



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

University of California Press

Chapter Title: Music as Resistance and an Emerging Avant-garde

Book Title: Composing the Citizen

Book Subtitle: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France

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Published by: University of California Press . (2009)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppfjp.14>

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PART FOUR • SHIFTING NOTIONS
OF UTILITY

Between the Nation and the Self

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9 • Music as Resistance and an Emerging Avant-garde

In the late 1880s, no song spoke more to the French imagination or made so palpably clear the political power of music than “En revenant de la revue” (Returning from the Review) (figs. 69–70). On 14 July 1886, Parisians swarmed the Longchamp stadium to cheer General Georges Boulanger and the return of troops from Tonkin. After fighting in Kabylia (Algeria), Italy, Indochina, and the Franco-Prussian War, Boulanger had commanded the forces occupying Tunisia in 1884 and reinstituted the draft, thereby democratizing the army. Recently appointed minister of war, he was the darling of the Ligue des patriotes, personifying *la patrie* and national honor. Paul Déroulède considered him the only minister Germany feared. With his blond beard and charismatic nature, he seemed the idol many were seeking.¹ That evening at the Alcazar d’été, Paulus performed one of his favorite songs, a vigorous march tune taken from a ballet at the Folies-Bergère. This time he substituted a new ending, rhyming “admirer” with Boulanger. As he sang, he pretended to gallop on an imaginary horse, holding his hat on the end of his cane. The public, many of them Boulanger admirers, went wild. Only after numerous repetitions would they let him leave the stage.² Soon people were imitating him. While at the Eldorado the beloved singer Thérèse popularized Déroulède’s “Le

1. Those who had grown up on *La Tour de France par deux enfants: Devoir et patrie* by G. Bruno [Augustine Fouillée] (Paris: Belin, 1877) would have associated blond hair with the Gauls, whom some considered the original French. This text was responsible for the popular phrase “Nos ancêtres, les Gaulois.” See M. Martin Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 131–33.

2. César Desormes, conductor at the Folies-Bergère, composed the ballet; Paulus commissioned two others to write lyrics for an excerpt he liked. The singer performed this numerous times before that fateful evening when he changed the verses “Moi, j’ faisais qu’admirer / Tous nos braves petits troupiers” to “Moi, j’ faisais qu’admirer / Notr’ brav’ général Boulanger.” See Paulus [Jean Paul Habans] and Octave Pradels, *Trente ans de café-concert: Souvenirs recueillis* (Paris: Société d’édition et de publications, 1908), 4–6. To hear this song sung in 1908, go to: www.chanson.udenap.org/enregistrements/peheu_en_revenant_de_a_revue_1909.mp3 (accessed 30 May 2008).



FIG. 69 Sheet music cover of L. C. Desormes's marching song "En revenant de la revue" (1886).

FIG. 70 One of the many reproductions of the popular song "En revenant de la revue."

Bon Gîte” and “La Bonne Vieille” from his *Chants du soldat*, the director of the Divan japonais reported that “every time an artist was about to begin his act, the entire audience on cue began to sing: ‘En r’venant de la r’vue,’ punctuating each couplet with shouts of ‘Long live Boulanger!’”³ For years, the song could be heard all over the country, and as far away as Hanoi.

Political and economic liberalism allowed some people to thrive, but it also led to a malaise in the country, one that many saw Boulanger as best equipped to address. The petite bourgeoisie, experiencing a rise in the overall cost of living with a decline in wages, felt threatened by big business, mass culture, and organized labor. Fearing foreign competition, particularly with Germany, they blamed free trade and became protectionist.⁴ Suspicious of progress and industry, high finance, and symbols of modernity, they saw the department stores as “agents of internationalism.” Seeing a contradiction in the support of the *républicains opportunistes* for monopolies in the context of their desire to broaden access to the nation’s resources and help people prosper, this group formed a resentful offshoot of radical republicans. The popular nationalism they espoused evolved into a troubling paradox, a political alliance that began in the spirit of Jacobin patriotism and migrated gradually to the Right.

“En revenant de la revue” addressed this new spirit, roused it, and contributed significantly to the popularity of General Boulanger, a rising political leader who came to represent the most significant threat to the Third Republic. Serving as a form of political resistance, especially during the Revolution, popular songs had long functioned as propaganda among the working classes. Throughout the 1870s, those sympathetic with republicanism used songs in *cafés-concerts* to keep alive the spirit of *revanche* and build momentum for a regime change. Patriotic songs performed there helped forge a republican identity during the repressive Moral Order. Frédéric Robert has documented the extent to which elements of the “Marseillaise” permeated many songs performed at the Eldorado and the Alcazar, implanting its message of French pride and resistance to the Germans well before it was declared

3. Jehan Sarrazin, *Souvenirs de Montmartre et du quartier latin* (1895), cited in Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 341.

4. The export of many French goods had been falling even before the recession of the early 1880s. Fear intensified that Germany was surpassing France, and that France would no longer be able to compete with its neighbor. In May 1883, Déroulède called for boycotts of German goods and objected to the “peaceful invasion” of German workers, counting some 50,000 in Paris and 500,000 in France. These positions helped attract to the Ligue more *petit commerçants* who began to feel abandoned by the republican mainstream when the radicals like Spuller refused to acknowledge the commercial crisis.

the national anthem.⁵ When Boulanger, “General *Revanche*,” later ran for office, advocacy of *revanche* returned in *café-concert* songs, this time to fan enthusiasm for a republican opponent. Unsurprisingly, with political freedom of expression now the law, songs could again be used openly for spreading ideas critical of the regime in power. Striking workers plotting demonstrations met in halls such as the Alcazar.⁶

But “En revenant de la revue” went further. It helped mobilize people into a crowd, not to engage in violent resistance, but to vote, albeit against the parliamentary republic. The song contributed to the movement, Boulangism, that linked the emergence of mass culture to that of mass politics.⁷ At the same time, Boulangism’s success revealed the vulnerability of liberal democracy. An antirationalist, antihumanitarian, and xenophobic nationalism arose in association with Boulanger, building on that of Déroulède and Drumont.⁸ Whereas large crowds in revolutionary festivals and the crowd of a spectacle brought together by culture could be useful for its social binding, crowds bound by political criticism of the status quo could be threatening, particularly when roused by strong, charismatic personalities such as Déroulède and Boulanger.

Boulanger also appealed to titled aristocrats, who saw him, like Marshal MacMahon, as capable of preparing a return of monarchy. Monarchists had already made significant gains in the 1885 elections and the far Left and the Right had come together on amnesty for Communards in spring 1886. Royalists were taken with Boulanger’s desire to revise the constitution, and so when he put himself on the ballot throughout the country, many contributed to his campaigns. Financing as well as publicity became major factors in the elections. At first nostalgic and later perhaps hopeful for victory, monarchists began to have costume parties in which they dressed up in period attire and danced to music inspired by that of the Ancien

5. Frédéric Robert, *La Marseillaise* (Paris: Pavillon, 1989), 212, 218–26. Boulanger was particularly interested in the “Marseillaise.” As minister of war, he asked for one version of it, with the same orchestration and in the same key, to be performed by all military bands. A committee (chaired by Ambroise Thomas) was formed to choose among 200 arrangements, and the general took part in making the choice. *Ménestrel*, 6 February 1887, 78.

6. In his *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), James Lehning describes one such meeting for two to four hundred people (107).

7. *Ibid.*, 157, 160.

8. This included future leaders of the new Right, such as Maurice Barrès (b. 1862), a Boulangist deputy elected from Nancy in 1889, and Charles Maurras (b. 1868) who saw the role of Boulangism as “reconciling old France with democracy in socialism.” Hostile to the positivists of the new university whom they considered too intellectual and too rationalist, they believed in instinct and feelings. Raised with *revanche* as their generation’s duty, they used nationalist sentiment to appropriate the moral authority previously claimed by Freemasons. See Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885–1914* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 74–5.

Régime. Just as powerful as “En revenant de la revue” for the petite bourgeoisie, newly composed pavaues and minuets captured the imagination of the aristocracy, quite possibly fueling their desire for political change.

Increasingly, many French, especially social and intellectual elites, were also troubled by the materialism, mediocrity, and consumerism of the modern world. As a disillusioned critic noted, “The dominant characteristic of the *esprit public* had become crude chauvinism, mixed with sentimental inanity and self-satisfied ignorance. *Cafés-concerts* were at their peak. Paulus and Déroulède reigned over the crowds and met their aesthetic needs. . . . But minds saturated with naturalism felt an emerging need . . . a need for something else, without knowing exactly what that might be.”⁹ Some looked to satire to channel their critique, others to the sublime—a domain beyond all comparison, beyond comprehension—especially as represented in Wagner’s music. With this, alongside electoral change in 1885 and economic liberalism, came a renaissance of idealism, a desire to escape the period’s near exclusive concern for reality, the real, and the possible in order to entertain the metaphysical and the mysterious, the strange and the obscure, even if this meant tolerating, even enjoying, the barely comprehensible. This trend was particularly evident in literature and the visual arts with Mallarmé, Huysmans, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, and others. While the growing socialist movement both imagined and advocated more idealistic goals for society, many among the elites who felt constrained by positivist rationalism or bourgeois morality, and who were distressed by republican hypocrisies and republican pandering to the lowest common denominator, embraced these new values as a way to seek distinction from the masses. For many espousing aristocratic or aristocratic-like values, culture became a tool to appropriate for different needs and desires than those of the republican state, with music perhaps the most capable of covert as well as explicit resistance to ideological domination.

The roots of modernism, I argue, begin here¹⁰—not just in antibourgeois resistance, but in fascination with music for the mind that would challenge that of sentiment, in the self-exploration this music enabled, and in the obscure realms of the

9. Cited in Adolphe Retté, *Le Symbolisme: Anecdotes et souvenirs* (Paris: Vanier, 1903), 158–59.

10. An early use of the word “modernist” appeared in *La Revue moderniste* (December 1884–February 1886), which published music reviews by a Wagnerian, Hippolyte Mirande, poems about the Rose-Croix, and works by Charles Morice. Debussy expressed his interest in this journal in a letter of September 1886 to Emile Baron from Rome, in Claude Debussy, *Correspondance*, ed. François Lesure and Denis Herlin (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 52. Roger Shattuck, in *The Banquet Years* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), observes: “The twentieth century could not wait for a round number; it was born, yelling, in 1885” (4).

unknown it suggested. While these new currents might appear as a return to art for art's sake, inspired by Baudelaire, led by the symbolists, and in part responding to Wagner, I see this as a reconception, an appropriation of music's utility for nonrepublican purposes. From the perspectives of the other arts, especially poetry and painting, music became a model, a window onto the nature of inner experience, intuition, and the creative process itself. To the extent that music could nurture and serve the private aspirations of individuals rather than the public ones of the state, it had the capacity to promote new values associated with rising countercultures, be they political or apolitical.

REVIVING MEMORY OF THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

As it did in 1873 when a return to monarchy seemed inevitable, music and musical taste again functioned as a barometer of political sentiment after the 1885 elections threw into question opportunists' continued control of government, raised hopes and fears about rising monarchist support, and led to new alliances. A notable instance of this came after four thousand people attended a royalist festival on 14 May 1886 celebrating the marriage of Amélie, daughter of the comte de Paris, to the future king of Portugal. For a month thereafter, republicans discussed exiling the pretenders to the French throne; they passed a law to this effect in June.¹¹ Around the same time, the Opéra-Comique agreed to produce Emmanuel Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui* about an exiled king who yearns to return to his homeland. The story was based on Henri de Valois, fourth son of Catherine de' Medici, who was made king of Poland against his will. At the premiere on 18 May 1887, critics noted that audiences heard several allusions to the "present situation."¹² As with Delibes's *Le Roi l'a dit* in 1873, the work, originally conceived as an operetta, uses humor and wit to make light of a monarch, this one displaced from his own

11. The Bonapartist pretender went to Switzerland; the comte de Paris and the duc d'Orléans, to Great Britain. Philippe Levillain, "Les Droites en République," in *Histoire des droites en France*, vol. 1: *Politique*, ed. Jean-François Sirinelli (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 190. During this time, in his song "L'Expulsion," from *Chansons du Chat Noir* (Paris: Heugel, n.d.), Mac-Nab asked why French royalty could not marry in France and advocated expelling others too—priests, police, and anybody who exploited workers. In his song, Montéhus concluded, "Socialism, that's the future." See Pierre Barbier and France Vernillat, *Histoire de France par les chansons* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 83–85.

12. According to Auguste Vitu in *Figaro*, 19 May 1887, when Antonin Proust saw the conspirators' in Chabrier's opera drawing straws to decide who would kill the king, he said they might just as well have been members of the budget committee deciding who would "porter le coup fatal" to get rid of René Goblet as head of government. In fact, Goblet had just relinquished his position on 17 May.

country. Besides ridiculing the Polish people and a king who loves France “like a mistress,” the work is full of conspiracies, including a Polish one in which a disguised Henri participates to avoid being crowned. If many listeners found the libretto too complicated, this was perhaps a reflection of how complicated France itself was in the mid 1880s. People were disgusted with intrigues and political defections, the Legitimist pretender in the 1880s, Henri V, was not strong or particularly courageous, and many feared insurrection and the anarchy it would bring, or socialism. Although *Le Roi* returned to the stage that November and the following March, eventually receiving twenty performances, the work did better abroad than in France.

