statement of random pitch alternations, *Le nombril interlope*, mm. 26-27.

Figure 5.14. Elaborated statement of random pitch alternations, *Le nombril interlope*, m. 31.

Figure 5.15. Multilayered statement of random pitch alternations, *Le nombril interlope*, m. 32.
This idea of elaboration and interplay between the primo and secondo piano parts is further evidenced through the alternation of successive phrases. Figure 5.15 demonstrates two four-measure phrases, where once again the randomly generated pitches of the melody are the only true departure between the phrases. The melodic rhythms of mm. 48-51 and mm. 52-55 are identical. The accompaniment once again focuses on a quasi tonic-dominant scale degree relationship with a dissonant harmony above the base line (much like the relationship presented in Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.16. Contrasting melodic phrases with identical rhythms, *Le nombril interlope*, mm. 48-55.

Returning to the idea of the literal repetition of notes, let us consider Figure 5.16; the secondo part providing us with a dissonant, alternating ostinato. In the primo part we are presented with metrically bracketed subdivisions of various pitches. Normally this
would imply an acute amount of precision on the part of the performer, given the variety of the divisions presented by the brackets. However, this presentation is also marked by the indication of “approximativement,” or approximately. The precisely notated subdivisions paired with the almost neglectful performance marking indicates something beyond the score to the aesthetic of the Dada movement. Like the “passion” indication from Figure 5.11, this juxtaposition of opposites conveys a certain ambivalence towards established musical practices, both incorporating and satirizing their characteristics.

Figure 5.17. Exact notation with “Approximativement” performance marking, Le nombril interlope, mm. 57-67.

Table 5.2 gives a general summation of the different sections of Le nombril interlope along with the characteristics which shape these sections and define the aesthetic of the work. Because the first four pages of the score are unaccounted for, I
present this as a preliminary investigation rather than try to comment on organization of the work as a whole.

### Table 5.2. Sectional form and characteristics of *Le nombril interlope*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm. 1-5</td>
<td>Emphasis of half step, alternating accompanimental figures, randomly generated melodic line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>mm. 6-16</td>
<td>Chromatic and rhythmic accompaniment with slight variations, sonic interlude with syncopation, syncopated melody presented in octaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>mm. 17-24</td>
<td>Melody with registral shifts, slight variation in the accompaniment, “Passion” gesture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>mm. 25-33</td>
<td>Rhythmic alternation, glissandi, rhythmic development, polyrhythm, layering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>mm. 34-43</td>
<td>Continued octave ostinato, chordal syncopation in secondo part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’</td>
<td>mm. 44-47</td>
<td>Modified accompaniment from C, identical melodic rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>mm. 48-72</td>
<td>Alternation of melodic phrases and accompaniment, elaboration and overlapping of phrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>mm. 73-102</td>
<td>Dissonant ostinato, precise subdivisions with “approximativement” marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>mm. 103-114</td>
<td>Summation and quotation of previous parts, alternating phrases, precise subdivisions, ostinato accompaniment, syncopated melodic ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>mm. 115-118</td>
<td>Literal repetition of whole step with dissonant conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Extramusical Characteristics

The pieces themselves do not call for the incorporation of distinctly non-musical elements. However, the context and purpose of their creation does go beyond the realm of strict musical aesthetic consideration. Ribemont-Dessaignes believed that his
compositions and means of creating them could “constitute a new form of musical art.”
His quasi-aleatoric methods were meant as a way to counteract the seriousness and self-
indulgence that music as a “high” art had established for itself. Elements of Dada
doctrine can be seen in the way he uses performance indicators as a means of satirizing
the material being portrayed, or by the musical invocation of a short waltz.

Ribemont-Dessaignes’ means of elaboration and interplay in the music also have a
distinctly visual quality to them. Beginning with a simple conceptual idea he continues to
layer and elaborate upon it until in the music it became something cacophonous and
complex. To compare this to one of his earlier pre-Dada paintings titled *Silence* we see
his mechanical depiction is derived of many overlapping and interlocking parts, giving no
emphasis to any particular part, much like the musical layers of Figure 5.5 or 5.14. It is
also clear that *Silence*, with its vibrant colors and angular, distinguished shapes, is
formally and conceptually anything but silent.
It is clear from Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes’ biography and his artistic creations that he, too, was partial to the idea of incorporating aesthetic ideals across different forms of media. He believed he was being proactive in the inclusion of musical creations in the events intended to disrupt and cause controversy amongst the Parisian
artistic community. However, “Dada disregarded music and I was the only one to involve it in the movement.”\textsuperscript{138} His efforts and open-mindedness towards intermedial influences were not accepted as a legitimate means of expressing the Dada aesthetic.

