

Erik Satie's *Socrate* (1918), Myths of Marsyas, and *un style dépouillé*

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It is almost easier to say what Erik Satie's *Socrate* is not rather than what it is. It has proved enigmatic since its première, when the audience giggled at its conclusion, confused by the strange sincerity of the work, especially since it was written by a composer known for his humorous piano pieces (Harding 1975, 183). Scholars have defined *Socrate*'s clear, unadorned musical lines as modernist, abstract, and even quasi-socialist and minimalist (see Danuser 2004, 261–62; Shattuck 1968, 168; Fulcher 2005, 146–51; and Wilson 2007, 215–16). The work also defies traditional categorizations of genre: Satie designated *Socrate* not as an oratorio, a symphony, or an opera, but as a *drame symphonique*, scored for chamber orchestra and four sopranis. Satie envisioned the work as incidental music for the reading of Plato. The sopranis sing selections in French from Plato's dialogues on the life of Socrates in a detached style, as if reading. *Socrate* eschews the grand theatricality of the opera stage in favor of the intimacy of the salon. *Socrate* resists spectacle.

Like Stravinsky and Cocteau's neoclassical opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927), *Socrate* presents an idealized Apollonian Greek antiquity favoring restraint, simplicity, and detachment through despectacularization and the neoclassical *style dépouillé* (the "stripped-down style"). *Socrate* does not present Plato's text, or the life of Socrates, for that matter, as it was; the text is offered as a white and pure idealized past. But Satie's restrained classicism in *Socrate* is not just another ode to the noble founders of Western civilization, their democratic ideals, and their dedication to philosophy, as this essay will show. Despite its staid affect, light female voices, despectacularization, and spare accompaniment, *Socrate* hints at a violence lurking under the surface of Socrates's peaceful martyrdom. Satie's setting not only celebrates the martyred philosopher, but offers an alternative reading of Socrates's life and death that emphasizes the violent and painful sacrifices underlying musical neoclassicism. The gruesome myth of Apollo and Marsyas, evoked throughout the work, endows the stripped-down aesthetic with menace. Satie strips away (silences) voices, philosophical arguments, characters, and accompaniments to produce a work that ends in a raw, unsettled finale. Satie's process of *dépouillement* takes an unexpected turn at the end of the work, when, after the death of Socrates, we find that

we are no longer listening to a work stripped of artifice but a work stripped to the bone. In its treatment of violence and stripping of ornament, *Socrate* helps reveal the darker side of Apollonian neoclassicism.

In arguing that underneath the placid, “stripped-down” style of *Socrate* there lurks a hidden violence, this study does not focus on Satie’s compositional process, documented in his notebooks; instead, the article examines *Socrate*’s performance history and the creation of the work’s libretto, which the composer completed before sketching his musical ideas.¹ Satie’s novel selection and setting of the text is critical to my reading. I examine how Satie reinterprets the violent myth of Marsyas and Apollo in the first movement, and how he ruminates on Socrates’s dying words in the last movement. Understanding the ideas and events that led to the creation of Satie’s enigmatic masterpiece allows us to view *Socrate*’s portrayal of Plato’s dialogues as part of a project of *dépouillement*, a neoclassical aesthetic that sought to strip down musical material in favor of an ascetic aesthetic uniting musical and moral Hellenism. My reading of *Socrate* allows us to reexamine the early twentieth-century *style dépouillé* and to place *Socrate* at the center of debates on Socrates, Hellenism, and morality.

“White and Pure as Antiquity”: *Socrate* and French Hellenism

In *The Frail Social Body: Pornography, Homosexuality, and Other Fantasies in Interwar France*, a study of French society after the humiliating defeat in the Franco–Prussian war, Carolyn Dean paints a vivid picture of a society in crisis. As Dean explains, to buoy citizens’ moral character, the conservative French government of the day sought to crack down on vice and urged the promotion of “classical” art and morals (Dean 2000, 34). The government heralded French Classicism (*ancien régime*, and Revolutionary) as heir to the Greco–Roman tradition and invoked Hellenism in its myriad guises to symbolically reunite a defeated and injured France with its great past.² The moral crisis deepened through the decades leading up to the Great War and throughout the period the government routinely urged a return to Gallic and Greco–Latin values to heal the humiliation and moral vice of society. As Glenn Watkins (2003, 96) explains, “During the war [World War I] the modernist Republican notion of classicism was premised largely upon the idea that Greece had bequeathed to France a legacy of individual liberty and that from Rome had come a veneration for the rule of law and republicanism. Combined, they had provided the foundation for the rational social order that stood at the very heart of the French Revolution, epitomized by the principles of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*.”

Neoroyalists hoped to return to the Hellenic and Latinate virtues of clarity and simplicity rather than the corrupting cosmopolitan, modern, and Germanic traditions (Fulcher 1999, 200).

Clarion calls for clarity and purity in French music sounded continually from the 1870s through the post–World War I period. As Scott Messing has argued, scholars and musicians, including Lalo, Coquard, Bruneau, Mithouard, Mauclair, and Cocteau, touted Latinate, Hellenic, and Gallic values of classicism, grace, naturalness, and simplicity in opposition to German excess (Messing 1991, 483–84). That these musical qualities could lead to such divergent works as Satie’s *Socrate* and Stravinsky’s *Octet* or *Oedipus Rex* demonstrates that the early composers contributing to neoclassicism had aesthetic and philosophical motivations beyond the rhetoric of simplicity and a return to nature.

From the very beginning, Satie wanted to ensure *Socrate* exhibited Hellenistic qualities of classical simplicity. Satie and his patron, the American expatriate Princesse Winnaretta Singer–Polignac (1865–1943), first met to discuss the possibility of a commission in the late summer of 1916 (Kahan 2003, 203).³ Work continued on the project through 1918 and resulted in a three–movement *drame symphonique* constructed out of texts from Plato’s dialogues that chronicle the life and death of Socrates. The first of *Socrate*’s three movements draws from Plato’s *Symposium* and paints a portrait of Socrates, comparing him to the satyr Marsyas. The second movement, taken from the *Phaedrus*, depicts a scene between the philosopher and his student walking along the banks of the Ilissus River in Athens. The final and longest movement consists of a long narration from the *Phaedo* retelling the last moments of Socrates in prison as he drinks his cup of hemlock, says a final prayer, and dies.