Wagnerians were surprised that one among them would choose to write a light comedy using conventional forms. Baron Vincent d’Indy, however, wrote Chabrier to say “how much your monarch pleases me.”¹³ More than the story, however, it was the music that appealed, although the eclectic mixture of serious and light, lyrical and comedic, parody and pastiche, confused critics.¹⁴ For amusement and distraction, the characters in *Le Roi malgré lui* engage in dances: a *bouffée* from Chabrier’s birthplace, Auvergne (suggesting his own nostalgia), as well as a pavane, choral waltz, mazurka, and barcarole. According to his biographer Roger Delage, Chabrier studied and made copies of old dances at the Bibliothèque nationale to serve as inspiration.¹⁵ Yet along with music signaling the sixteenth century, such as a French chanson recalling Clément Jannequin, modern harmonic innovations abound in *Le Roi malgré lui*—unresolved and accented ninths in the prelude that set the tone for Henri’s desire to leave, leaping ninths later used to express hatred, parallel ninths animating the choral waltz, and musical metaphors for duplicity and disguise. Still, some critics felt the work showed too much fantasy and lacked *la juste mesure*.¹⁶

The political situation grew more heated in 1887 with two developments that contributed to the rise of an active political resistance associated with Boulanger. First, in April 1887, accusations of spying on the French border rekindled xenophobic panic and paranoia about Germany. The arrest of a French customs officer,

13. Cited in Roger Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 388.

14. In his “Chabrier” entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie et al. (New York: Grove, 2001), Steven Huebner points to “patter singing, an Italianate canon of confusion, show-stopping roudades, serious love music in post-Wagnerian chromatic language, an elegiac modal pavane, and a driving choral waltz” as representative of the work’s eclecticism. See also the analysis in his *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism and Style* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), chap. 18.

15. Gaillards, courantes, sarabandes, and passepieds. Delage, *Chabrier*, 397.

16. Both the Wagnerian Louis de Fourcaud and the anti-Wagnerian Camille Bellaigue made such objections. See *Ménestrel*, 20 November 1887.

Guillaume Schnaebelé, and a German soldier's assassination of a French hunter in French territory—predecessors of the Dreyfus Affair—fueled the ire of the Ligue des patriotes, which turned increasingly anti-immigrant. “National independence from foreigners” emerged as one of its highest priorities.¹⁷ Boulanger impressed everyone by calling for a general mobilization of the troops. This apparently caused Bismarck to back down from confrontation, but led to Boulanger's dismissal from government. On 27 June, Déroulède called a meeting of the Ligue at the Cirque d'hiver to protest Boulanger's dismissal and acclaim Boulanger as Gambetta's heir. That December, when President Grévy resigned, the Ligue wanted Boulanger back in the government.

Second, on 27 August 1887 the comte de Paris published a manifesto demanding a vote on whether the people yearned for monarchy. After Grévy's resignation, the comte's friends spoke to him of the general, and a consensus emerged.¹⁸ When in spring 1888, Boulanger ran for election throughout the country, the duchesse d'Uzès spent over 3 million francs (6.6 million euros in today's currency) to subsidize his campaigns.¹⁹ The comte de Dillon, the Ligue's treasurer, also contributed, as did the prince de Polignac.²⁰ With this help, that of the Ligue, and the many songs written in support of him, in 1888 and 1889, Boulanger emerged the victor in Paris and five other *départements*. Hopes invested in Boulanger, however, did not last for long. When Déroulède engineered a coup d'état by which the

17. These attitudes were already present in Déroulède's 1877 play *L'Hetman*. It begins with a Ukrainian Jew, Samuel Chmoul, described not only as “able, eloquent and ingenious,” but also two-faced—a spy and traitor. By the late 1880s, Déroulède was thought to be someone who saw traitors everywhere. In 1887, he wrote a column on “German Spies” in *Le Petit Parisien*.

18. In *The Past in French History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), Robert Gildea analyses how the baron de Mackau argued the advantages of Boulangism to the comte de Paris, saying it could “transform royalism from a movement of chiefs without Indians into a genuine populist enterprise” (303–4). William Irvine, “Royalists and the Politics of Nationalism,” in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France*, ed. Robert Tombs (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), cites a letter from 10 February 1888 in which a confidant of the comte's wrote to Mackau proposing a secret meeting with the comte to discuss “an imminent monarchist restoration” (113–14). On 2 January 1888, the Bonapartist pretender, Prince Napoléon Victor, also received Boulanger, whom he saw as a “stepping-stone in the acquisition of power.” See Bernard Ménager, “Nationalists and Bonapartists,” in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France*, 137.

19. The duchesse actually sold her mansion on the Champs Élysées to support his campaign. An excellent account of the importance and role of politics in her life is Patrick de Gmeline, *La Duchesse d'Uzès, 1847–1933* (Paris: Perrin, 1986), esp. 91–122.

20. Sternhell, *Droite révolutionnaire*, 74. In February 1889, Maurice Barrès introduced Polignac to workers as one their new recruits. See also Jacques Chastenot, *La République des républicains, 1878–1893* (Paris: Hachette, 1954), 205, and Michael Burns, *Rural Society and French Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), chap. 3. When Déroulède became the Ligue's president in 1888, he appointed a new board of directors, half of whom had links to Boulanger.

general would take over the presidency, Boulanger refused.²¹ Eight months later, Boulanger went into exile, and the following year, he committed suicide. In March 1889, the Ligue was banned and royalists lost face as the party of demagoguery and disorder, their ambitions at returning France to a monarchy destroyed.

From 1886 to 1889, then, the potential for regime change set the stage for those disenchanted with the status quo to appreciate music's ideological utility anew. A broad range of composers—conservatives such as d'Indy, republicans such as Saint-Saëns, and even composers known for popular music—increasingly wrote sarabandes, gavottes, pavaues, and minuets. While for some, these were most likely a response to a rising fashion, for others, they presented opportunities to show how old musical forms could profitably be enjoyed in contemporary contexts, a metaphor, perhaps, for how the monarchy could be integrated and might thrive in the modern world.

THE DANCE CRAZE

With Legitimists allied with Orléanist royalists but unable to mount a serious opposition, and some willing to join a new alliance with an emerging republican Right,²² few in 1886 anticipated an actual return to monarchy or a Third Empire. Still, after Amélie's spectacular wedding, a taste for reviving Ancien Régime festivities began to spread, along with the music and dancing associated with them.²³ Perhaps picking up on interest in Lully's and Rameau's dances heard at the Opéra, the *concerts populaires*, and private salons in the early 1880s, together with new editions of this music (see chap. 5), d'Indy, in his *Suite dans le style ancien* (1886), composed dances modeled on those that thrived under Louis XIV—a prelude, entrée, sarabande, *menuet*, and *ronde française*—setting them for two flutes, trumpet, and strings.²⁴ As he honors the structures and rhythms associated with these dances, he adds new charm through the

21. Boulanger cited personal reasons (his mistress). Chastenet, *République des républicains*, suggests that this was tantamount to Hercules finding his Omphale, that is, losing his strength to the charm of a woman (192).

22. Edouard Drumont, in *La Fin d'un monde* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1889), bemoans the monarchists' inability to articulate an effective opposition (319). After the comte de Chambord died, he suggests, many legitimists were uninterested in joining forces under the comte de Paris, preferring instead to "amuse themselves, . . . dress up, dance, and love (393). Maxime Lecomte, in *Les Ralliés: Histoire d'un parti, 1886–1898* (Paris: Flammarion, 1898), 66–83, reproduces documents from August 1886 arguing to establish an alliance between monarchists and conservative republicans.

23. Moreover, in March 1887, the Opéra-Comique revived Grétry's *Epreuve villageoise* (1784).

24. Entrées can be found in Lully's *Armide* and Rameau's *Dardanus*, sarabandes in Gluck's *Armide*, and minuets and rondos in much music by Lully, Gluck, and Rameau. In his *opéra-comique Attendez-moi sous l'orme* (1882), d'Indy had earlier sought to explore "human feelings in those

way the melodic lines interact and the chromatic harmonies that result. The prelude's slow tempo invites the listener to savor these in the two solo flutes, moving in tonally unstable parallel thirds and in seconds in contrary motion. In the *menuet*, d'Indy creates rhythmic interest by alternating two measures of hemiola (three quarter beats) with two measures in 6/8. D'Indy's sarabande, which was well received at the Société nationale on 13 March 1887, borrows the genre's stately pace and accented second beat, but in incorporating minor ninths and major sevenths as color around the repeated Ds (ex. 19), he shows how flexible and adaptive the dance can be in modern "clothes." In 1887, possibly inspired by the prelude to Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui*, Erik Satie composed three sarabandes also with unresolved seventh and ninth chords.²⁵

Simultaneously, aristocrats began to perform old dances, sometimes in period costumes, wigs and all, especially the stately pavane from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the elegant minuet that first appeared at the court of Louis XIV. As in the seventeenth century, when the king himself danced publicly, and when children and gentlemen were expected to practice dance daily, it was believed that learning the "measured, studied, and composed" gestures and attitudes of dance would not only discipline the body but also physically encode values associated with the Ancien Régime.²⁶ In 1887 and 1888, *L'Illustration* published three images of this new fashion, showing couples dancing the pavane and minuet (figs. 71–73). The magazine included the score of a minuet for piano "inspired by melodies from yesteryear," in case readers wished to reenact the experience. To explain this new fashion, it noted:

Whether from Italy or Spain (and dictionaries disagree), the pavane has just made a triumphant return to the realm of fashion, full of frequent revolutions. The minuet, which is younger and more typically French, shares in

with wigs and powder," although he and others were not entirely satisfied with the results (letter to Adolphe Jullien, 21 February 1882, F-Pn, Opéra). Vicomte Alexis de Castillon (d. 1873), too, earlier wrote a dance suite with a sarabande, revived at the Société nationale in January 1886.

25. See Alan Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (New York: Norton, 1988), 20–21. In his *Satie the Bohemian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Steven Whiting, however, thinks that Satie had already been exploring such harmonies (66). Robert Orledge, in his *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), argues for the influences of Victor-Dynam Fumet, the pianist whom Satie replaced at the Chat Noir in 1887, and of Gregorian chant (34–38). Satie's *Sarabandes* undoubtedly influenced the *Sarabande* Debussy first published in the *Grand journal du lundi* (17 February 1896) and later his *Pour le piano* (1901). See André Hoérée, "Préface," in Claude Debussy *Images (oubliées): Three Pieces for Piano* (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Theodore Presser, 1977).

26. See, e.g., Philippe Beaussant, *Versailles, Opéra* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), 34–39, and Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Festive Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

EX. 19 Vincent d'Indy, *Suite dans le style ancien* (1886), "Sarabande."

In this *Suite*, d'Indy experimented with traditional eighteenth-century dance forms but injected his own characteristically complex harmonic progressions into each movement. The "Sarabande" contrasts sections of comparative simplicity, such as the one below and those in which the double-dotted melody is carried by a solo flute with pizzicato string accompaniment, with more contrapuntally complex sections for the strings alone, where the melody appears in canon between the first violin and the viola.

Flute I
Flute II
Trumpet
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

Lent (♩ = 60)

pp

Lent

p

p

p

p

this. . . . The return to truly artistic traditions is a comforting sign. Besides, society's newly found passion for the pavane and the minuet is not an isolated event. It is one among a number of new instances of a renewed taste for traditional elegance. . . . Even in the theater, in several recent ballets, this yearning to be charmed rather than amazed, which is typical of the French spirit and even more of the Parisian spirit, has been in evidence. The minuet was still almost a novelty—an ancient novelty—two years ago, when Victor Hugo's grandchildren danced it in costume with Alphonse Daudet's son.²⁷

For royalists such as the duchesse d'Uzès, these dances were a way not only to rediscover their "lost joy," but also to educate their children in the *mœurs* of the Ancien Régime. In March 1887, *L'Illustration* reproduced drawings of children

27. "Nos gravures . . . le Menuet," *L'Illustration*, 8 January 1887, 28–29.



FIG. 71 Dancing the minuet in period costumes, *L'Illustration*, 8 January 1887.

The text that accompanies this illustration explains the vogue for eighteenth-century dances: “The duchesse d’Uzès, that typical Parisian woman, felt the need to renew the usual elements of aristocratic parties and to attempt more than ever to fill this thirst for artistic sensations that consumes us at the turn of this century. . . . This was the source of this new fashion. Other salons followed.”

dancing pavanes and minuets. Real clothes belonging to the host’s grandfather, together with the direction of the dances by the Opéra’s *maître de danse*, assured an experience purporting to have some authenticity.²⁸ By April, this taste spread to masked balls at the Opéra where dancers began the evening by performing a pavane and passepied from Emile Paladilhe’s opera *Patrie* (1886).

For republicans, the taste for bringing a modern perspective to old dances, which continued through 1900, reinforced interest in earlier models of French charm and grace, as discussed in chapter 6. Delibes’s six dances *dans le style ancien* composed for Victor Hugo’s play *Le Roi s’amuse*, at the Comédie-Française in 1882, contain a gaillard, pavane, madrigal, and passepied. The Société des concerts performed a sixteenth-century pavane that December. Saint-Saëns, who incorporated pavanes

28. “Nos gravures . . . Une soirée chez M. de Lesseps,” *L'Illustration*, 26 March 1887, 208, 216. Ferdinand de Lesseps was the creator of the Suez Canal. In 1880, he founded a company to construct the Panama Canal, which was funded by French bonds beginning in 1888. Later, he was condemned for the scandal surrounding it.



FIG. 72 Dancing the pavane, *L'Illustration*, 26 March 1887.

At the home of Ferdinand de Lesseps, eleven children, ranging in age from 5 to 16, donned old-fashioned clothes and reenacted pavanés and minuetts under the direction of the Opéra's dancing master, M. de Soria. The two youngest, "Jacques, 3 ½ years old, and little Giselle . . . 16 months old . . . seemed bored and preferred sleeping to dancing."