It is unfortunate that the movement so shunned the expansion of their ideals into the realm of music, especially because their judgements were based on personal taste or mere social vendettas. Ultimately it would be these disagreements about what constituted the “new spirit” that would bring about the demise of the movement. “The Dadaists mocked a lot of music. André Breton hated it. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes quickly abandoned composing. He later wrote penetrating essays on Varèse, Stravinsky, and contemporary music.”\textsuperscript{139} What could have been a promising development and rebirth for the Dada movement in Paris was ironically cut short by a lack of vision its participants had about what constituted authentic anti-art.

\textsuperscript{138} Ribemont-Dessaignes, \textit{Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes}, 40.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 43.
CHAPTER 6
SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Intermedial Synthesis

My goal, in exploring these four works by Satie and two piano pieces by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, was not merely to focus on the musical framework in which these artists were operating. A truly comprehensive analysis of these works requires great care in considering the intermedial, multifaceted nature of the works. “Satie’s is an exceedingly fragile art form, a delicate interweaving of individual strands of artistic experience suspended in exquisite balance, and any attempt to define this elusive art is like trying to dissect the proverbial butterfly.”\(^{140}\) Though this thesis falls short of comprehensively defining Satie’s art form, and only referentially considered Ribemont-Dessaignes works as a contemporary means of comparison, it is my hope that the emphasis placed upon the consideration of the artistic works as whole prevailed. Analyzing a dissected butterfly does not instill a conception or understanding of the “individual strands of artistic experience.” One needs to consider its color, size, shape, past and current environment, mechanics of how the butterfly moves, etc.

Satie and Ribemont-Dessaignes were creating culturally contemporary and referential works born out of a set of similar aesthetic influences. “All musical contemplation, of any period of musical history, has value only, or mainly, if it represents a true reflection of the creative tendencies of the time.”\(^{141}\) Not giving credence to the role

\(^{140}\) Gillmor, “Musico-Poetic Form,” 2.

\(^{141}\) Mann, “Reaction and Continuity,” 39.
that these influences played in the creation of their works means that little (if any) aesthetic or analytical meaning would be possible.

**Medium**

We have encountered a diverse assortment of media in the pieces examined through this study; dance, painting, illustration, film, text, music as both a visual medium and aural experience. This list is by no means comprehensive and has been constructed based on the works examined in this thesis. The nature of collaboration sometimes constitutes levels of hierarchy, and arguments can be made (and have been) for the dominance each contribution, and therefore medium, plays within the presentation of the work to the public. However, rather than view these mediums as competing components to define a work there should be a level of comprehension where these aspects complement one another.

**Genre**

The genres discussed have been highly specific to the works examined, from the integrated “album” of *Sports et divertissements* to the “instantanéiste” ballet *Relâche*. These genres are also not absolute definitions of the works, but rather conveniences in determining a means of discussing the artistic works as a whole. Determining a way to define these genres was influenced by three main factors: the mediums involved; the act of collaboration (either direct or not); and the aesthetic climate (the overall cultural and artistic values emphasized at the time). Each of these factors can be weighed differently depending on the amount of available historical information available, and even then any conclusions are somewhat conjectural because we, as analysts, are removed from the era.
in which these works were created. However, these are still pertinent questions to consider, especially when considering the ramifications of music interacting with other mediums of art (and visa versa).

Robert Hatten introduces the idea of intertextuality in music studies concisely by focusing on issues contained within music and amongst musical works; that is, through the examination of a composer’s use of style and strategy in their musical works in relation to other musical works (or “texts”). When briefly discussing *Histoire du soldat*, he comments that Stravinsky’s “metaphorical attachments to earlier styles” results in a parodistic intertextuality that “is not an absorption of material and/or accompanying associations into a new context, but rather a collision of two contexts, generating a third meaning from the interaction.”"142 This intertextual relation pertains specifically to Stravinsky’s stylistic incorporations, but the key point is the resulting “collision of two contexts, generating a third meaning from the interaction.” Let us consider expanding intertextual associations beyond purely musical works, as the groundwork of this thesis has proposed. Intertextual connections between music, language, plastic arts, and the genres they create also possess the capacity for intertextual relationships. Matters of style, strategy, and their influence within and amongst mediums are critical to consider if any level of comprehension is meant to be drawn between typically disparate analytical forms.