Satie’s first mention of *Socrate* appears in a letter to Valentine Gross from 1917 where he expresses his aesthetic aims for the piece: “I am afraid to ‘muck up’ this work, which I want to be white & pure as Antiquity” (Satie 2003, 273–74).⁴ Satie continually stressed the simplicity of the work throughout his letters and public writings. In 1918 he wrote to a friend, “It is a return to classical simplicity with a modern sensibility” (Satie 2003, 325).⁵ Before a performance of the work, Satie gave a short speech that he jotted down on the cover of the manuscript where he declared, “The aesthetic of the work, I pledge to clarity; simplicity accompanies it, directs it, that’s all” (see Volta 1979, 64).⁶

For Satie, “white and pure as Antiquity” seems to have meant setting Plato’s words simply: the text setting is syllabic in neatly arching vocal lines underpinned by repetitive yet unassuming accompanying figures. Each movement unfolds slowly and fluidly, without any chromatic flourishes or

67

p

Et n'es - tu pas aus - si jou - eur de flû - te?

p

mf

71

Oui sans dou - te, Et bien plus é - tonnant

p

pp

p

Example 1: Satie, *Socrate*, movement I, *Le Banquet*, mm. 67–74 (from Vocal Score [VS], p. 6).

ornament. Example 1, taken from the first movement of *Socrate*, is typical of Satie’s setting. The vocal line mostly moves stepwise, with occasional leaps (mostly octaves, fifths, and fourths). The accompaniment is cellular, comprised of simple repeating figures.

Satie renders this bare accompaniment and these unadorned vocal lines more “pure” and “white” by having female voices sing *en lisant* for male characters, which further abstracts the work, nullifying the mimetic potential of Plato’s text. The women sing the text as if they were reading from Plato’s text, not as if they were the actual characters in Plato’s drama; the listener cannot identify the female vocal lines with a male character. According to Alan Gillmor, “There can be no denying that the cool ‘white’ sound of the soprano voice more readily enhances the remote ‘antique’ flavor of *Socrate*” (Gillmor 1988, 220). By characterizing the soprano voice using Satie’s own adjectives (“white” and “antique”), Gillmor ascribes a certain purity to the female voice, which he believes Satie saw as crucial.

In the work’s early performance history, both Satie and Polignac preferred female voices (preferably four), minimal staging, and venues associated with *belles-lettres* rather than opera or drama. First readings of the work took place at private homes (the Princesse de Polignac’s and Jane Bathori’s) and always sung by women (see Orledge 1990, 317; Potter 2013,

303–305; and Bathori 1964, 238–39. See the appendix for a timeline of the composition and earliest performances of *Socrate*).⁷ In giving the singing roles to women, Satie was no doubt inspired by the Princesse’s original idea of three women reading Plato’s dialogues in ancient Greek, accompanied by Satie’s music. Here I emphasize not how *Socrate*’s female voices appealed to the Princesse de Polignac’s interests in Hellenism, but that these voices work to abstract and purge *Socrate* of dramatic representation in line with his “white and pure as antiquity” aesthetic. I have offered a queer reading of *Socrate* as a product of Polignac’s salon elsewhere (see Dorf 2007). Sung in homes, and at Adrienne Monnier’s left-bank bookshop, La Maison des Amis des Livres, the first performances emphasized the “white and pure as Antiquity” aesthetic, expressed as emotional detachment stripped of mimetic possibility and on Plato’s text, free of operatic embellishments, of spectacle and drama.

Choosing a Translation

Satie’s libretto similarly encodes both the proto-neoclassical disengagement with emotion and his aesthetics of whiteness and purity through the choice of translation and his manipulation of Plato’s writings. Two weeks after receiving the commission for *Socrate*, Satie wrote that he was “swimming in happiness” upon having settled on a translation of Plato’s text among the many French versions available in Paris. The composer took passages directly from Victor Cousin’s early nineteenth-century translation and artfully strung them together to create one flowing narrative.⁸ From Cousin’s thirteen volumes, Satie created three movements. He took material from three of Plato’s dialogues—*The Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo*—and maintained the original narrative sequence of the passages he selected.

The critic Alexis Roland-Manuel related how Satie settled on Victor Cousin’s translation:

Déjà les *Dialogues* de Platon le sollicitaient. A la version de Mario Meunier, que je lui recommandais, il préféra le texte de Victor Cousin, plus lourd, assez plat, disait-il, et par là-même mieux à son gré. Aux grands jours où les Ballets Russes nous éblouissaient de leur faste, il commençait à prêcher les moyens pauvres, ultime ressource de l’art dans un monde sans amour. Car ce faune saturnine nous proposait une ascèse. (Roland-Manuel 1952, 11)

Already, Plato’s *Dialogues* had called out to him. I recommended Mario Meunier’s version, but he preferred Victor Cousin’s text, which was, he said, heavier, and rather flat, and for those reasons better suited to his

taste. In the great days when the Ballets Russes were dazzling us with their spectacle, he began to preach poverty of material, art's ultimate resource in a world without love. For this saturnine faun proposed to us an asceticism.

Roland-Manuel's telling of the story seems to imply that Satie's choice of Cousin's translation is part of the same poetics of despectacularization we saw in the choice of female voices. A "flat" and "ascetic" Plato is positioned against the erotic "dazzling spectacle" of the Ballets Russes. One can imagine the vibrant orientalist costumes and acrobatic movement of Ballets Russes repertoire favorites that evoked exotic and/or ancient Eastern locales, such as *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Schéhérazade*, *Thamar*, *Cléopâtre*, *Le Dieu bleu*, and *Narcisse*. Roland-Manuel went even further, noting how this new aesthetic of poverty was needed in a "world without love," which most likely refers to the Great War (Roland-Manuel 1952, 11).⁹

If we compare Cousin's translation with Meunier's 1914 translation, we can better understand why Cousin's fits more closely with Satie's stripped-down aesthetic. In general, Cousin uses simpler language and sentence structures. His translation reads more easily and is more straightforward. Moreover, Satie may have preferred the ancient flavor of Cousin's almost seventy-five-year-old translation to Meunier's sumptuous prose. Socrates's famous final speech is one of the most revealing passages, where the two translators diverge in matters of style and even in terms of philosophical interpretation:

[Cousin:] Criton, nous devons un coq à Esculape; n'oubliez pas d'acquitter cette dette. (Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; do not forget to settle this debt.) (Plato 1822, 1:322)

[Meunier:] Criton, fit-il, nous sommes redevables d'un coq à Asclépios. Payez ma dette, et ne l'oubliez pas. (Crito, [he said], we are indebted of a cock to Asclepius. Pay my debt, and do not forget.) (Plato 1952, 273)

Cousin remains faithful to the original Greek first-person plural voice; moreover, Cousin's text displays a greater economy of words as compared with the verbose Meunier.¹⁰ Not only does Meunier personalize the debt ("payez *ma* dette"), but he also draws out Socrates's last words. The difference between settling "*this* debt" (Cousin) and "*my* debt" (Meunier) carries philosophical implications and invites distinct interpretations. The translations identify different beneficiaries of the sacrifice to Asclepius. For Meunier, it is Socrates who is about to die. For Cousin, Socrates's last words remain thoroughly ambiguous—the language implies that all people present at his death, or even the whole populace, could be in need of the sacrificial cock.