FIG. 73 Sarabande in "Reveillon mondaine," *L'Illustration*, 22 December 1888.

The sarabande was danced at Christmas Eve parties in 1888.

into his historical operas *Etienne Marcel* (1879) and *Henry VIII* (1883), also included a minuet and gavotte in his Septet (1881) and another pavane in his *Prosperine* (Opéra-Comique, 1887), a work praised for its charm and grace.²⁹ Pavanes in Gaston Salvayre's *Egmont* (1886) and Paladilhe's *Patrie* (1886), as well as the minuets in Massenet's *Manon* (1884), function as musical echoes of the French past. The young composer Georges Marty concluded that even the Académie might be open to such dances and in 1885–86 included a minuet, the first movement of his Suite for orchestra, as one of his Envois de Rome. *Figaro* reproduced a minuet from Godard's *Suite de danses anciennes et modernes* (31 August 1887). In 1887, when the comte de Paris was advocating a return to monarchy, not only the composer-conductor Gabriel Marie but also popular composers like Aimé Girod and Emile Girard composed pavanes for piano, the latter entitled “Souvenir d'autrefois.”

The Bibliothèque nationale houses many pavanes from the period, most them signifying the Ancien Régime, but no more so than in 1887 when nine were published.³⁰ A sixteenth-century pavane was even included that year in a collection of children's choruses.³¹ Among the most famous is the *Pavane* for orchestra and chorus by Gabriel Fauré. Although he had begun the work in August 1887 with Jules Danbé's orchestra in mind, he told the comtesse Greffulhe that he had written it for her salon. That September, he asked her cousin Robert de Montesquiou to write words for the chorus. Fauré's *Pavane*, which the Concerts Lamoureux premiered on 25 November 1888, was finally danced and performed at the countess's garden party in the Bois de Boulogne on 21 July 1891.³² Many other composers also wrote pavanes and suites in the next decade.³³

Whether performed in period costumes or listened to in concerts, whether in aristocratic salons or popular settings, the Opéra, the Société nationale, or the Folies-Bergère, these dances electrified the imagination. They showed how contemporary music could embody fruitful relationships with the past, whether

29. M. Savigny, “Les Théâtres,” *L'Illustration*, 26 March 1887, 216. Possibly this work was influenced by Lully's *Prosperine*, republished by Michaelis.

30. In the Bibliothèque nationale, I found twenty-three pavanes published in France between 1875 to 1886, and sixty-six more published from 1888 through 1900—most of them “memories of past times,” whether associated with the Medicis, Henri II of Navarre, or Henri III, whether written “in the style of Louis XIV,” or parts of “salon fantasies” to be danced in recreating eighteenth-century *fêtes galantes*.

31. *Chœurs d'enfants* composed or transcribed by Adolphe-Léopold Danhauser (Paris: Lemoine, 1887), 2.

32. Gabriel Fauré to Comtesse Greffulhe, ca. 29 September 1887, in *Gabriel Fauré Correspondance*, ed. Jean-Michel Nectoux (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 131–32.

33. The young Paul Vidal (Prix de Rome, 1883) wrote a pavane in 1888. Widor included one in his *Jeanne d'Arc* (1890). See also chapter 11, n. 121.

through imitation, appropriation, or assimilation. While some functioned as symbols of an earlier era with the power to help people identify with it, others like Fauré's *Pavane*, written for an aristocrat with republican sympathies, were attempts to bring a modern perspective to an old tradition. They suggested that the past had a value that could inform present-day thinking, including its music, that progress was not merely a continuous process of linear evolution but something that could turn back on itself in order to propel itself forward.³⁴ In this sense, the utility of these dances was cultural, sometimes countercultural, rather than moral, educational, or commercial. Like republicans, aristocrats increasingly looked to the arts as a way to assure the continuity of their traditions.

WAGNER'S THREATENING ALLURE

Wagnerism invades us, inundates us. In my classes at the Conservatoire, my students think about it constantly when speaking among themselves, and even talk with me about it. What are we supposed to do, those of us from another generation? Remain indifferent, insensitive to a universal movement, or change with the times, modify our ideas, our style, in short, our art?

LÉO DELIBES³⁵

In 1885, besides the fall of Jules Ferry, the death of Victor Hugo, symbol of the Third Republic, marked a major transition in French culture. Hugo had symbolized republican resistance to Napoleon III, and his return to France in 1870 signaled the end of the Second Empire. Some compared him to Gambetta in that both were committed to a republic of democracy, not violence.³⁶ His poetry of family values, of combat and liberation, expressed with great force and clarity, his concept of literature as a social act, of art for the sake of progress, and of theater through which the writer could “take charge of souls,” and his insistence on bringing art to the masses—these earned him canonization.³⁷ On 27 February 1881, France celebrated his eightieth birthday with Jules Ferry bringing him a bust of the Republic and thousands of Parisians parading before his house all afternoon. For the occasion, Saint-Saëns

34. See Jann Pasler, “Paris: Conflicting Notions of Progress,” in *The Late Romantic Era*, ed. Jim Samson (London: Macmillan, 1991), 389–416.

35. Delibes in conversation with Lalo, ca. 1888, cited in Joël-Marie Fauquet, “Le Folklore breton dans *Le Roi d’Ys*, un antidote contre Wagner?” *L’Avant-Scène opéra Le Roi d’Ys* 65 (July 1984): 20.

36. Gildea, *Past in French History*, 37.

37. See *La Gloire de Victor Hugo: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 1er octobre 1985–6 janvier 1986*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985), and Priscilla Clark, *Literary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 145–149, 156.

wrote a *Hymne à Victor Hugo* for huge orchestra and chorus, organ, eight harps and trumpets, using a motif attributed to Beethoven, the poet's favorite composer.³⁸ In eastern Paris, they named the boulevard that links the Place de la République to the Place de la Nation for him. When he died, the long shadow of this French Hercules was lifted and many began to conceive of art's social utility differently.

As frustration with the positivist and secular rationalism of the *républicains opportunistes* grew, a number of "movements" critical of the artistic agendas of republicanism emerged in elite and popular culture. The Ligue des patriotes had shown that the French could appreciate an authoritarian leader and that they understood the appeal of the irrational. Listeners sick of materialism flocked to the Concerts Lamoureux, whose conductor promised escape from bourgeois banality and commercialism. Along with those in high-priced seats, there were many students, especially from the Ecole de médecine, driven by a "thirst for the infinite" to counteract the "precise and the concrete" aspects of life. They sought to overcome the strictures of measure and proportion and get beyond the limits of the individual to immerse themselves in the "hereditary aspects of a race." Wagner's music offered a kind of "sonorous and celestial manna."³⁹ Beginning in 1882, virtually all Lamoureux's concerts featured it; some gave premieres of French works inspired by Wagner.⁴⁰ On 2 March 1884, the public sat spellbound "in a religious silence" for an hour and a quarter as he treated them to the French premiere of the first act of *Tristan und Isolde*. If the work preached redemption through love, this was not the love of family that would lead to love of country, as envisaged by republicans. Rather it was love as a passion. The desire this music aroused was certainly as sensuous (and, arguably, as sexual) as the music of Delibes and Massenet. But it also called on the unfathomable, the uncontainable, and the incommensurable. As Nietzsche described it, Wagner derived his power from Dionysus, not the Apollo whom the French government had for so long idolized.

In trying to describe the experience of this premiere, *Ménestrel's* reviewer found that the traditional method of judging through comparison, as promoted by republicans, simply did not work. Because nothing resembled the way the voice and the

38. While Hugo was alive, a wide range of composers set his poetry to music—not only Saint-Saëns, but also Berlioz, Bizet, Fauré, Franck, d'Indy, and Massenet.

39. Léon Daudet, who attended the 1887 Paris performance of *Lohengrin*, saw the taste for Wagner's music as part of the reaction against the "evolutionist materialism" that had become overwhelming since 1885. Many of his cohorts at the Ecole de médecine sought "refuge" at the Concerts Lamoureux. See Daudet, "Devant la douleur," in *Souvenirs et polémiques*, ed. Bernard Oudin (Paris: Laffont, 1992), 228–30.

40. For example, Lamoureux presented the prelude to Chabrier's *Gwendoline* on 22 November 1885 and d'Indy's *Le Chant de la cloche* on 28 February 1886.

orchestra were equals in *Tristan*, the work could not be seen as superior to this or that. Any attempt at analysis would “lessen the emotion and spoil the pleasure.” The only way to evaluate such music was in its own terms, its own logic. This meant understanding Wagner’s theory and how *Tristan* was the “culmination” of the system worked out in the *Ring*.⁴¹ The next year, an international collection of writers and intellectuals who patronized the Concerts Lamoureux started the *Revue wagnérienne* (1885–88) to do just that: “explain the lyrical works of Wagner to the public” and, for those who knew it already, turn them into connoisseurs. Each month, they reviewed all performances of Wagner in France and published essays by their members, including Mallarmé and Huysmans. In their first issue, sold at the Concerts Lamoureux, the royalist music critic Louis de Fourcaud revisited the notion of a Wagnerian logic, appropriating a concept long associated with republican values to suggest, counterintuitively, that Wagner brought “a return to logic” along with “human truth.”⁴² Many of them also met and performed Wagner together as a group called the Petit Bayreuth (fig. 74).

One should not take this to mean that republicans rejected Wagner. To the extent that Wagner’s music represented musical progress with its high-minded tone, extreme chromaticism, and innovative dramatic form, those with eclectic tastes were open to what the French might learn from it. Republican composers were among the many French who, along with Lamoureux and aristocrats such as Winnaretta Singer (the future princesse de Polignac), the comtesse de Pourtalès, and the comtesse Greffuhle, traveled to Bayreuth. In 1876, Saint-Saëns heard the *Ring* there, and in 1882, with Delibes, Salvayre, and Guiraud, the premiere of *Par-sifal*. Anti-Wagnerian critics, such as Camille Bellaigue, too made the trip in 1886, and in 1888, when Debussy first attended, some 120 French went to Bayreuth.⁴³ As noted above, in the decade following Wagner’s death in 1883, French composers began to assimilate what they found important in his music. Besides permeating music by Wagnerians like d’Indy and Chabrier, Wagnerian leitmotifs characterize Saint-Saëns’s *Henry VIII* (1883) and Massenet’s *Manon* (1884). Steven Huebner

41. Eugène Briqueville, “*Tristan et Yseult* aux Concerts Lamoureux,” *Ménestrel*, 9 March 1884, 116. Of course, critics did use Wagner as a basis for comparison, especially those unsympathetic to his music. For example, in reviewing a concert on 27 March 1892, H. Barbedette compares the adagietto from Beethoven’s Symphony in C minor to the prelude from *Lohengrin* as examples of “the true and the artificial, the spontaneous and the *recherché*.”

42. Louis de Fourcaud, “Wagnérisme,” *Revue wagnérienne*, 8 February 1885, 8. Note that the editorial staff of the journal included not only the founder Edouard Dujardin, but also the Polish pianist Tédor de Wyzewa and the British political theorizer Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

43. In his *Le Voyage artistique à Bayreuth* (Paris: Delagrave, 1900), Albert Lavignac lists those French who attended Bayreuth performances between 1876 and 1899. By 1896, over 700

Petit-Bayreuth

SÉANCE DU DIMANCHE 31 MAI 1885

PROGRAMME

- 1° « SIEGFRIED-IDYLL »
- 2° PRÉLUDE DU 3^{ME} ACTE DES MAÎTRES CHANTEURS
ARRANGEMENT POUR PETIT ORCHESTRE PAR M^{LE} CAMILLE BENOÎT
- 3° 1^{RE} ACTE DE PARSIFAL
 - a PRÉLUDE
 - b « DAS HEILTHUM » (Rêve de Gurnemanz)
M^{LE} G. S. RENÉ TAILLANDIER
 - c SCÈNE DU LAC
M^{LE} G. S. RENÉ TAILLANDIER, ANFORTAS-GURNEMANZ
M^{LE} CLODIO PARSIFAL
 - d SCÈNE DU TEMPLE
M^{LE} G. S. RENÉ TAILLANDIER, GURNEMANZ
M^{LE} CLODIO PARSIFAL
- 4° 2^{ME} ACTE DE PARSIFAL
 - a PRÉLUDE
 - b SCÈNE dans le CHATEAU ENCHANTE
M^{LE} G. S. RENÉ TAILLANDIER, KLINGSORN
- 5° 3^{ME} ACTE DE PARSIFAL
 - a PRÉLUDE
 - b SCÈNE 1^{RE}
 - c SCÈNE du VENDREDI - SAINT
M^{LE} CLODIO PARSIFAL
M^{LE} G. S. RENÉ TAILLANDIER, GURNEMANZ

EXÉCUTANTS

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| M ^{RE} BOISSEAU, WENNER, LAFORGE. | |
| H. IMBERT, M. GAUPILLAT, GATELLIER, | |
| DAVID, HENRY & J. MIERSCH . . . | VIOLON ^S |
| M ^{RE} WARNECKE, WITT, J. GARCIN, | |
| & CH. LAMOUREUX | VIOLON ^S |
| M ^{RE} BILOIR, A. IMBERT, JIMENEZ, | |
| H. BECKER & BURGER | VIOLONCELLES |
| M ^{RE} CHARPENTIER & ROUBIÉ | CONTRE-BASS ^S |
| M ^{RE} DONJON | BASSE |
| M ^{RE} TRIÉBERT | HAUTBOIS |
| M ^{RE} TURBAN | CLARINETTES |
| M ^{RE} DIHAU | BASSON |
| M ^{RE} REINE & HALARY | COR ^S |
| M ^{RE} TESTE | TRUMPETTES |
| M ^{RE} LEPIDORE | FRÈRES |
| M ^{RE} V. D'INDY | TIMBALLE ^S |
| M ^{RE} L. LEROY & LUZZATTO | PIANOS |

L'arrangement des fragments de PARSIFAL pour Petit Orchestre est de M^{RE} E. HUMPERDINCK
Le N^{OS} 2 sous la direction de M^{RE} C. Benoît - Les N^{OS} 1, 3, 4 et 5, sous la direction de M^{RE} A. Lascaux.