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Musical Characteristics

In each of the pieces examined instances of musical borrowing and quotation played a key role. Satie joined high and low forms of musical culture in his compositional practices based on his personal experiences with popular music as well as drawing on his formal musical training. In this way he conceived of his music as more of a plastic, tangible artistic material, making his musical creations more fitting of the avant-garde trends of the early twentieth century. This is why critics analyzing Satie’s music have been so apt to label him a “Cubist,” “Dada,” or “Surreal” composer, because of his willingness to embrace and incorporate nonmusical arts. Musical repetition, ostinati, collage, and quotation were all merely compositional tools to conceive of his music as a novel application that still fit within the medium of music.

Conversely, Ribemont-Dessaignes’ openness as an artist working in nonmusical mediums gave him the perspective to do as Satie did. He appropriated his musical knowledge and adapted it to his primary style of artist output; stated another way, his works remained within the realm of Dada aesthetics but the medium went from his traditional visual form to the musical. Though this process did not involve collaboration between individuals, it did require, in a sense, an artistic collaboration with himself only he translated the genre of the works (Dada, parodistic, anti-art) from his typical medium of expression, the visual, to music.

Extramusical Characteristics

The extramusical characteristics involved in Satie’s and Ribemont-Dessaignes’ works were simply a means to examine the extramusical aspects of the works in a
separate (though not entirely removed) context. We saw that these characteristics arrived
as part of the works in largely two ways: first, there was the personal impetus to seek a
means of expressing something beyond “pure” music. Satie’s calligraphy and narrative
text of *Sports et divertissements* acted as a personal commentary on his views of the role
of the performer and how the work should be received. The textual references to cultural
activities build a level of understanding that enhances the music. This could also be
understood through his musical quotations, though those acted on a more blatant musical-
acoustic level. Ribemont-Dessaignes likewise adopted unorthodox performance
indicators that commented simultaneously on how the work should be performed as well
as on the nature of his compositions within the avant-garde movement (the “passion” and
“approximativement” passages).

The second way that extramusical characteristics appear in these works was
through the collaborative process. Indirect extramusical influences could come in the
form of sources of inspiration, such as Martin’s illustrations, or Picasso’s costumes.
Direct extramusical influences resulted from the process of combining literal parts of a
whole, such as Cocteau’s desire to insert realistic “ear deceivers” into the sonic makeup
of *Parade*, or Satie creating a coordinated musical score to match the visual elements laid
out in Clair’s *Cinéma* film. Both the indirect and direct forms of extramusical
characteristics ultimately make the act of creating a part of the whole dependent on
another. As was described before, this does not immediately imply a hierarchy amongst
the mediums involved, but rather suggests that the influences between the mediums are
more apparent during the process of collaboration.
6.2 Conclusion

The mutual attraction between Satie and contemporary artistic movements have been noted in multiple writings about him, garnering broad statements such as “Dada might have been made for Satie.” These retroactive and hyperbolic assumptions are convenient in characterizing and contextualizing the way in which artists, such as Satie or Ribemont-Dessaignes, operated when creating or composing, but ultimately undermine the intertextual relationship between artistic mediums. The fact remains that the works examined in this study are defined in their complexity through the interaction between the mediums, while the artists who worked in those mediums used this interaction, or “collision” as Hatten puts it, to generate art that does not so categorically fit within a single definition of medium or genre.

APPENDIX A:

MOVEMENTS FROM *SPORTS ET DIVERTISSEMENT*
La Comédie italienne

A la capitaine

Scaramouche explique les beautés de l'état militaire.

On y est fortement malin, dit-il. On fait peur aux civils.

Et les galantes aventures! Et le reste! Quel beau métier!

Erik SATIE
29 Avril 1914

Appendix A: Figure 2. “La Comédie italienne,” Sports et divertissement.
Appendix A: Figure 3. “Le Tango (perpétual),” Sports et divertissement.
Appendix A: Figure 4. “Le Flirt,” Sports et divertissement.
Appendix A: Figure 5. “Le Bain de mer,” *Sports et divertissement.*
Appendix B: Figure 1. Program for “Manifestation Dada” on 27 March 1920.
Appendix B: Figure 2. Program for “Manifestation Dada” on 27 March 1920.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

JOURNAL ARTICLES


BOOKS


**MUSICAL SCORES**


THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS


AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS


PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS


_____.. Pas de la chicorée frisée. Score, 1920, private collection.