The implications of Cousin's translation of Socrates's final words permit a reading that extends the plight of Socrates to all characters in the drama, and even further, to all listeners of *Socrate*. In a note, Cousin explained that this debt is owed in "recognition of his [Socrates's] recovery from the disease of life" ("en reconnaissance de sa guérison de la maladie de la vie actuelle." Plato 1822, 1:322). This interpretation suggests that sharing the debt among those present at a performance of *Socrate* serves as a *momento mori*: we are all suffering the disease of life, and death is ever near. Nietzsche also read this last line as a prayer of thanks for the poison that would kill him, an admission that life is a disease in need of a cure: "O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster.' This ridiculous and terrible 'last word' means for those who have ears: 'O Crito, *life is a disease*'" (Nietzsche 1974, 272; also see Madison 2002, 421–36, and Wilson 2007).¹¹ In this reading, the healing from life is the conclusion of Socrates's earlier arguments laid out in *Phaedo* that examine the fear of death and the immortality of the soul. However, the text in *Phaedo* concerning these broader philosophical discussions does not appear in *Socrate*. In Satie's work we are left with a single female singer advising the audience that *we all* owe a sacrifice to the god of healing—the responsibility of Socrates's death falls on all of our shoulders. Why do we need healing? Satie lays clues throughout the work, not only in his stripped-down setting of the text, but within the libretto itself.

Alcibiades and Marsyas: Violence in *Socrate's* Libretto

The whiteness and purity of *Socrate* result from a drastic stripping away of text. When Satie cut up Plato's dialogues, however, he tended to keep sections related to violence. As a result, Satie's libretto invokes themes of suffering and pain throughout. In the second movement, for example, as Socrates and Phaedrus walk barefoot along the Illisus River, they discuss the Rape of Orithyia: when the violent God of the North wind, Boreas, whisked Orithyia away, he inadvertently dragged her body over sharp rocks and killed the young nymph. The nymph's death anticipates Socrates's own death in the last movement, but this bucolic scene from *Phaedrus* avoids any hint of the violence lurking beneath the surface. Satie's chosen text here represents a short lesson: It begins with Socrates in a playful mood as he converses with Phaedrus while strolling along the river Ilissus. Barefoot, they enjoy their walk and the beauty of their surroundings. While walking, Phaedrus asks Socrates whether or not he believes the myth of Boreas and Orithyia. Socrates describes to his eager young student how the myth can be explained rationally. While he is talking, they arrive at the place

where they decided to stop and sit. Socrates poetically describes the sights, sounds, and smells of this beautiful spot where they have decided to rest. The movement ends. While the violent act is never described in Satie's libretto, listeners familiar with Plato's *Phaedrus* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, like the Princesse de Poliganc and her friends, might have noted its conspicuous absence.¹²

Violence lurks under the surface in the first movement of *Socrate* as well. *Le Banquet* [*The Symposium*] is set in the home of Agathon the playwright. In Plato's narrative, the guests, all male, recline on couches, drink wine, and discuss the nature of *erôs* (ἔρως).¹³ In the first movement of *Socrate*, Satie does not use the opening of the dialogue or the long philosophical eulogies of *erôs*. In fact, this movement omits all philosophical discussions and begins after Diotima's famous speech on the nature of *erôs* as told by Socrates, when suddenly the evening's festivities are interrupted by the arrival of the drunken Alcibiades, accompanied by revelers. Alcibiades begins to eulogize Socrates, and in doing so, he criticizes the famed philosopher for rejecting his previous sexual advances. Socrates remains impervious to the young politician's charms and continues to reject him.¹⁴ Satie begins the first movement of *Socrate* after this rejection towards the conclusion of *The Symposium* as Alcibiades finishes his narration with a description of Socrates. By selecting this specific eulogy of Socrates delivered by one of the youths the philosopher supposedly corrupted, Satie paints a sympathetic portrait of Socrates while simultaneously alluding to, and foreshadowing, his trial and thus his execution (portrayed in the third movement of the work).

Satie's treatment of the eulogy removes all possible allusions to Alcibiades's frustrated sexual desire for Socrates, which prefaced the speech,¹⁵ and provides instead a physical description of Socrates by comparing the philosopher with the mythological satyr Marsyas:

Je prétends ensuite qu'il ressemble au satyre Marsyas. . . . Et n'es-tu pas aussi joueur de flûte? Oui sans doute, et bien plus étonnant que Marsyas. Celui-ci charmait les hommes par les belles choses que sa bouche tirait de ses instruments, et autant en fait aujourd'hui quiconque répète ses airs; en effet, ceux que jouait Olympos, je les attribue à Marsyas son maître. . . . La seule différence Socrate qu'il y ait ici entre Marsyas et toi, c'est que sans instruments, avec de simples discours, tu fais la même chose. . . . Pour moi, mes amis, n'était la crainte de vous paraître totalement ivre, je vous attesterais avec serment l'effet extraordinaire que ses discours m'ont fait et me font encore. En l'écoutant, je sens palpiter mon cœur plus fortement que si j'étais agité de la manie dansante des corybantes, ses paroles font couler mes larmes, et j'en vois un grand nombre d'autres ressentir les mêmes émotions. . . . Tels sont les prestiges qu'exerce, et sur moi et sur bien d'autres, la flûte de ce satyre (Satie 1919, 5–13)