FIG. 74 Petit-Bayreuth program, 31 May 1885.

"Petit-Bayreuth" was the name adopted by a group of dedicated Wagnerians who got together to discuss and perform his works. The group included among its members Chabrier, d'Indy, Chausson, and Humperdinck, the last of whom arranged Wagner's works so that they could be performed by the group's small orchestra.

calls these a "clearer invitation to listen for motivic connections of a rudimentary developing-variation type than previous French repertory."⁴⁴

Beginning with Pachelbel in the 1860s, conductors endeavored to educate their audiences to the merits of Wagner's music by multiple performances. Some took its difficulties as challenges that, as with Berlioz's music, would stretch their conducting capacities, performers' skills and coordination, and audiences' ability to tolerate expressive intensity and imagine drama without the stage. For example,

were attending. Not everyone loved what they heard. For a listener who found the whole experience fascinating, but much of the music boring, see Albert Wolff, *Voyages à travers le monde* (Paris: Victor-Havard, 1884), 259–343.

44. The immense question of Wagner's reception and influence on French composers has been treated extensively, most recently and thoughtfully by Huebner in his *French Opera*, vii, 66, and Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz, eds., *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitäts-Verlag, 1999).

to draw opera-lovers to his premiere of the religious scene from *Parsifal* in 1884, Colonne repeated it in the middle of a program featuring the popular baritone Jean-Baptiste Faure. Although this audience remained unimpressed, the work entered Colonne's repertoire, appearing four more times in spring 1887. In a review of these performances, Edouard Dujardin, editor of the *Revue wagnérienne*, commented on how much better Colonne got over time. Whereas in 1884, he had had problems with tempos and the movement of the chorus, in 1887, he got everything right. In April, Dujardin also waxed enthusiastic about his performance of the Flower Maidens' scene from *Parsifal*, "an extraordinarily difficult work" requiring not only "absolute precision," but also "superior musical intelligence."⁴⁵ Two months earlier, the amateur choral society Concordia had also taken it on for the challenge of singing in twelve parts, its most demanding work to date.

Wagner's success with orchestral audiences, the reintroduction of Wagner at the Société des concerts in 1884 after a fourteen-year hiatus, and the literature defending his music gradually convinced state officials to support a production of *Lohengrin*.⁴⁶ In late summer 1885, the Opéra-Comique director Carvalho and its conductor Jules Danbé traveled to Vienna to hear the opera. There they consulted with the conductor Richter on what they would need to mount their own production. They also stopped in Munich, where they heard it again and got further instructions from Wagner's widow.⁴⁷ Unfortunately in December their project fizzled due to organized press resistance; however, in February 1886,

45. Edouard Dujardin, "Notes et nouvelles," *Revue wagnérienne*, 15 February 1887, 3, and 15 April 1887, 67. For more on the reception of *Lohengrin*, see also Kelly Maynard, "The Enemy Within: Encountering Wagner in Early Third Republic France" (PhD diss., UCLA, 2007).

46. Even if *Lohengrin* evoked a riot of different responses at the Concerts Padeloup in 1868, it was a favorite among French musicians and writers. In 1861, Baudelaire compared the experiences of Berlioz, Liszt, and himself to its overture in the first installment of his famous essay "Richard Wagner et *Tannhäuser* à Paris," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marcel Ruff (Paris: Seuil, 1968), 510–23. In 1858, Flaxland published the opera for piano and voice in French; in 1868, Saint-Saëns transcribed the religious march from *Lohengrin* for piano, violin, and organ. According to the future director of fine arts Henry Roujon, the writer Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, one of the first Wagnerians of his generation, often sang all the parts of *Lohengrin* for his literary friends while accompanying himself on the piano. (See Frantisek Deak, *Symbolist Theater: The Formation of an Avant-garde* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993], 96–97.) An Italian production was mounted at the Théâtre-Italien in 1878 but the premiere in French, privately supported, took place in Nice on 21 March 1881. Angelo Neumann, director of the Prague theater, tried to bring a German production to Paris in 1882. To encourage this, Lamoureux conducted its first act four times beginning on 12 February 1882. In 1884, the Société des concerts reintroduced the marches from *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, earlier removed for reasons of "high propriety" after the Franco-Prussian war. See D. Kern Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 271.

47. Nicolet, writing in *Le Gaulois*, cited in *Ménestrel*, 13 September 1885, 327.

the Eden-Théâtre decided to stage it, albeit without a state subsidy. Playing on the controversy over French protectionism, on 25 February 1886, the L'Alcazar introduced popular audiences to a parody of it, *Lohengrin à l'Alcazar*. Meanwhile, both Lamoureux and Colonne prepared listeners with fragments, as did the wind band of the Bon Marché department store, and on Good Friday 1886, Lamoureux treated his audience to an all-Wagner concert at the Eden-Théâtre.⁴⁸

Still, there was also public outcry that Wagner's music was simply not French. Admitting that *Lohengrin* had a "great nobility of expression" and that the stories of Tristan and of Parsifal and his son Lohengrin came from Brittany, some nevertheless saw everything Wagner wrote after *Lohengrin* as "the contrary of the French spirit." Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians clashed over whether his work embodied clarity or not and whether its unending melodies represented an evolutionary concept of melody or exceeded the boundaries of French rationalism.⁴⁹ If music's utility was believed to lie, in part, in helping audiences to explore, understand, and embrace French temperament and *mœurs*, with Wagner it was feared to be too powerful: it could overwhelm French values and cause the French to lose sight of something essential in the French spirit. Therefore, despite the republicans' hubris about France's ability to assimilate differences from abroad, adversaries thought Wagner's music could (and should) never be acclimatized in France. Those very republicans who believed in the benefits of assimilation, supporting education of the lower classes and the colonized, became anxious about the meaning of assimilation when it came to the music of their enemy. Whereas earlier many had felt that France could learn much from the German educational system, the German choral tradition, and the Germany army, and whereas in the 1870s, French audiences had successfully assimilated Handel's music, Wagner was seen differently.

There were other objections as well. After traveling to Munich and Bayreuth in 1886, the amateur singer and co-founder of Concordia, Mme Henriette Fuchs, published a 357-page book on Wagner. Like others, she was "enthralled by the strange, troubling charm of this sensual and intoxicating music" and found it difficult to analyze her impressions. Nonetheless, four evenings of "sung monologues" seemed "monotonous." She particularly objected to the "gradually diminishing role of the voices"—the duos, trios, quartets, and choruses—until their "obliteration" and to the "preponderance of the orchestra, as both symphonic and melodic

48. Fantasies on *Lohengrin* by L. Girard for wind band were published in 1869 and 1884. The Bon Marché's Harmonie performed the prelude and nuptial march from *Lohengrin* on 20 June, 27 June, 4 July, and 8 August 1885; the Concerts Lamoureux did fragments on 7 February 1886, and the Concerts Colonne excerpts on 21 March 1886.

49. See, e.g., H. Barbedette, "Concerts et soirées," *Ménestrel*, 21 December 1884, 23.

agent.” From her perspective, in seeking theatrical illusion, Wagner “sacrificed the beauty of singing, the purity of the vocal line, and the charm of voices in juxtaposition.” Mme Fuchs also protested the human truths that his characters purportedly represented, finding that they lacked any moral sense, which she defined in republican terms as an internal struggle between duty and passion. Even if Lohengrin was a symbol of Christian purity, she found his character and feelings obscure. She also faulted Wagner for refusing to acknowledge the influence of French music (Berlioz) and French concerns (the relationship between music and poetry).⁵⁰

Amid calls for more protectionism by the Ligue des patriotes, especially vis-à-vis Germany, a host of concerned composers and worried publishers went further, viewing Wagner and anything related to him as threats. As Wagner’s popularity grew, Saint-Saëns, nationalist and classicist to the core, led the resistance. Annegret Fauser has called him “a fervent Wagnerian who changed into a bitter anti-Wagnerian.”⁵¹ Earlier, he had been very enthusiastic, performing Wagner’s music in Paris, visiting Wagner in 1876, and promoting him in the French press. Although he, like Mme Fuchs, criticized the subordination of the singer to the work as a whole (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), he tried to keep an open mind, encouraging a Czech impresario to bring a production of *Lohengrin* to Paris in 1881 and declaring *Die Walküre* “the Theater of the Future.” However, on 25 October 1884, in a widely reproduced speech at the Académie des beaux-arts, he began to object, pointing to a crisis in music. Without mentioning Wagner, he criticized Germans’ “increasing disdain for melody,” worried about the possibility that this might “consign melody to the least importance,” and asked whether the French have “enough influence to stop this movement.”⁵² The next year, when the *Revue wagnérienne* was created, he published this speech in a collection of essays, *Harmonie et mélodie*. In it, he expressed admiration for Wagner’s music, but pointed to Wagnerians’ intolerance

50. Henriette Fuchs, *L’Opéra et le drame musical d’après l’œuvre de Richard Wagner* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1887), 146, 212, 264, 323.

51. Annegret Fauser, “Nationality and Wagnerism: A French Dichotomy?” (paper presented at the Eighth International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, Surrey, UK, 1994). She argues that the two were friends until the early 1880s when Wagner developed a distaste for Saint-Saëns’s newer works such as the *Danse macabre*—“a nothingness”—and was offended when Hans von Bülow, writing on *Samson et Dalila*, explained, “Saint-Saëns was the only composer capable of profiting from Wagner’s theories without letting himself be carried away.” Other scholars too have analyzed the composer’s complex attitudes toward Wagner, most recently, Stephen Studd, *Saint-Saëns: A Critical Biography* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1999), 138–41, 148–49, and Jean Gallois, *Camille Saint-Saëns* (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 2004), 175–78, 245–48.

52. Camille Saint-Saëns, “Causerie sur le passé, le présent, et l’avenir de la musique,” *Ménestrel*, 26 October 1886, 377–79. This essay also appeared in *L’Avenir musical*, a journal for music educators.

for other music and claimed he could never embrace the “Wagnerian religion.” “I’m an eclectic,” he explained, “I love my liberty passionately and cannot bear to have admirations imposed on me.” Anxious about the impact of Wagneromania in France, he implored young French musicians to “stay French, be yourselves, of your time and your country. The future is yours.”⁵³ During the controversy over whether the state-subsidized Opéra-Comique should produce *Lohengrin*, he claimed that the welcome Germany had shown French musicians was not comparable to the French infatuation with German composers such as Mozart and Weber.⁵⁴

Such sentiments caused quite a stir. During his German concert tour in January–February 1886, many Germans reacted with anger. Even if he pleaded that he was “enough of an artist to be no enemy of any artwork,” several towns feared public disturbances (such as those associated with Wagner’s music in Paris) and canceled his performances.⁵⁵ In spring 1886, d’Indy considered retaliation against Saint-Saëns: putting together a tour of the Concerts Padeloup in Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire in which he would conduct nothing by his colleague.⁵⁶ Then, that November, d’Indy and Ernest Chausson staged a coup at the composers’ league, the Société nationale, hoping to alienate Saint-Saëns and take control of the organization. When Saint-Saëns heard that they had voted 42 against 26 to introduce foreign music into concerts that had been entirely for music by living French composers, he resigned as president. His eclecticism had reached its limits and his desire to protect his musical peers superseded his openness to foreign influences.⁵⁷ With this, he became dangerously close to sharing the intolerance he associated with Wagnerians.

Tensions reached a climax in 1887 over the Paris premiere of *Lohengrin*, galvanizing another debate about music in France. Politics inevitably permeated the discussions. On 28 March, *Le Temps* reminded Parisians that Wagner hated France. Hatred for Wagner was linked with the desire for revenge; hope for return of the two provinces was revived when the people of German-occupied Alsace-Lorraine elected

53. The introduction from *Harmonie et mélodie*, dated March 1885, was reproduced in *Ménestrel*, 16 August 1885, 289–90, and 23 August 1885, 297–99.

54. See Georges Servières, *Richard Wagner jugé en France* (Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1886), 292.

55. Letter from Saint-Saëns to Angelo Neumann, reprinted in *Ménestrel*, 14 February 1886, 86. *Ménestrel* also printed correspondence concerning the cancellation of his concerts in Cassel, Dresden, and Bremen and the postponement of *Henri VIII* in Prague. According to *Ménestrel*, 21 February 1886, 95, Hanslick defended him, and his concert in Vienna went on as scheduled. His performance in Prague was hailed as a triumph. See also Yves Gerard, “Introduction” to *Saint Saëns: Regards sur mes contemporains* (Paris: Bernard Coutaz, 1990), 11–12.

