

## ‘Dry as a Cuckoo’: The Changing Perceptions on Erik Satie

No one is entirely sure how to classify this unique composer, though all seem to agree on one point. He was indeed eccentric. Born Eric-Alfred Leslie Satie in Honfleur, France on May 17, 1866, he has become known for his influence on the impressionist and avant-garde movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While his early compositions, including the *Gymnopédies* and *Sarabandes*, were praised for their influence on composers such as Debussy and Ravel, Satie achieved no commercial success during his lifetime, and eventually died in poverty. In modern times, he is lauded for his contributions, considered almost a father to two separate movements, yet many of his contemporaries barely acknowledged him during his life. Often considered a humorist and a poseur rather than a musician, Pierre-Daniel Templier’s biography claims he was both “...the greatest musician in the world and [also] vilified as an untalented provocateur.” In this reception analysis, I will be analyzing newspaper reviews of Satie and his music from both the early 1900s as well as reviews from long after his death. I will focus primarily on British and U.S. newspapers in order to analyze how he was received outside of France during his lifetime as well as how he is received today. When did opinion of him shift from mostly negative criticism to praise and why? While I will look at many performance reviews and articles from both time periods, as well as the contexts surrounding his reception, I will primarily be focusing on his collaborative 1917 ballet, “Parade.” While he continually seems to fly under the radar, no one can argue that Satie’s music had an impact on the world. What that impact was and how it developed will be a primary focus of this study.