And I further suggest that he resembles the satyr Marsyas. . . . Are you not a piper? Why, yes, and a far more marvelous one than the satyr. His lips indeed had power to entrance mankind by means of instruments; a thing still possible today for anyone who can pipe his tunes: for the music of Olympus's flute belonged, I may tell you, to Marsyas his teacher. . . . You differ from him in one point only—that you produce the same effect with simple prose unaided by instruments. . . . As for myself, gentlemen, were it not that I might appear to be absolutely tipsy, I would have affirmed on oath all the strange effects I personally have felt from his words, and still feel even now. For when I hear him I am worse than any wild fanatic; I find my heart leaping and my tears gushing forth at the sound of his speech, and I see great numbers of other people having the same experience. . . . Such then is the effect that our satyr can work upon me and many another with his piping (Plato 1946, III: 219–23)

Within *Socrate*, Alcibiades's comparison of Socrates and Marsyas foreshadows Socrates's ultimate fate as well, albeit, without the agony and violence. According to Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates dies peacefully. In the myth, however, Marsyas is killed for daring to challenge Apollo to a musical contest. After Marsyas defeated Apollo on the reed-flutes, the god flayed the satyr alive. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes how the god is unmoved by Marsyas's pleas:

“Help! . . . Why are you stripping me from myself? Never again, I promise! Playing a pipe is not worth this!” But in spite of his cries the skin was torn off the whole surface of his body: it was all one raw wound. Blood flowed everywhere, his nerves were exposed, unprotected, his veins pulsed with no skin to cover them. It was possible to count his throbbing organs, and the chambers of the lungs, clearly visible within his breast. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6:383–400, and Ovid 1955, 145)

Contemporary statuettes of Marsyas frequently portrayed the satyr bound to a stake sticking out of the ground, flayed alive, his head hanging low (see Bundrick 2005, 131–39, and Waddington 2004, 144–55). Like Marsyas's body stripped of its skin, *Socrate* pulsates like one raw wound. Though Socrates dies peacefully, the excised portions of Satie's work reveal a violence in the “stripped down,” white, and pure aesthetic hailed by many proponents of neoclassicism.

Dépouillement

Satie came to the “stripped-down aesthetic” of classical simplicity in *Socrate* through a congruence of the concerns of his patron and others in his artistic circle (see Satie to Henry Prunières, 3 April 1918, in Satie 2003,

325). The composer often described his music at this time in terms of what Rollo Myers called *dépouillement*, a term that could be translated as “stripping,” “skinning,” and also “abstracting,” echoing some of the ideals of a nascent neoclassical aesthetic (Myers 1948, 55).¹⁶ In Boris Schloezer’s oft-cited review of Stravinsky’s *Symphonies d’instruments à vent*, which first coined the term “néoclassicisme,” he also foresaw a movement “toward a simplification of musical language, a style nude and stripped-down” (“vers une simplification du langage musical, vers un style nu, dépouillé.” De Schloezer 1923, 247).¹⁷

Gurminder Bhogal has recently reassessed the origins of the *style dépouillé* in the works of twentieth-century French composers. According to Bhogal, Reynaldo Hahn and Jean Cocteau employed the term in the 1910s—Hahn in reference to Ravel’s *Ma Mère l’Oye* (1908–10), and Cocteau regarding Satie’s rhythm (Bhogal 2013, 299). Cocteau wrote, “Satie teaches the most audacious thing of our époque: to be simple. Has he not proved that he could refine better than anyone? For he clears, simplifies, strips rhythm” (Cocteau 1918, 30–31).¹⁸ In his writings, Cocteau positioned Satie against the supposedly foreign influences of Debussy and Ravel, and “stripping down” in his hands became a useful metaphor to advocate for the purging of “impressionism” from a Gallic Art (see Verzosa 2008, 122–24 and 135). By the 1920s, as Scott Messing has noted, the *style dépouillé* drew associations with *néoclassicisme* and the post-World War I works of Stravinsky (Messing 1996, 129, and Bhogal 2013, 302–304). Bhogal, however, views the characteristics of the aesthetic—“uncluttered textures, lean counterpoint, rhythmic simplicity, and small-scale forms by chamber ensembles” (Bhogal 2013, 303)—as markers of the neoclassical style, and perhaps nothing more. “Since it is unlikely that any composer’s output from this time was a product of *dépouillement* taken at face value,” she suggests, “we might consider this term as a metaphor for a set of musical techniques” (Bhogal 2013, 305).

Satie’s *Socrate* seems to have taken the *style dépouillé* at face value. As I will explain, Satie’s uncluttered textures, lean counterpoint, and absence of ornament in *Socrate* demonstrate the most severe form of the *style dépouillé*. In *Socrate*, simplification and nudity evoke painful vulnerability; the satyr is stripped of his skin and flesh and left naked (denuded). It is not just a collection of musical attributes, but this radical version of the *style dépouillé* is seen in the libretto and performance history of the work as well.

Socrate ends with excerpts from Plato’s description of Socrates’s death as told in the *Phaedo*, and here Satie takes the *style dépouillé* to the extreme. In this long dialogue with Echecrates, *Phaedo* recounts the philosopher’s final moments in prison before his death. Satie strips the long dialogue to

its structural pillars: he eliminates the introductory lines, where Phaedo and Echebrates meet, and begins with Phaedo's narrative describing how they arrived early at the prison to see their teacher. Here, most of the philosophical arguments are removed in order to elucidate the details concerning Socrates's death. Satie cuts Phaedo's and Xanthippe's emotional descriptions at the beginning in order to make the effusion of sentiment at the end more poignant. By comparing Satie's text with the complete passage from Cousin's translation (see Table 1 below), we can see that Satie removes the emotional outbursts in the early words of Phaedo's narrative (Plato, *Phaedo*, 59d–60b, in Plato 2003, 118–19).