56. Gallois, *Camille Saint-Saëns*, 245–46.

57. In January 1888, Saint-Saëns became president of the Société des compositeurs, another organization devoted to helping French composers.

only French-sympathetic candidates. Then the newspaper *Le Gaulois* interviewed various composers on Wagner. Gounod saw Wagner as France's national enemy, but thought his music should not be judged according to the man. Delibes wondered why Paris was the only civilized capital where *Lohengrin* had not yet been performed. Yet most composers queried believed that "given our *mœurs*, our impressions, and our aptitudes," there could never be a "complete naturalization" of Wagner's music in France. Joncières hoped that those who borrowed "precious materials" from Wagner would hold firm to "essential qualities of the French genius, clarity and precision." Ernest Reyer summed up their feelings: "his country is not ours."⁵⁸

In an attempt to incite resistance, on 19 April, the editor of *La Revanche*, whom Lamoureux had recently taken to court for prejudice, printed a translation of Wagner's incendiary 1870 farce *Eine Kapitulation*, which makes fun of the *républicains opportunistes*.⁵⁹ Schnaebelé, suspected of espionage, was arrested across the border on 21 April, and on 23 April, a member of the Ligue des patriotes tried to blackmail Lamoureux to prevent the sale of a pamphlet caricaturing Wagner. With German troops on the eastern frontier, mutual insults, and other "incidents," many felt that war with Germany was imminent.⁶⁰ The nation was in crisis, and the prime minister advised cancellation of the opera (fig. 75).⁶¹ The premiere was postponed. Only after Schnaebelé was set free on 30 April did Lamoureux go forward with *Lohengrin*, as *Ménestrel*'s editor had predicted, performing it uncut on 3 May at the Eden-Théâtre and charging extraordinarily high ticket prices, 25 or 50 francs per seat, 500 for a box.⁶²

58. Interviews in *Le Gaulois*, reproduced in *Revue wagnérienne*, 15 April 1887, 104–109.

59. When the *Revue wagnérienne* published this comedy on 8 October 1885 (in the same issue as its review of Saint-Saëns's *Harmonie et mélodie*), it included Wagner's explanation: he had published it, not to ridicule Parisians, but to show that, by comparison, the Germans were even more ridiculous (228–33).

60. Lannes de Montebello, French ambassador at St. Petersburg, letter to French Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux, 14 February 1897, Archives de la Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris, N.S., 33, Russie: Politique étrangère.

61. Martine Kahane and Nicole Wilde, *Wagner et la France* (Paris: Herscher, 1983), 65–69.

62. H. Moreno [Henri Heugel], "Semaine théâtrale: L'Ajournement de *Lohengrin*," *Ménestrel*, 1 May 1887, 171. For a Wagnerian critic's take on what held up this performance and how it turned out, see Adolphe Jullien's 1887 reviews in his *Musique* (Paris: Librairie de l'art, 1896): 234–48, and *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie de l'art, 1892): 86–102. For a less sympathetic perspective from one who would have preferred Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, see Amédée Boutarel's articles in *Ménestrel*: "Epilogue: A la question 'Lohengrin,'" 1 May 1887, 169–71, and "Lohengrin," 8 May 1887, 177–79, and in *La Musique des familles*: "Finissons-en! . . .," 21 April 1887, 210–11, "Lohengrin," 28 April 1887, 218–19, and "L'Ajournement de *Lohengrin*," 5 May 1887, 226–27. See also Elaine Brody, *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope, 1870–1925* (New York: Braziller, 1987), 49–51, and Manuela Schwartz, "'La Question de *Lohengrin*' zwischen 1869 und 1891," in *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme*, 107–36.

PRIX : 10 C.

L'ANTI-WAGNER

PRIX : 10 C.

PROTESTATION CONTRE LA REPRÉSENTATION ALLEMANDE DE L'EDEN-THÉÂTRE

A NOS LECTEURS

Mardi prochain 26 avril 1887, M. Lamoureux, momentanément directeur de l'Eden-Théâtre, offrira à la population parisienne, la première du *Lohengrin* de RICHARD WAGNER.

Ce monsieur fort peu français, qui sans doute a oublié nos désastres de 1870, se défend de ce manque de patriotisme en disant que l'art n'a pas de patrie.

Sans être chauvin, on peut faire remarquer à M. Lamoureux, qu'il a fort mal choisi son moment pour célébrer la gloire et la musique du musicien anti-français.

RICHARD WAGNER, personne ne l'a oublié, est l'individu qui au moment de nos désastres, nous a insulté dans une brochure restée célèbre.

Cet individu à mœurs infâmes a également publié un poème dont nous donnons plus bas quelques vers.

Nous laissons la plume à d'autres plus autorisés que nous, et nous nous faisons un devoir de reproduire l'article de M. Mermeix, rédacteur à la France, un de ceux qui n'ont pas oublié !

M. Grandmougin, le poète Franco-Comtois, avait publié l'année dernière, l'article ci-dessous.

M. Carvalho avait compris et des lors s'était abstenu; il a fallu que M. Lamoureux évoque encore, le spectre insulteur du mangeur de chonchoute allemand.

L'Éditeur.



M. LAMOUREUX offrant à Wagner l'or français provenant des représentations faites à l'Eden-Théâtre.

FIG. 75 Anti-Wagner propaganda, April 1887.

This caricature takes aim at Lamoureux, who had recently conducted *Lohengrin* in Paris, depicting the conductor as a monkey offering Wagner a plate of French gold that derived from not only his artist's rights but also the government subsidy that helped make them possible.

The performance took place without incident. However, although there was police protection outside and no protest within the hall, nationalist demonstrations outside the theater the next day alerted everyone to a potentially serious disruption of "public order." General Boulanger, as minister of war, had stood up to the Germans, and his sympathizers felt emboldened. To explain his motivations for performing Wagner, Lamoureux mustered all the republican-sounding arguments he could: he was caught between the huge expenses he had personally incurred to prepare the work, his "duty" as a "patriot," and what he saw as the "interests of

the country,” that is, “the cause of progress.” By this, he meant the need to “reveal to France a new art, one whose essence is absolutely superior” and could lead to “a considerable *élan* that would perhaps [otherwise] have never been known.”⁶³ Regardless of these arguments, the minister feared the still very pronounced associations that many felt between Wagner’s music and pro-German politics and ordered all subsequent performances halted indefinitely. A critic in *Le Petit Journal* put this in explicitly patriotic terms: “It is good to love music; it is preferable to love one’s country.”⁶⁴

The decision was full of ironies. Republicans promised more freedom of expression and less censorship and yet when faced with the threat of disturbance to “public order,” they resorted to the repressive tactics of the Moral Order. They believed in private enterprise and laissez-faire economics, especially after 1885, yet chose to squash the individual initiative shown by Lamoureux, who had spent his own money on the production. They advocated the prosperity that performances produced, but allowed politics to trump economics. They trusted public opinion, then began to deny it when Wagner’s music became popular. Ultimately, I suspect, the international diplomatic situation weighed heavily. Also, republicans may have worried that Wagner was becoming a new dogma and might squelch French diversity and eclecticism. From this perspective, the minister may have found the work potentially destructive of what his government hoped music could be. Possibly in response to his cancellation of *Lohengrin*, Colonne stopped performing Wagner for ten months, presenting nothing between the Flower Maidens and religious scenes from *Parsifal* on 8 April 1887 and the overture of *Tannhäuser* on 22 January 1888. Lamoureux continued to include Wagner in every concert, but decided to comfort nationalist anxieties by presenting Bizet’s dramatic overture *Patrie* and making room for plenty of Berlioz, Massenet, and Saint-Saëns.

For all their differences, French Wagnerians were not totally adverse to the republicans’ artistic agendas, and ironically shared more with conservative *opportunistes* than with modern radicals. For both Wagnerians and the *opportunistes*, music was more than a “pleasant art of passing, frivolous distraction”;⁶⁵ it should involve reflection and could elevate listeners by expressing grandeur and national character, or what some called “race.” However, Wagnerians and conservative *opportunistes* differed on the nature of music’s significance and the kind of model it offered society. These republicans looked to music as a metaphor for the order

63. Lamoureux’s letter in response to the minister is discussed in Boutarel, “Epilogue: A la question ‘Lohengrin.’”

64. Blaise Thiberté, “Causerie,” *Petit Journal*, 6 May 1887.

65. Saint-Saëns, “Causerie,” 377.

and harmony they envisaged in French society, an alternative to that found in religion. Music, a context for experiencing these, albeit through the imagination, was part of building a new notion of collective identity through shared tastes. In 1885, socialists agreed: "If art is social, it is collective. . . it carries the conceptual imprint of human collectivity."⁶⁶

French Wagnerians also appreciated how concerts brought people into a special "communion": "a thousand people gathered together, inspired by the same cause to close their eyes and undergo the same intense emotion, can each feel absolutely alone and yet identified by this inner feeling with all their neighbors, who have thus become truly one with them." While Marmontel thought of this as the "triumph of music," the poet Paul Valéry called it "the ideal religious state, the oneness in feeling of a living multitude."⁶⁷ Listening to the overture to *Lohengrin* led Baudelaire to theorize that in such a context, music "suggests analogous ideas in different brains."⁶⁸ In a sense, such experiences realized what the revolutionaries had sought in their festivals, although not in the service of civic goals.

Where Wagner's music went beyond the wishes of republicans to see music create community was in the nature of the inner experience it stimulated, the hopes, desires, and aspirations it addressed in listeners. In listening to *Lohengrin*, Baudelaire experienced an "ecstasy composed of pleasure and knowledge." Catulle Mendès found that this music made one "suffer with it as much as he who wrote it," reflecting that pleasure and pain were sometimes very close.⁶⁹ For many, it became a kind of substitute for religion. French Wagnerians' particular affinity for *Parsifal* derived in part from its allusions to Christian rituals. "It is reserved for Art," Wagner wrote, "to save the spirit of religion by recognizing the figurative value of the mythic symbols which the former would have us believe in their literal sense, and revealing their deep and hidden truth through an ideal presentation."⁷⁰ Living in a culture whose government increasingly disdained religion, those French attracted to Wagner's music yearned for an experience of the sublime, while recognizing it to be beyond their ability to grasp or understand it. Works

66. Jean Lombart, "Les Formes de l'art et le socialisme," *Revue socialiste*, January 1885, 331–32.

67. Marmontel, *Éléments d'esthétique musicale*, 259; Paul Valéry, "At the Lamoureux Concert in 1893," in his *Occasions*, trans. Roger Shattuck and Frederick Brown (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 199.

68. Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner," 513.

69. Ibid., 514. Catulle Mendès first visited Wagner and saw his operas in Munich in 1869. His *Richard Wagner* (Paris, 1886) was the first full-scale biography of the composer in French. See Huebner, *French Opera*, 255.

70. Richard Wagner, "Religion and Art," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ellis, vol. 7 (London: Broude Brothers, 1897), 213.

such as the overture to *Lohengrin* offered a “vista on a higher world.”⁷¹ Some looked to this music for intense, unequaled pleasure (*jouissance*), but others were seeking transcendence.

Unlike republicans who hoped that the self-cultivation encouraged by playing and listening to music would help form good citizens, who in turn would nurture the growth and perfection of society, French Wagnerians considered music a form of contemplation stimulating self-growth for its own sake. Huysmans understood *Tannhäuser* as an “allegory of Evil struggling with Good,” but interpreted this as “the symbol of our internal hell in opposition to our internal heaven.”⁷² Edouard Schuré saw *Parsifal* as representing a “transcendent idealism,” “the aspiration of a spiritual being for purity, goodness, perfection that alone can ennoble one’s internal nature and draw one toward the heights of spirituality and divine intelligence.” While Baudelaire was impressed with how Wagner could “translate all that is excessive, immense, and ambitious in the spiritual and natural man,” comparing his music to opium, Schuré admired the way Wagner attempted to balance and reconcile the passions with the superior intellect.⁷³ Camille Mauclair later put these ideas more simply: at concerts “each person prays to his own god and has his own dreams.” Listeners sought “contrasts, triumph and defeat, the mastering and the abandonment of self”: “I come to flee who I am to discover who I want to be.”⁷⁴ Such notions led to a cult of the self in some ways resembling that practiced in politics by Déroulède and Boulanger, albeit for different reasons.

With the fiasco of *Lohengrin* in 1887, Wagner’s music underlined a conflict in French audiences between their private and public needs and desires. Republicans looked to music to teach judgment and help audiences come to grips with their differences, but Wagner’s music became a passion demanding total submission and could lead to intolerance. Republicans expected music to help diffuse political and social tensions, but Déroulède’s patriotic extremism and Wagner’s music excited these and threatened the public order. Music’s utility was handcuffed, unable to negotiate the needs of self and other, the desire for order and progress. To indulge their fascination with Wagner’s music, French listeners eventually had to ignore the public concerns associated with his music and distance themselves from his politics. In arguing for putting on *Lohengrin*, critics from several newspapers

71. Edouard Schuré, “Les Concerts du dimanche et les maîtres symphonistes—Beethoven, Berlioz, Richard Wagner,” *Revue des deux mondes* 62 (March 1884): 814.

72. Joris-Karl Huysmans, “L’Ouverture de Tannhäuser,” *Revue wagnérienne*, 8 April 1885, 61.

73. Baudelaire, “Richard Wagner,” 514; Edouard Schuré, “Parsifal,” *Revue wagnérienne*, 8 November 1885, 270.

74. Camille Mauclair, *La Religion de la musique* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1928), 26, 41.

agreed that “art has no country” and “patriotism has nothing to do with art.”⁷⁵ Such sentiments threw into question the role of politics in the arts.

ART BEYOND POLITICS, MUSIC OF AND FOR THE MIND

In the 1870s, the *républicains opportunistes* made their thoughts on this notion clear: art should aspire to universal significance. In 1876, when government officials had banned Wagner from French concerts for reasons of public order, the city of Paris decided to sponsor a prize for the best symphony. City officials considered it “the purest and most abstract form of music.” Composers were to express “feelings of the highest order” without dealing with politics or religion. In the mid 1880s, several French composers returned to the genre. Fauré, whose first symphony dates from 1866–73, composed his Symphony in D minor in 1884.⁷⁶ In late 1885, Saint-Saëns accepted a commission from the London Philharmonic Society. Lalo and d’Indy also began symphonies in 1886.