Table 1: Comparison of Satie's libretto and Cousin's translation (Socrates's death).¹⁹

<i>Source Text (Cousin)</i>	<i>Satie's Libretto</i>
Je puis te raconter tout de point en point; car	
depuis la condamnation de Socrate, nous ne manquions pas un seul jour d'aller le voir. Comme la place publique où le jugement avait été rendu, était tout près de la prison, nous nous y rassemblions le matin, et là nous attendions, en nous entretenant ensemble, que la prison fût ouverte et elle ne l'était jamais de bonne heure.	Depuis la condamnation de Socrate, nous ne manquions pas un seul jour d'aller le voir. Comme la place publique où le jugement avait été rendu, était tout près de la prison, nous nous y rassemblions le matin, et là nous attendions, en nous entretenant ensemble, que la prison fût ouverte et elle ne l'était jamais de bonne heure.
Aussitôt qu'elle s'ouvrait, nous nous rendions auprès de Socrate, et nous passions ordinairement tout le jour avec lui. Mais ce jour-là nous nous réunîmes de grand matin que de coutume. Nous avions appris la veille, en sortant le soir de la prison, que le vaisseau était revenu de Délos. Nous nous recommandâmes donc les uns lieu accoutumé, le plus matin qu'il se pourrait, et nous n'y manquâmes pas.	
Le geôlier qui nous introduisait ordinairement, vint au-devant de nous, et nous dit d'attendre et de ne pas entrer avant qu'il nous appelât lui-même;	Le geôlier qui nous introduisait ordinairement, vint au-devant de nous, et nous dit d'attendre et de ne pas entrer avant qu'il nous appelât lui-même.

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<i>Source Text (Cousin)</i>	<i>Satie's Libretto</i>
car les Onze, dit-il, font en ce moment ôter les fers à Socrate, et donnent des ordres pour qu'il meure aujourd'hui.	
Quelques moments après, il revint et nous ouvrit. En entrant, nous trouvâmes Socrate qu'on venait de délivrer de ses fers, et Xantippe, tu la connais auprès de lui, et tenant un de ses enfants dans ses bras.	Quelques moments après, il revint et nous ouvrit. En entrant, nous trouvâmes Socrate qu'on venait de délivrer de ses fers, et Xantippe, tu la connais auprès de lui, et tenant un de ses enfants dans ses bras.
A peine nous eut-elle aperçus, qu'elle commença à se répandre en lamentations et à dire tout ce que les femmes ont coutume de dire en pareilles circonstances. Socrate, s'écria-t-elle, c'est donc aujourd'hui le dernier jour où tes amis te parleront, et où tu leur parleras! Mais lui, tournant les yeux du côté de Criton: Qu'on la reconduise chez elle, dit-il: aussitôt quelques esclaves de Criton l'emmenèrent poussant des cris et se meurtrissant le visage.	
Alors Socrate, se mettant sur son séant, plia la jambe qu'on venait de dégager, la frotta avec sa main, et nous dit [en la frottant:] L'étrange chose, mes amis, que ce que les hommes appellent plaisir, et comme il a de merveilleux rapports avec la douleur que l'on prétend contraire!	Alors Socrate, se mettant sur son séant, plia la jambe qu'on venait de dégager, la frotta avec sa main, et nous dit [en la frottant:] L'étrange chose, mes amis, que ce que les hommes appellent plaisir, et comme il a de merveilleux rapports avec la douleur que l'on prétend contraire!
Car si le plaisir et la douleur ne se rencontrent jamais en même temps, quand on prend l'un, il faut accepter l'autre, comme si un lien naturel les rendait inséparables.	

Satie removes not only superfluous information, such as the details pertaining to the boat's arrival from Delos, but also portions of the text that foreshadow Socrates's death and express an abundance of sentiment.

Satie delegates the emotional content of the deleted prose to musical form. He depicts the sorrow and the imminence of death through a leit-motivic opening musical gesture rather than through his libretto, and he saves the emotionally poignant moments for the dramatic climaxes, such as Socrates's explanation that swans sing their best right before they die (*Phaedo*, 84e–85a), the taking of the poison (117c), and the uttering of his last words and death (118a). The ascending repeating triad leitmotiv that opens the movement (mm. 1–4; see Example 2) reoccurs in varied forms at key dramatic sections. After Socrates mentions the dying swan, Satie includes a brief line of reflection by Phaedo, “Although many times I have admired Socrates, I never did as much as then” (“Bien que j’aie plusieurs fois admire Socrate, je ne le fis jamais autant que dans cette circonstance”). Here, Satie masks the ascending motive with added eighth notes but strips away the harmony (mm. 81–83; see Example 3). The motive repeats again as ascending quarter-note triads a few measures later as Socrates puts his hand on Phaedo’s shoulder and says that tomorrow he will cut his hair. As Socrates’s death draws closer the leitmotiv returns more frequently, climaxing with Socrates’s final words regarding the cock owed to Asclepius (mm. 271–73; see Example 4). After this line, Satie drastically pulls back. The last two pages of the vocal score are stripped bare, accompanied by hollow repeating quarter notes (mm. 276–94; see Example 5).

Socrate Silenced

The stripping bare of musical and dramatic excess in *Socrate* connotes violence. Daniel Albright reminds us that the myth of Apollo and Marsyas, alluded to throughout *Socrate*, is, after all, about the brutal punishment of a sensualist satyr: “The flaying of Marsyas can be read as a literalization of the sense–immediacy of expressive music—music that cuts to the quick of the player and the listener” (Albright 2000, 19). In *Socrate* the text, the score, and Satie’s intended performance conditions receive the Apollonian treatment of *dépouillement*, though the work embodies aspects of both Apollo and Marsyas: it is detached, Apollonian, lofty, cerebral, and disengaged, but it also has brief moments of emotional, mimetic, and perhaps even sensual drama. Satie’s Apollonianism is not the detached, cool “sounding numbers” of the god of harmony and order—his Apollo is responsible for flaying Marsyas. As Albright explains, “One of the shocking aspects of this myth [of Apollo and Marsyas] is that Apollo seems to act out of character: ever since Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), we are used to thinking of Apollo as a lucid, clarifying, beautiful god, the opponent of Dionysus

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$\text{♩} = 72$

p
m.g. La basse en dehors

5 PHEDON
p Depuis la condamna ti - on de Socra te, *mf* nous ne manquons

Example 2: Satie, *Socrate*, mouvement III, *La Mort de Socrate*, mm. 1–7 (VS, p. 35).

79

...Bien que j'aie plusieurs fois

pp *rall.* *p*

82
ad - mi - ré So - cra - te, je ne le fis ja - mais au -

Example 3: Satie, *Socrate*, mouvement III, *La Mort de Socrate*, mm. 79–83 (VS, p. 45).

271

Socrate dit: Criton, nous devons un coq à Es-cu-la-pe:

274 *f*

n'oublie pas d'acquitter cet-te det-te...

f *pp subito* *rall.* *sf*

277

Un peu de temps après il fit un mouvement convulsif...

sf *accel.*

Example 4: Satie, *Socrate*, movement III, *La Mort de Socrate*, mm. 271–79 (VS, pp. 69–70).

and every sort of ecstasy and riot. If even Apollo can be maddened by a music contest, it suggests how dangerous is the goal of expression in the arts: the expresser may find himself most horribly exhibited, expressed, pressed out” (Albright 2000, 18). If Apollonian music can invoke the barbarity of the god who skinned Marsyas, how do we reread “stripped-down” neoclassical narratives to account for such shifting meaning?

The violent Apollo, introduced in the libretto of the first movement, is most apparent in the final movement when the white and pure aesthetic makes an abrupt turn in the final two bars of the work toward painfully exposed, undulating tritones. Throughout *La Mort de Socrate* (the third

286 *pp* yeux... *mf* ...Voi - là, E - ché - cra -

289 tes, quel - le fut la fin de notre a - mi..... *mf* ...du plus sage et du plus jus -

292 te de tous les hom - mes *ralentir de plus en plus*

Example 5: Satie, *Socrate*, movement III, *La Mort de Socrate*, mm. 286–94 (VS, p. 71).

and final movement of the work), Phaedo remains the anonymous narrator speaking in the past tense; the libretto effaces the dialogic aspects of the original text, and Phaedo’s dialogue is turned into a narrative. But in the final lines, Satie abruptly shifts back into a mimetic mode:

Socrate dit: “Criton, nous devons un coq à Esculape; n’oublie pas d’acquitter cette dette . . .” . . . Un peu de temps après il fit un mouvement convulsif; alors l’homme le découvrit tout à fait: ses regards étaient fixes. Criton s’en étant aperçu, lui ferma la bouche et les yeux . . . Voilà Echécraates, quelle fut la fin de notre ami . . . du plus sage et du plus juste de tous les hommes (Satie 1919, 69–71).

Socrates said, “Criton, we owe a cock to Asclepius, do not forget to pay this debt . . .” . . . A short time after that, he had convulsions, and the attendants uncovered him: his eyes were fixed. Crito closed his mouth and eyes . . . There it is Echecrates, such was the end of our friend . . . the wisest and most just of all men.

Satie mirrors this shift in the relationship between the narrator and the audience with a shift from the sweetly arching vocal lines to a much more sharply stripped-down aesthetic of reciting tones and bare harmonies. Once Socrates utters his final words, the voice and its accompaniment make a dramatic change. As Phaedo describes Socrates’s passing and Crito closing his eyes, Satie’s musical accompaniment repeats a stark open fifth on A beginning in measure 276 (see Example 4). To mark the transition from Phaedo’s narrative to his final address to Echecrates, Satie moves the slowly pulsating open fifth up a whole step to B (m. 287 in Example 5). The sudden step upwards signals a metaphorical “stepping out” of the narrative and into a conversation outside the frame of Phaedo’s story. Over open fifths in the accompaniment, the soprano’s A4 rises to B4 in measure 288, and once more up to E5 in measure 291, accentuating the final line of text (“. . . du plus sage et du plus juste de tous les hommes” [“the most wise and just of all men”]). The line ends with a monophonic cadence on A4 in measure 292 for the final word of text (see Example 5). The last two measures oscillate between octaves on the tritone E-sharp/B and its resolution to F-sharp/B, perhaps a musical metaphor for the enduring agony that will befall the followers of Socrates, a reminder of the debt left unpaid. In its cold resolution, clean and white in its simplicity, stands a violent *dépouillement*.

Satie’s harmonies expose a grotesque skeleton deprived of ornament. The bare parallel motion of the last two bars presents a musical metaphor for the death of Socrates—not peaceful, but slow, prolonged, and uncomfortable. While the philosopher slips away peacefully, those left alive in a world that could kill Socrates must truly suffer. Satie, Apollonian in his cruelty, skins the final moments of the work, leaving the concluding unsettling tritone painfully exposed.

Concerning *dépouillement* in Ravel’s work, Bhogal writes, “If we were to take the impossible task of removing ornament from those works in which decoration is especially prominent, it is unlikely that we would uncover anything of substance, let alone attain a glimpse of underlying aesthetic truth” (Bhogal 2013, 305). Bhogal also cites Roger Nichols’ similar observation about the *style dépouillé*: “The problem for many French composers in the 1920s was that they had been brought up in the decorative tradition of Impressionism, so that when their style was stripped down there was noth-

ing left worth listening to” (Nichols 2002, 216). Richard Taruskin draws similar conclusions to Bhogal in *The Oxford History of Western Music* when he writes that “the music [of *Socrate*] ostentatiously displays not only its rejection of ostentatious emotional display, but also its eschewal of technical finesse” (Taruskin 2005, IV: 573). Removing ornament in French music of this period to its bare essentials poses the risk of revealing that underneath the arabesque lies nothing at all: without ornament we are left with silence.

Peter Dayan sees the words of Socrates in *Socrate* “slipping away”—a silencing of the philosopher—resulting in a “strange alliance between music and silence,” a “fade-out” (Dayan 2008, 415–17). What he reads as silence, I identify as part of the aesthetic of *dépouillement*. Discussing Satie’s treatment of Plato’s text in the first movement, Dayan writes: “Already we see the words of Socrates being emptied of their properly verbal or philosophical content, and assimilated, in their true effect, to music” (Dayan 2008, 415–16). Dayan’s reading is persuasive, but his interpretation of this “emptying,” when understood in the context of neoclassicism, illustrates a specific aesthetic of abstraction. If, as Dayan suggests, Satie used music to silence, refuse, and ignore verbal and philosophical content, in *Socrate*, perhaps, these same strategies of silencing function as redaction.

In *La Musique et les heures*, Vladimir Jankélévitch praises *Socrate* for its immobility, clarity, and timelessness. In the final pages of the score, he recognizes a “fade-out” similar to Dayan’s reading. Concerning the death of Socrates in *Socrate*, Jankélévitch writes, “Death here does not explode like the roar of thunder nor gloriously expire in a culminating apotheosis, but happens slowly and on tiptoe, or, like the spirit of God, carried by a light breeze” (Jankélévitch 1988, 35).²⁰ For Jankélévitch, Satie and the “Hellenism” of *Socrate* are “part of the detoxifying cure, this frugal diet, austere and purifying that French music should impose at the end of these drunken nights” (Jankélévitch 1988, 37).²¹ Satie, as well, thought about *Socrate* in terms of what it is not, writing in 1918, “It isn’t Russian, of course, it isn’t Persian either, nor Asian. It is a return to classical simplicity with a modern sensibility” (Satie 2003, 325).²² The whiteness and purity of *Socrate* exists by virtue of the silencing of what it is not. A similar politics of exclusion lies at the heart of a recent reappraisal of Vladimir Jankélévitch and his criticism lauding French neoclassical works like *Socrate* (see Gallope et al. 2012, 215–56).