Scholars have pointed to the indebtedness of Saint-Saëns’s Third Symphony to Liszt, to whose memory the work is dedicated, specifically Liszt’s notion of thematic transformation.⁷⁷ The work uses a returning, cyclical theme, the first such experiment in a French symphony, notably predating d’Indy’s *Symphonie cévenole* and Franck’s Symphony in D Minor, begun in early fall 1887.⁷⁸ Saint-Saëns also expands the modern orchestra, adding not only more woodwinds and brass, but

75. A. Boutarel, “Epilogue: A la question ‘Lohengrin,’” and H. Moreno, “Semaine théâtrale: L’ajournement de Lohengrin,” *Ménestrel*, 1 May 1887, 169. 171. These articles were written after *Lohengrin* was postponed from 30 April to 3 May.

76. Fauré must not have been happy with the symphony for, after performances at the Concerts Colonne on 15 March 1885 and that fall in Anvers, he destroyed most of it, reusing some of the Andante in a subsequent work.

77. Brian Hart discusses the influence of not only Liszt, but also Schumann in his “The French Symphony after Berlioz: From the Second Empire to the First World War,” chap. 16 of *The Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. 3b: *The European Symphony from 1800 to 1930*, ed. A. Peter Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). See also Ralph P. Locke, “The French Symphony,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 175–76, and Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 289–90.

78. According to Joël-Marie Fauquet, Saint-Saëns’s Third Symphony made a “strong impression” on Franck, who purchased the score before he began writing his own Symphony in D Minor. It was also the first of three symphonies that premiered in Paris that winter, followed by Edouard Lalo’s Symphony in G Minor on 13 February and d’Indy’s *Symphonie cévenole* on 20 March. See Fauquet, *César Franck* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 717–18.

also a piano and organ, and challenges traditional tonal progressions. But when it comes to form, he combines the four traditional movements of a classical symphony into two movements, beginning with a sonata allegro.⁷⁹

In addition to these other influences and motivations, I see Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony as a direct response, if not specifically to Wagner, then to Wagnerism in France. Written in the style of English program notes at the time, the analysis of his Third Symphony, distributed in English at the London premiere on 19 May 1886 and in French at the Société des concerts in Paris on 9 and 16 January 1887, presented an opportunity to one-up the specialized treatment French concert societies were giving to Wagner's music. Programs at the Concerts Colonne in February and March 1884, for example, included musical examples for the first time: three leitmotifs in *Parsifal* (fig. 76).⁸⁰ And the program for *Tristan* at the Concerts Lamoureux in March 1884 contained the longest written commentary on any music in such a publication in Paris. Saint-Saëns went further with an unprecedented eight-page analysis and twenty-one musical examples, several of them from six to twelve bars long, most indicating instrumentation.⁸¹

In focusing on the feelings expressed in the symphony, Saint-Saëns, whether consciously or unconsciously, seems to take on the way Wagner was presented to the orchestral audiences. Although there are no explicit symbols associated with these feelings, many sound like those described in the notes for the religious scene (act 1) and Good Friday scene (act 3) of *Parsifal* at the Concerts Colonne in 1884, possibly written by Dujardin.⁸² After the symphony's "somber and agitated" first theme, "various episodes lead to a gradual calm," an "extremely calm and contemplative" theme in the adagio (no. 7), and a coda "with a mystic character" alternating between D♭ major and E minor (no. 9). Such sentiments echo the "mystic nourishment" of the sacred banquet in *Parsifal*, where, after an introduc-

79. Saint-Saëns also combined leitmotifs and traditional forms in his opera *Henry VIII*. See Huebner, *French Opera*, chap. 13.

80. It is also interesting to note that in his 100-page tome, *Parsifal et l'opéra wagnérien* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1883), Edmond Hippeau reproduces these same musical examples (38–39).

81. "Programme analytique de la 3^{me} symphonie en ut mineur"; also published as "Une nouvelle symphonie de Camille Saint-Saëns," *Ménestrel*, 2 January 1887, 36–38, a week before its French premiere. The numbers below refer to the themes cited in the analysis. The only other similar publication of the period was a seven-page "analytic and thematic" analysis of d'Indy's *Wallenstein*, complete with musical examples, sold during its performance by the Concerts Lamoureux on 22 December 1889, 9 March 1890, and 9 November 1890. It is possible that d'Indy and the Concerts Lamoureux produced this in response to the brochure on Saint-Saëns's symphony.

82. See the notes for concerts on 10 February and 2 March 1884. Dujardin translated Wagner's libretto for these performances.

PARSIFAL

de Richard WAGNER

(Paroles françaises de M. Edouard DUBANIER.)

I

GRANDE SCÈNE RELIGIEUSE

(Das Liebesmahl)

2^e tableau du 1^{er} acte

Le Saint-Grail, vase sacré, dans lequel le sang du Christ a été recueilli, est pieusement gardé par de saints et braves chevaliers. A certains jours solennels, le roi et grand-prêtre de l'ordre, Amfortas, découvre le calice et, selon le rite chrétien, consacre le pain et le vin. C'est à ce banquet sacré, dans cette nourriture mystique, que les chevaliers puisent toute vertu et vaillance.

Or, un jour, le culte du Grail a été souillé; Amfortas s'est laissé séduire par les maléfices de l'enfer; il est puni de sa faute par une blessure cruelle. Les cérémonies sont à peu près abandonnées, les chevaliers languissent sans force.

Mais le Christ a promis rédemption et salut. C'est Parsifal, le héros au cœur pur, au cœur simple, (*der reine Thor, le Pur et Simple*) qui, en triomphant des épreuves où Amfortas a succombé, doit accomplir l'œuvre de grâce.

La scène religieuse, qui forme le second tableau du premier acte, décrit les cérémonies du Grail, auxquelles Parsifal assiste sans y prendre part.

Les thèmes principaux qui y sont développés sont les suivants :

1^{er} Thème de la CÈNE (*das Liebesmahl - Spruch*); il exprime la promesse de salut.
• Prenez mon corps, prenez mon sang...

2^e Thème du GRAIL, (*das Grail-Motiv*), qui représente le culte du Saint-Grail.

3^e Thème de la FOI (*das Glaubens-thema*); il symbolise la foi, la pureté, l'enthousiasme des ministres du Grail.

FIG. 76 Concerts Colonne program, February 1884.

Here for the first time the program notes included musical examples to help guide the listener through Wagner's *Parsifal*. They reproduce three of the major recurring leitmotifs in the opera, with a description of the meaning of each.

tion to the "panorama of sites" Parsifal has traversed, the Grail Knights await him with "serene and calm hearts." The symphony's adagio theme, beginning on A \flat in rising thirds, may be an allusion to the opening of the Last Supper theme (A \flat -C-E \flat), Wagner's symbol of the "promise of salvation," albeit without the syncopations and extended allure—this is the first musical example in Colonne's program. Thereafter follows a "struggle" in the symphony between a "fantastic" motive and an "austere" one, with the first (no. 12) characterized by syncopated rhythms and modulations through several keys, interrupted by an "expressive

phrase" (no. 13), and the second (no. 14), slow and deliberate, using the same opening intervals (major second, minor third) as in the theme of the Holy Grail, the second of Colonne's musical examples. A similar "struggle" can also be found in the confrontation between the evil seductress Kundry and Parsifal in act 2. In Saint-Saëns's symphony, it ends with the "defeat of the worrisome and diabolical element," just as it does in Wagner's opera with Parsifal baptizing Kundry before the Good Friday scene. The next phrase in Saint-Saëns's symphony "rises to the summits of the orchestra, floating as in the *azure* of a purified sky, and after a vague reminiscence of the initial theme, a *maestoso* [no. 15] announces the triumph of the calm and elevated idea," a transformation of the initial theme, and eventually a final episode (no. 18) with a "tranquil and pastoral feeling." Likewise, at the end of the religious scene in *Parsifal*, leitmotifs from the opening theme return and in the Good Friday scene, the main theme (the fourth in Colonne's notes) pushes upward as Parsifal, in a forest under the rising sun, contemplates "all creatures, now redeemed and purified, . . . celebrating their day of innocence," an earthly equivalent of the azure symbolizing the absolute, transcendental, and ideal.⁸³ Did Saint-Saëns, a good classicist, mean to deliver a classical response to the concerns of Wagner and French Wagnerians? The final words of the analysis drive the point home. Eschewing any description of feelings, it explains the "natural logic" of his final rhythms, in which the rhythm of three-bar phrases becomes one big measure in three half-note beats, or twelve quarter-notes.

While the London audience was somewhat perplexed by the work's innovations, the conservative public of the Société des concerts was delighted. Pougin pointed to the "clarity of ideas," "richness of their developments," and "elegantly severe style," calling it a work of very high order.⁸⁴ At the premiere, Gounod reputedly referred to Saint-Saëns as "the French Beethoven."⁸⁵ He had succeeded in appropriating the orchestral splendor and feelings associated with Wagner's music, while creating a classical work of French clarity. As Kern Holoman reports, Ambroise Thomas asked the orchestra for an unprecedented third performance because, "given the invasion of German music," it "so honors the French school." The Société asked him to compose another symphony, but Saint-Saëns never returned to the genre.⁸⁶ With *Prosperine* (1887) and two more operas in the next six years, he sought to counter Wagner's influence with a very French balance of

83. Deak explains the azure in his *Symbolist Theater*, 70.

84. Arthur Pougin, "Concerts et soirées," *Ménestrel*, 16 January 1887, 54. In his *Saint-Saëns*, Studd points out that the English public received it "respectfully rather than enthusiastically" (153).

85. Brian Rees, *Camille Saint-Saëns: A Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 265.

86. Holoman, *Société des Concerts*, 280. The extra concert took place on 13 March 1887.

melody, declamation, and orchestra.⁸⁷ Later in his *Musical Memories*, he asserted that as art music is “sufficient unto itself,” “in its self-sufficiency lies its heights of greatness.”⁸⁸

By 1887, notions associated with Wagner also began to influence how audiences heard music previously thought to be distinctly French. For example, when *Lakmé* was performed in Brussels in late 1887, while one critic compared it to an eighteenth-century pastel, another commented, not on its extraordinary charm, but on how the work expressed “dreamy poetry, the ideal, the azure.” Lakmé herself is “a child of the country of the ideal” to which she “transports” Gerald. “When the realities of the world appear to him, she understands that life is no longer possible and dies.” Musically, what impressed Belgians were its melodic ideas, rich and varied sonorities, complicated harmonies, and the orchestra’s important role—all associated with Wagner. A response so different from the one the work had received earlier, with the physicality of feminine and musical charm here replaced by the elusiveness of dreams and an imaginary ideal, shows us how the contingencies of taste and context affect musical meaning.⁸⁹

SYMBOLIST IDEALISM

French Symbolists took another perspective on art beyond politics in their focus on music as thought, with new implications for the utility of music. Before he wrote about the merits of Wagner’s music in 1861, Baudelaire, inspired by Edgar Allan Poe, saw the “world of the mind” divided into “pure intellect, taste, and moral sense.” He was drawn to pure intellect, that which aims at truth. Then, in *Tannhäuser*, Baudelaire found the model for a new kind of art: in functioning as symbols of ideas, Wagner’s melodies stimulate the imagination to perceive hidden connections or “correspondences” between ideas and sense perceptions. He concluded that listening to, reading, or viewing art inevitably involves drawing the listener into a creative activity paralleling that of the artist. Music became for Baudelaire a key to the imagination, its power resembling magic. Music reveals the scale of human feelings while addressing our thought and, with its recurring melodies, exercising our memory.⁹⁰ This insight led many writers to become self-

87. Camille Saint-Saëns, “Prosperine,” *Ménestrel*, 17 April 1887, 156.

88. Saint Saëns, “Art for Art’s Sake,” *Musical Memories*, translated in Studd, *Saint-Saëns*, 295–97.

89. One reviewer noted that before writing *Lakmé*, Delibes had traveled to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal*. These reviews are cited in H[enri] M[oreno], “Lakmé à Bruxelles,” *Ménestrel*, 5 December 1887, 3–5.

90. Baudelaire, “Richard Wagner,” 521. Here, he is, in part, citing Liszt.

conscious theorists of their own practice, and “modern writing” henceforth to be “inseparable from its reflections upon itself.”⁹¹

Mallarmé, one of Baudelaire’s spiritual successors, sought to push the importance of pure thought further, ultimately rejecting both the beautiful and the useful. In his essay “Sur le Beau et l’Utile,” Mallarmé criticized the beautiful for being “gratuitous” and “turning into ornament,” and the useful, in addressing “mediocre needs,” for “expressing an inelegance” (the absence of elegance was considered a serious shortcoming by many in France). In their place, he envisioned “a direct implementation of the idea, to please and serve, from which emerges an impression, very modern, of truth.” This did not mean “naming” objects—which is “to abolish three-quarters of the pleasure” of figuring something out little by little—but “suggesting” them—“therein lies the dream.” As he later put it, “language in the hands of the crowd serves the function of a currency, easy to use and direct; however, in the poet’s hands, it is turned, above all, into dream and song.”⁹²

Such a philosophy led to self-conscious obscurity rather than clarity in Mallarmé’s writing, inspired by the “obscure sublimity” he experienced at concerts. His friends noted that the poet had a passion for music, which he considered a “sacred pleasure,” finding in it a “secret analogy with nature.”⁹³ He particularly enjoyed performances of symphonic music at the Concerts Lamoureux. They stimulated his thinking and the beginnings of a poem,⁹⁴ and he sought to “transpose” into words the whole set of relationships he heard in music.⁹⁵ Like Baudelaire, he looked to music as a model that would help him reclaim poetry’s

91. Richard Sieburth, “1885, February, Symbolists Poets Publish *La Revue wagnérienne*,” in *New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 791.

92. “Le Beau et l’Utile, ayez ce terme moyen, le Vrai. Le Beau, gratuit, tourne à l’ornement, répudié: l’Utile, seul ou qui l’est, alors, à des besoins médiocres, exprime une inélégance. Façonner, exactement, veut, chez l’artisan, une espèce d’oubli quant à l’usage, autant que du bibelot—seulement la mise en œuvre directe de l’idée, comme objet se présente, pour plaire et servir, causant une impression, toute moderne, de vérité.” Stéphane Mallarmé, “Réponses à des enquêtes,” in *Igitur; Divagations; Un coup de dés*, ed. Yves Bonnefoy (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 392, 400.

93. Ibid., 250. “Plaisir sacré” is an essay in which Mallarmé describes his experience of an orchestral performance. See also Henri de Régnier, *Figures et caractères* (Paris: Mercure de France, ca. 1901), 117, 129, 135–36. Régnier finds both the nature of his genius and his chosen style characterized by obscurity.

94. According to Régnier, Mallarmé often took notes during performances. The short paragraphs that make up “Crayonné au théâtre” in *Igitur; Divagations; Un coup de dés*, 177–238, were thus appropriately titled.

95. “Nous en sommes là . . . un art d’achever la transposition, au Livre, de la symphonie ou uniment de reprendre notre bien: car ce n’est pas de sonorités élémentaires par les cuivres, les

oral origins in incantations and charms. Rejecting the invasion of politics in everything, Mallarmé considered Wagner's music drama a form of poetry at its most ideal. Although he may have been introduced to it in the 1860s by the composer Augusta Holmès, a good friend for decades,⁹⁶ it was not until his essay on Wagner in the *Revue wagnérienne* that he articulated its importance to him, a "challenge to poets whose duty he [Wagner] usurped." With the addition of music that "blurs the color and lines of the characters with the timbres and themes, creating the rich atmosphere of Dreaming," he found that the convergence of the arts in Wagner's music created what he called "festivals" within each listener—a term appropriated from the huge communal experiences of the Revolution to describe desirable private experiences. Like Saint-Saëns, Mallarmé construed the value of music to lie, not in the myths it might accompany on stage or elicit in one's imagination, but in its abstraction, a music of and for the mind. As Wagner had realized an alliance between music and drama, Mallarmé sought to create one between music and language, what he called the two sides of an idea. This, he hoped, would lead to a state of pure contemplation or the "azure," the "infinite."⁹⁷

Under Mallarmé's influence at his famous Tuesday salon from 1883 until he died in 1898, there emerged a self-consciously anti-utilitarian avant-garde. Inspired by Mallarmé who advised guests to hone their own individual voices, this group sought glory through "internal satisfaction" and self-esteem rather than public approbation. In September 1886, wishing to get beyond the connotations associated with literary decadence—nihilism and eccentricity—Jean Moréas published a manifesto naming the group symbolists. As Patricia Mathews has pointed out, this group of writers, poets, and painters challenged the core of the republican ideology—universal secular education, art education, nationalism, and imperialism—although without unmasking the "mechanisms of social power and authority" underlying them. They attacked republican pedagogy for stifling intuition, constraining the imagination with conventions, overwhelming students with

cordes, les bois, indéniablement mais de l'intellectuelle parole à son apogée que doit avec plénitude et évidence, résulter, en tant que l'ensemble des rapports existant dans tout, la Musique." From "Crise de vers," in Mallarmé, *Igitur; Divagations; Un coup de dés*, 250.

96. In her *Mallarmé: The Poet and His Circle* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), Rosemary Lloyd traces the poet's relationship with Augusta Holmès from the 1860s through the 1890s and her role in introducing him to Wagner's music (150–52). She also documents his connections with the composers Chabrier, Chausson, and Debussy.

97. Mallarmé, *Igitur; Divagations: Un coup de dés*, 169, 172, 218–26, 359, 392, 400–401. Mallarmé published "Richard Wagner: Rêverie d'un poète français" in the *Revue wagnérienne*, 8 August 1885. His comments about Wagner in "Crayonné au théâtre" (218–21) suggest that he attended the premiere of *Lohengrin* at the Eden-Théâtre in 1887.

knowledge that encumbered the mind, and ironically, given their goals, impeding any sense of the universal. They prioritized spirituality over rationality and materialism, anarchism over positivism, although not necessarily expressed politically. In the place of history, they accorded value to the primitive, natural world beyond civilized society; instead of progress based on an evolutionary development from the past, they looked to the future as a blank slate, “the idealized realm of the Absolute.” Symbolist painters saw themselves as seeking a truer reality than the realists and a more ideal one than the academics.⁹⁸ Construing their poetry as the “enemy of teaching, declamation, false sensibility, and objective description,”⁹⁹ symbolist poets hoped to revive appreciation of the naïve and the spiritual and to put people in contact with a prescient state of being. Through intuition and divination they looked for correspondences through which ideas would be revealed. Seeing the world in a new way, they sought aesthetic expression representing “esoteric affinities with primordial ideas.”¹⁰⁰ This involved translating the mobility, relativism, and dynamism of the mind. The young critic Albert Aurier called art and poetry “les Inutilités Vitales,” what differentiated humans from monkeys; yet he and others, some of them left-wing anarchists, understood that if art could transform consciousness, it could transform the individual and thus society.¹⁰¹

Wagner’s music remained an inspiration to this group, although with their most radical innovations, the symbolists went beyond it. In 1886, confronting both naturalists and romantics, who inevitably confused reality in art with their interpretation of it, Gustave Kahn defined their new orientation: “The essential aim of our art is to objectify the subjective (the externalization of an idea), instead of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through the eyes of a temperament).” From this came the idea of a work of art as an equivalent of a sensation, that is, not the reproduction of reality, but a translation of it in artistic terms involving abstraction. This encouraged artists to deform objects, to exaggerate “according to the needs of the Idea to be expressed” so as to “begin to live with a life that is no longer our life of contingencies and relativities, but a splendid life . . . the life of Art, the being of Being.”¹⁰²

To escape the conventions of meter and rhyme and forge a new kind of poetry, free verse, Kahn, Henri de Régnier, and other symbolists looked to the way music

98. Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7, 22–24, 39–41, 215–17.

99. Jean Moréas, “Manifeste du symbolisme,” *Figaro illustré*, 18 September 1886.

100. Ibid.

101. Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, 14, 39.

102. Gustave Kahn, from *l’Événement* (1886), and G.-Albert Aurier, from “Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin,” *Mercur de France* 2 (1891), reproduced in Herschel Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 50, 89–93.

is organized. Kahn composed his verse based, not on counting syllables, but on phrases, stress patterns, vocal sounds, and pauses in the thought. Like Wagner, he also incorporated more assonance and alliteration in lieu of rhyme schemes.¹⁰³ Except for “Un coup de dés” and his prose poems, Mallarmé was not willing to eschew the power of the classical twelve-syllable alexandrine. Still, in a letter to Kahn, he noted the “considerable charm” of free verse and pointed out that it would allow “anyone who is at all musical” to “create his own personal and unique metrics,” a kind of “immediate and unmediated consumption of thought.”¹⁰⁴ In 1886, René Ghil published his *Traité du verbe*, proposing a quirky theory of “verbal instrumentation” and an elaborate system linking letters of the alphabet with instruments. Mallarmé wrote a preface.

Music also inspired new approaches to painting. Criticizing republicans’ preoccupation with reason, in 1885 the psycho-aesthetician and color theorist Charles Henry explained, “I believe in the future of an art which would be the reverse of any ordinary logical or historical method, precisely because our intellects, exhausted by purely rational efforts, will feel the need to refresh themselves with entirely opposite states of mind.”¹⁰⁵ In studying the feelings generated by various sounds, he and painters such as Paul Signac (who applied his theories to painting) embraced the idea of contrast as integral to art from a new perspective. In proposing that intense dynamism results from contrasting colors in close juxtaposition, Henry agreed with *républicains opportunistes* on the importance of contrasts, but did not see them as something for the artist to reconcile.

Henry reconceived the republican notion of comparison as a way to interact with the arts, removing its role as a prelude to judgment. Because they put the burden of resolution on the viewer, contrast and comparison could produce harmony. This was important in society as well as in art, for he saw contrast as representing social difference and individual autonomy. However, addressing them was only the first step. Artists also had to understand the language of art as the language of correspondences, horizontal correspondences between the senses and vertical correspondences between ideas (as experienced in Baudelaire’s poetry and Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*). Associations and analogies, Henry observed, make possible an art that objectifies the subjective: “Among the actual symbolists, several have

103. Kenneth Cornell, *The Symbolist Movement* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), 62–63.

104. Cited in Lloyd, *Mallarmé*, 189–90.

105. Charles Henry, “Introduction à une esthétique scientifique,” *Revue contemporaine*, August 1885, cited in Robyn Roslak, “Symphonic Seas, Oceans of Liberty: Paul Signac’s *La Mer: Les Barques (Concarneau)*,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Spring 2005.

understood, more or less vaguely, that outside of the logical boundaries of ideas there could be associative images inseparably founded on purely subjective laws. This is borne out in the fact that there can be intimate relationships between the hearing of certain sounds, the vision of certain colors, and the feeling of certain states of the soul.”¹⁰⁶

Such relationships could be a metaphor for a world based on cooperation rather than struggle and competition, even, as Robyn Roslak points out, cooperation in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. “Theoretically then,” she writes, “the more senses a work of art could . . . stimulate in a viewer, listener, or reader, the more socially beneficial (and thus socially useful) its role would be. ‘Musical’ or ‘symphonic’ painting, with its allusion to harmonious progressions of sound and its supposed power to suggest an idea[l] on multiple sensory levels without resorting to the literal or the mundane, was a promising prospect in this regard.”¹⁰⁷ Seeking analogies among one’s senses thus became a new method of relating to art. Whereas the comparative method (which depended on distinguishing differences as well as similarities) enabled rational judgment, the perception of sensory analogies (which relied on similarities alone, or correspondences) led to intuitive understanding and, ideally, to an experience of inner harmony. To anarchists like Henry and Signac, an art of analogy promised deliverance from their disillusionment with society.

Music was thus extremely useful, indeed critical, to the thinking of the avant-garde from Baudelaire and Mallarmé to Henry and Signac. It helped them to understand the power of suggestion, link sensations and ideas, and theorize an art of analogy. Although this notion of the useful points to personal and aesthetic as opposed to public utility, the use of music here did have political implications. Music enabled them to redefine the republican agenda: the freedoms they needed, the kind of self-growth they envisaged, and the nature of the progress they sought to achieve. And it was part of a reciprocal relationship between the arts and literature that eventually pushed on the boundaries of French artistic identity. It gave rise to new definitions of French charm and, in reaching for the sublime, new forms of artistic pleasure. For some, music suggested new ways of fusing poetics and politics.

As with the republican view of the world, however, there were contradictions and ironies in the symbolists’ counterdiscourse. On the positive side, symbolists stressed the importance of creativity. Téodor de Wyzewa, citing Wagner, noted

106. Ibid. Recent developments in neuroscience support the idea that synesthesia exists in the brain as neural connections between areas that control colors, sounds, language, etc. See, e.g., V. S. Ramachandran and Ed Hubbard, “Hearing Colors, Tasting Shapes,” *Scientific American* 288, 5 (May 2003): 42–49.

107. Ibid.

was enthusiastic about Boulanger in 1887 and voted for him in 1889.¹¹² The symbolists' cult of the self and antirationalist embrace of intuition paralleled those of conservatives such as Maurice Barrès, who frequented the bohemian and anarchist circles of 1890.¹¹³ Mathews sees the greatest irony of all in their rejection of capitalism, which "posed a greater threat to symbolist notions of the self than did individual government policies and was at the root of much of their pessimism about bourgeois society." Symbolists may have associated utility with marketability and scorned the fact that art had become a form of commerce. But most of them were "*rentiers* living off unearned income and having nothing to do but contemplate." The market thrived on just the kind of distinctions and taste for change that they advocated.¹¹⁴

INTUITION AND RADICALLY NEW CONCEPTS OF MUSIC

Claude Debussy, who attended the Bayreuth performances of Wagner in 1888 and 1889 and Mallarmé's Tuesday salon beginning in 1890, was notable among musicians in the late 1880s for drawing upon both Wagner and symbolist ideas. As early as 1885 when he was twenty-three, he felt "obliged to invent new forms."¹¹⁵ Although, like Saint-Saëns, he did not like cliques, rejected the dogma associated with Wagner's music, preferred personal freedom to any musical system, and advocated moving "beyond Wagner" (*après* [after] and not *d'après* [in the manner of] Wagner, as he later put it), the influence of Wagner, especially *Tristan* and *Parsifal*, on Debussy's music has been well documented.¹¹⁶ Debussy also shared much with the symbolists. As he wrote in a letter in 1885, echoing Baudelaire, he wanted to create music "supple and chaotic enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of

112. Lloyd, *Mallarmé*, 210.

113. Barrès promoted a cult of self in his early novels such as *Sous l'œil des barbares* (1888) and *Un Homme libre* (1889).

114. Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, 14–15, 43–45, 239n81. She concludes, "The failure to circumvent capitalism is less a sign of the inadequacy of Symbolism as a counterdiscourse than of the success of capitalism in absorbing and commodifying its antagonists" (45).

115. Debussy, letter to Henri Vassier, 19 October 1885, in *Claude Debussy: Correspondance, 1884–1918*, ed. François Lesure (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 38.