In Dayan’s and Jankélévitch’s readings of *Socrate*, Socrates dies peacefully, and thus, so ends the work. Satie said that in writing *Socrate*, he wrote a simple work “without conflict.”²³ But the lack of conflict is not due to a lack of argument or a lack of moral clarity. There is no conflict because Satie attempts to silence all alternative viewpoints. Socrates does not exit

life screaming in fear; he does not end in the ecstatic horror of Marsyas. Socrates drifts away, and *Socrate* dissipates, sung by the “white and pure” female voices. Vanishing without a whimper, or a scream, it just ends—unceremoniously, yet unambiguously. Socrates enters into death without fear. It is those left behind who are left to suffer the unsettling final tritones; we, as Cousin’s translation reminds us, are the ones in need of the healing sacrifice. Socrates and *Socrate* may slip away, but they leave traces of the violent stripping that created their “purity”—the grotesque final bars of *Socrate*.

Inexpression is the path to expression, or as Jankélévitch writes in *Music and the Ineffable*, “The mask, the inexpressive face that music assumes voluntarily these days, conceals a purpose: to *express infinitely that which cannot be explained*” (Jankélévitch 2003, 71). The erasure of Impressionism’s ornament, that last gasp of subjective Romantic expression, is one way toward the *ineffable*. “Reticence, generalized expression, and retrospective suggestion,” Jankélévitch continues, “are, as we saw, paradoxically the most effective means of expression” (Jankélévitch 2003, 73). Satie’s libretto for *Socrate*—reticent, retrospectively suggestive, and expressionless—is silenced by the disruptive harmonies in the last two bars, and through that silence we find expression.

Commenting on Fauré’s *Requiem*, Jankélévitch states: “Once the sacral arpeggios of the *Requiem* have dissolved into air—in *Paradisum deducant te angeli*—each listener has understood that there is no necessity for further commentary; everything has been said, and we exchange glances in silence” (Jankélévitch 2003, 84).²⁴ Once Socrates closes his eyes for the last time, the listener also understands that there is no necessity for further commentary. This silencing of Socrates, and thus also of music may invite us to view violence as an important element of musical neoclassicism—as the necessary generator of its *dépouillement*.

Satie’s return to antiquity is not merely a celebration of ancient ideals, Socrates’s death does not harken back to a golden age, and the last few bars of the work remind us that the ideals of Apollo carry with them the violence inflicted upon Marsyas. Nestled between the pregnant silences of its libretto and its performances, the work’s immobility—its skeletal and stripped-down music—reveals a despectacularized fragility. *Socrate* not only enlarges our definitions of neoclassicism, but ultimately tests the limits of performing antiquity.

Notes

1. Satie’s first composition notebook for *Socrate* at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BN 9623 [1]) clearly shows the libretto written lightly in pencil on the inside cover and first page.

2. Hellenism looked back to antiquity in search of the lost virtues and purity of the ancient Greeks. For more on the various flavors of French Hellenism see Peyre 1941, 48, and Langlois 1971.
3. Ornella Volta proposes the later date of October 1916 (Satie 2003, 226). For more on the *Princesse* and the commission of *Socrate*, see Dorf 2007.
4. All translations from the French are by the author unless otherwise noted. “Je m’occupe de la *Vie de Socrate*. J’ai une frousse de ‘rater’ cette œuvre que je voudrais blanche & pure comme l’Antique.” Erik Satie to Valentine Gross, January 6, 1917.
5. “C’est un retour vers la simplicité classique, avec sensibilité modern.” Erik Satie to Henry Prunières, April 3, 1917.
6. “. . . En écrivant cette œuvre, . . . je n’ai nullement voulu ajouter à la beauté des Dialogues de Platon: . . . ce n’est, ici, qu’un acte de piété, qu’une rêverie d’artiste, . . . qu’un humble hommage . . . / . . . L’esthétique de cet ouvrage je voue à la clarté; . . . la simplicité l’accompagne, la dirige . . . C’est tout: . . . je n’ai pas désire autre chose” The handwritten note is reproduced in Volta 1979, 64. Ellipses are in Satie’s original.
7. The appendix is adapted from Orledge 1990, 316–17, and Potter 2013, 303–305. Jean Cocteau, who was overseeing the publication of *Socrate*’s score, tried to exert control over the work’s staging, imagining a children’s choir singing the roles, as well as a staged version of *Socrate* in a bar with soldiers dressed in blue, which never materialized (Bathori 1958, 2).
8. The original notebook in which the libretto was worked out appears to have been lost, possibly in a fire that destroyed the collection of Conrad Satie. Pietro Dossena has informed me of a possible candidate for the missing notebook. BNF 9677(1) is the cover of a notebook, the same size and kind as the *Socrate* notebooks BNF 9623(1) and (3): 15cm x 19.5cm. While the cover clearly reads “*Socrate*–Brouillon,” all of the internal pages of the notebook are missing. Pietro Dossena, personal e-mail message to the author, 13 August 2009. (Also see Dossena 2008, 3, and Dayan 2008, 409–23.)
9. For more on *Socrate* and The Great War, see Orledge 1990, 81.
10. “ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρούνα: ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε” (118a).
11. For more on the philosophical differences resulting from variations in the translation, see Clark 1952, 146; Most 1993, 96–111; and Wells 2008, 137–48.
12. Ovid retells the tale of Boreas and Orithyia in *Metamorphoses*, 6:675–721.
13. The Greek word *erôs* (ἔρωσ) can be translated as “love,” “sex,” or “desire.” Both Cousin and Meunier use the French word *amour*.
14. Alcibiades’s eulogy is an odd conclusion to Plato’s philosophic dialogue on the nature of love. Plato probably used this last section of *The Symposium* to illustrate that Socrates could do little to help the corruption and hedonism of Alcibiades: Socrates refuses the young politician’s sexual advances, and Alcibiades chooses to ignore his mentor’s teachings. Plato might have decided to introduce the historical character of Alcibiades due to his notoriety—Socrates’s fallen pupil, the politician who aided both sides during the Peloponnesian Wars, and whose actions were guided not by reason (as Socrates taught him) but rather by purely selfish motivations. During Socrates’s trial, the case of Alcibiades was brought against him as part of the charge that he had corrupted the youth of Athens.
15. On homosexuality in classical Athens, see Halperin 1990.
16. Barbara Kelly has defined *dépouillement* as “economy of means” (see Kelly 2007, 173).

17. The section has been translated and cited in Messing 1986, 1. In the dissertation and later publication, Messing had inadvertently mis-cited the page as 257. This was corrected in Messing 1991, 490. Every scholar who has since cited Schloezer's article has depended on Messing's translation. I am thankful for Prof. Messing for sharing a photocopy of the difficult-to-locate original French with me.

18. "Satie enseigne la plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple. N'a-t-il pas donné la preuve qu'il pourrait raffiner plus que personne? Or, il déblaie, il dégage, il dépouille le rythme."

19. Plato, *Phaedo*, 59d–60b, (Plato 1822, 1:189–91). In the English translation, I've indicated sections in the original source material excised by Satie by brackets: "[I will try to tell you all about it from the very beginning.] We had all made it our regular practice, even in the period before, to visit Socrates every day; we used to meet at daybreak by the court-house where the trial was held, because it was close to the prison. We always spent some time in conversation while we waited for the door to open, which was never very early; [and when it did open, we used to go in to see Socrates, and spend the best part of the day with him. On this particular day we met earlier than usual, because when we left prison on the evening before, we heard that the boat had just arrived back from Delos; so we urged one another to meet at the usual place as early as possible. When we arrived,] the porter, instead of letting us in as usual, told us to wait and not come in until he gave us the word. ['The Eleven are taking off Socrates' chains,' he said, 'and warning him that he is to die today.'] After a short interval he came back and told us to go in. When we went inside we found Socrates just released from his chains, and Xanthippe—you know her!—sitting by him with the little boy on her knee. [As soon as Xanthippe saw us she burst into the kind of thing women generally say: 'Oh, Socrates, this is the last time that you and your friends will be able to talk together!'] Socrates looked at Crito. 'Crito,' he said, 'someone had better take her home.' Some of Crito's servants led her away crying hysterically.] Socrates sat up on the bed and drew up his leg and massaged it, saying as he did so, 'What a queer thing it is, my friends, this sensation which is popularly called pleasure! It is remarkable how closely it is connected with its apparent opposite pain. [They will never come to a man both at once, but if you pursue one of them and catch it, you are virtually compelled always to have the other as well] (Plato, *Phaedo*, 59d–60b, in Plato 2003, 118–19).

20. "La mort ici n'éclate pas comme le fracas de la foudre ni n'expire glorieusement comme le point d'orgue des apothéoses, mais arrive doucement et sur la pointe des pieds, ou, ainsi que l'esprit de Dieu, portée par une brise légère."

21. "Pour Satie . . . , l'hellénisme fit partie de cette cure de désintoxication, de ce régime frugal, austère et dépuratif que la musique française devait s'imposer au sortir des ivresses nocturnes."

22. "Ce n'est pas non russe, bien entendu; ce n'est pas non plus persan, ni asiatique. C'est un retour vers la simplicité classique, avec sensibilité modern." Erik Satie to Henry Prunières, April 3, 1918.

23. "En écrivant *Socrate*, je croyais composer une œuvre simple, sans la moindre idée de combat; car je ne suis qu'un humble admirateur de Socrate & de Platon—deux messieurs semblant sympathiques." ["In writing *Socrate*, I believed I was composing a simple work, without the least bit of conflict; for I am only a humble admirer of Socrates & Plato—two seemingly amiable gentlemen."] (Erik Satie to Paul Collaer, 16 May 1920, in Satie 2003, 406).

24. However, silence can carry violent connotations within Jankélévitch's writings. James Hepokoski has noted that the effects of the philosopher's "suppression of hermeneutic inquiry (despite his best intentions) carry a potential for intimidation that is difficult to ig-

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nore” (Hepokoski 2012, 225). James Currie agrees that Jankélévitch’s idea of silencing is “also fueled by [its] nondialectical reinscription, creating the effect of a kind of unconscious return of the repressed” (Currie 2012, 247–48).

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Appendix: Chronology of the Inception and Early Performances of Erik Satie's *Socrate*

Late summer of 1916	Satie and the Princesse de Polignac first meet to discuss the possibility of a commission.
January 6, 1917	Satie begins work on <i>Vie de Socrate</i> .
April 3, 1918	Private performance of excerpts: Jane Bathori (sop.) and Erik Satie (pf.), chez Polignac.
June 24, 1918	Private performance of <i>La Mort de Socrate</i> (third movement): Jane Bathori and Satie, chez Bathori.
August 1918	Satie completes <i>Socrate</i> vocal piano score.
October 10, 1918	Satie completes revising orchestral score.
December 7, 1918	Private performance of excerpts: Pierre Bertin (tenor) with Marcelle Meyer (pf.), chez Comte Étienne de Beaumont, after aggressive pleading for permission from the Princesse and Satie.
Early January 1919	Private performance of excerpts: Jane Bathori and Satie, chez Bathori.
February 7, 1919	Cancelled private complete performance: to have been sung by members of a children's choir, chez Polignac.
February 16, 1919	Private complete performance: first complete performance, Bathori and Satie, chez Polignac.
March 21, 1919	Semi-public performance of excerpts: Suzanne Balguerie (sop.) and Satie, at Adrienne Monnier's bookshop, La Maison des Amis des Livres.
May 25, 1919	Possible complete performance: Balguerie and Satie, chez Mme Berchut, 3 rue Edward Fournier, Paris 16.
February 14, 1920	First public performance: Jane Bathori and Suzanne Balguerie (sops.) with André Salomon (pf.), sponsored by the Société Nationale de Musique at the Salle de l'Ancien Conservatoire. Satie remarks after the performance: "étrange n'est-ce pas?"
June 7, 1920	First public performance with orchestra: Marya Freund (sop.), orchestra conducted by Félix Delgrange, at Festival Erik Satie, Salle Erard, 13 rue de Mail.