116. His friend the writer Pierre Louÿs wrote that Debussy envisaged writing an article titled "Concerning the Futility of Wagnerism" after he returned from his second trip to Bayreuth in 1889, even though later, both during and after writing his opera *Pelléas*, he "loved to quote certain lines from *Parsifal*" and Louÿs "remained convinced that *Parsifal* and *Tristan* engendered more from Debussy than did the Russians." Cited in Marcel Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, trans. William Ashbrook and Margaret Cobb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 53–54. Many scholars have examined the influence of Wagner on Debussy's music. See esp. Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: Eulenberg, 1979).

the soul, to the whims of reverie.”¹¹⁷ He called it “a mysterious mathematics whose elements participate in the Infinite.”¹¹⁸ Debussy once told his teacher that he was drawn to symbolist poetry because of its emphasis on suggestion, “only hinting at what is to be said,” so that he could “dream his dream” alongside the poet’s.¹¹⁹ He set five of Verlaine’s poems to music in 1882–83, Mallarmé’s “Apparition” in 1884, Verlaine’s *Ariettes oubliées* in 1885–87, and the *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* in 1887–89.¹²⁰ Just as the poems sacrifice logic and clarity to analogy and lyricism, Debussy’s music follows its own logic, which a critic of the time called “more eloquent than that of reason.”¹²¹ His songs clarify the poems through critical readings, establishing a chain of connections that reveal the poem’s hidden relations and unite the many sensations into a *mot total*, *neuf*, *étranger*.¹²²

The *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire*, as well as Debussy’s later setting of Maeterlinck’s symbolist drama *Pelléas et Mélisande*, reflect the intersection of Wagnerian and symbolist aesthetics.¹²³ The first of the set, “The Balcony,” composed in January 1888, just before Debussy went to Bayreuth, recalls Wagner’s continually changing chromatic harmonies and cites the Tristan chord. At the same time, its harmonies, melodies, and rhythms not only echo the poem’s formal structure, built of refrains and stanzas, and respect its alternating rhyme scheme, but also follow the words closely, embodying their syntactical parallelisms. Music reveals the poem’s complex analogies. Through a narrator standing on the balcony, Baudelaire explores the realm of memory, reliving past times there. This results in a series of disconnected

117. In her “Debussy, Mallarmé, and ‘Les Mardis,’” in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane Fulcher (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), Rosemary Lloyd compares this with Baudelaire’s similar assertion in a preface to his prose poems (260). See also Barbara L. Kelly, “Debussy’s Parisian affiliations,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29–33.

118. Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, ed. François Lesure (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 171.

119. “Conversations with Ernest Guiraud (1889–90),” reproduced in Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, vol. 1 (1962; rpt., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 205.

120. For an analysis of these songs from a symbolist perspective, see Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionnisme et symbolisme*, trans. Thérèse Douchy (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 134–43.

121. Louis Laloy, “Musique moderne: Claude Debussy and Paul Dukas,” *Revue musicale*, October 1902, 407. Laloy considered the Baudelaire settings Debussy’s most important work besides *Pelléas*.

122. Mallarmé, “Crise de vers,” 252.

123. The literature on Debussy’s opera is considerable. See, e.g., David Grayson, *The Genesis of Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1986); Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and *Debussy Perspectives*, ed. Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (forthcoming). For a fascinating study that goes in new directions, see Antokoletz, *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartok* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 55–181.

temporal settings. To link stanzas one and three in which the narrator speaks in the present and future tenses, Debussy moves harmonically by fifths in the direction of the sharp keys and uses two refrains with a similarly descending melodic curve spanning a wide register with many expressive nuances (a); to link stanzas two and four narrated in past tense, harmonic movement stays closer to C major and introduces flats, while its two refrains follow a gradually ascending curve in a narrow register with almost no dynamic nuances (b) (ex. 20a–b). Since it is the contour of these lines that recurs, not the exact pitches, meaning comes from configuration rather than tonal functionality. With this concept of musical line as arabesque, constructed of abstract linear principles, Debussy experiments with a radical new concept of melody that allows him to break down the implications inherent in pitch successions and build associations between musical ideas in new ways.¹²⁴ In the last two stanzas, as Baudelaire brings together the poem's principal images ("vows," "perfumes," "kisses"), as he connects past, present, and future and turns reflexive rumination into an aesthetic appreciation of the experience, Debussy creates a musical reconciliation of the song's previous ideas. With a musical refrain that starts out like b and ends in the shape of a, but inverted to follow an ascending pattern (ex. 20c), Debussy brings together the musical arabesques associated with the previous stanzas. Music's role, then, is not only a connective one, the "syn" of the poem's synaesthetic process, but also a musical equivalent of the poem that in turn expects the listener to connect its disparate parts and multiple meanings.

By March 1889, when he wrote the last of the set, "The Fountain," Debussy's style was beginning to change. In it, he again intensifies the effects of the poem's strophic form, sets the text sensitively and accurately, and links the poem's images with recurring musical motives that help the song cohere and elicit a synaesthetic response from listeners. However, an aesthetic of turning-in-place replaces the movement implied in tonal progressions. Debussy plays with oscillating figures and static harmonies that stop the motion to allow the listener to concentrate on the

124. As early as *Diane au bois* (1884), a short play by Théodore de Banville that reputedly served as an important source for Mallarmé's "L'Après-midi d'un faune," Debussy began to work with musical contour. He sought "une phrase d'une belle froideur, n'éveillant aucune idée de passion" to identify Diane. Keeping its shape constant, he transformed the phrase in other ways to show her gradually falling in love. Debussy, letter to Vasnier, 24 November 1885, in *Claude Debussy: Correspondance, 1884–1918*, ed. Lesure, 40. He also wrote a series of piano pieces entitled *Arabesques* (1888–91). In her article "Lakmé's Echoing Jewels," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna, 1800–1920*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Gurminder Bhogal analyzes the functional use of ornament in *Lakmé*, specifically her "opening arabesque melody." In fact, *Lakmé* could be one source of Debussy's notion of the arabesque. The main theme of his Prix de Rome-winning cantata *L'Enfant prodigue* (1884) is a short motive, an exotic melisma reminiscent of *Lakmé*, introduced in the prelude.

EX. 20 Debussy, *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* (1890), “Le Balcon.”

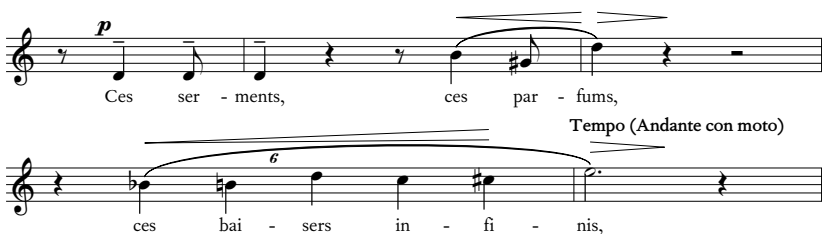
a. Melodic curve *a* in the refrain of stanzas 1 and 3.



b. Melodic curve *b* in the refrain of stanzas 2 and 4.



c. *b/a'* in the refrain of stanza 6.



patterns suggested by the water's movement—something Wagner did only in the opening of *Das Rheingold*. Vladimir Jankélévitch sees the fountain as an opportunity for exploring the “relative stability of the instable,” “immobility in perpetual movement,” and “movement for its own sake.”¹²⁵ The alternating seconds and flourishing arpeggios depict not only the *élan-retombé* of the fountain and the love affair, but also the *va-et-viens* of the poem as it alternates between the lovers and the nature outside their union. Recurring hypnotic quintuplets and sextuplets help elevate listeners into a dreamlike state to experience, through the imagination, the moment when the lovers merge with the enchanted night, with its reflecting moon, echoing fountain, and murmuring trees. When Fauré first heard these songs, he declared the 27-year-old Debussy a genius. They also attracted the attention of the symbolist writers.

In 1890, Debussy began work on an opera, *Rodrigue et Chimène*, with the Wagnerian writer Catulle Mendès.¹²⁶ However by 1892, when he set to music

125. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Debussy et le mystère de l'instant* (Paris: Plon, 1976), 78–79, 124, 127.

126. See Richard Langham Smith, “*Rodrigue et Chimène*: Genèse, histoire, problèmes d'édition,” *Cahiers Debussy* 12–13 (1988–89), 67–81.

Mallarmé's "L'Après-midi d'un faune," there is no hint of Wagner's breathless melodies or bombastic orchestration. Debussy's music begins with an improvisatory-sounding solo for flute, a instrument Wagner tended to neglect. It descends chromatically (recalling Dalila's "Réponds à ma tendresse" from *Samson et Dalila*) and undulates between the tritone C# and G, its gradual acceleration from 9/8 to 4/8 groups giving the work its opening momentum. From its three motives, he derived the entire piece.¹²⁷ With their general contour remaining constant, Debussy again showed his skill in transforming motives, stretching them out, interpolating notes, changing intervallic and rhythmic relationships, emphasizing one part over another, and writing them retrograde and in diminution or augmentation while still making them sound the same.¹²⁸ Throughout his rhythms and modulations too are fluid and flexible. In this way, his is music of pure thought, or what David Code calls a "musical equivalent to the conflict between speech and writing."¹²⁹ Mallarmé said it prolonged the emotion of the poem and "set its scene more vividly than color."¹³⁰

Although a taste for sonorities characterizes much French music of the time and links Debussy's music with radical republican concerns, symbolist ideas encouraged the composer to focus on sonorities for their own sake. In 1887, Gounod, not realizing that he was using terms associated with symbolists like Gustave Kahn, complained that Debussy had a tendency to explore strange and exaggerated musical colors to such an extent that he forgot "precise construction and clarity of form."¹³¹ Like the poets, Debussy was drawn to sonorities, not just for the aural pleasures they offered, but also for the freedoms they encouraged in his composi-

127. For a recent fascinating analysis of the piece that suggests a close relationship between music and poetry, see David Code, "Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé: Music 'après Wagner' in the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, 3 (2001): 493–554. Code sees the contrasts between the flute and the strings as paralleled in the poem by the "form-defining contrasts between seeing and feeling" in the poem. He furthermore argues that, just as the faun in the poem is "the symbol of the challenge the poem poses to the reader" (see n. 110 above), the music challenges audiences with a "conflict between its seductive seemingly immediate sensuous pleasures and the esoteric syntax that, in securing those pleasures, demands analytical scrutiny to be fully understood." Code sees this as Debussy's answer to "the challenge of writing music *après* Wagner (508–9).

128. John Ringgold, "The Linearity of Debussy's Music and Its Correspondences with the Symbolist Aesthetic Developments before 1908" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1972), 319.

129. Code, "Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé," 542.

130. For Debussy's memory of Mallarmé's response, see Claude Debussy, *Lettres à deux amis* (Paris: Corti, 1942), 121. See also Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Mallarmé: Un Clair Regard dans les ténèbres: Peinture, musique, poésie* (Paris: Biro, 1998), 164–72.

131. In his 1887 report as secretary of the Académie des beaux-arts on Debussy's envoi from Rome, "Printemps," cited in François Lesure, *Claude Debussy* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), 96, Gounod associates these problems with impressionist painting rather than symbolist free verse.

tional process. Sonorities, as opposed to pitches in the tonal system, do not imply or determine how they may be used, what may follow them or be combined with them. They tend to focus the listener on the present.¹³² Treated as sonorities, individual notes, dissonances, and unresolved chords can evoke one another through their resonances, their “magical attraction” sometimes supported by instrumental colors. Jankélévitch sees such chords as “hiding a fundamental tonality, a latent tonality, an understood but forgotten tonality, an inaccessible system of reference that is their secret life. . . . Debussy perceives their secret affinities” but also leaves to the listener responsibility for “filling in the discontinuities.”¹³³

In his focus on arabesque lines, static harmonies, and sonorities, Debussy challenged republican notions of beauty. His music has form, measured proportions, and formal closure, but they are neither conceived in conventional terms nor articulated with traditional means. In *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, for example, he synthesizes sonata form, song form (ABA'), variation, and as Code has suggested, fugal elements. He makes ambivalent their dividing points, thereby defying traditional analysis and rendering the perception of form ambiguous.¹³⁴ His music achieves reconciliation, balance, and interlocking connections among its parts, yet subtly and not obviously. Moreover, his forms do not necessarily exemplify a dynamic process in motion toward a stable resolution. Debussy was less interested in progress as a teleological or evolutionary movement forward than in what could be learned from returning to the acoustic essence of sound. Although this brought a new kind of simplicity to his music, the composer was not motivated by making music accessible. Indeed, like Mallarmé, espousing an “aristocracy of sensitivity,” he had little interest in the utility of the arts for the masses, going so far as to tell his teacher that he did not believe that music could be learned.¹³⁵ In a letter, Debussy went further, asserting that “music really ought to have been a hermetical science, enshrined in

132. In his *Debussy et le mystère de l'instant*, Jankélévitch adds, “L'attachement de Debussy au plaisir de la sonorité, non moins que son aversion pour les théories livresques, explique sans doute ce primat de l'immédiat” (196).

133. Ibid., 101–2.

134. There have been widely divergent opinions as to the *Faune's* form and where its sections begin and end. See, e.g., William Austin, “Toward an Analytical Appreciation,” in *Debussy: Prelude to the “Afternoon of a Faun,”* ed. William Austin (New York: Norton, 1970); Jean Barraqué, *Debussy* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), 85–86; Richard Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and more recently Matthew Brown, “Tonality and Form in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*,” *Music Theory Forum* 15, 2 (1993): 127–43.

135. “Conversations with Ernest Guiraud (1889–90),” reproduced in Lockspeiser, *Debussy*, 1: 207. In *Musica*, July 1906, Debussy explained, “Art is absolutely useless to the masses. . . . One does not command the masses to love beauty.” Debussy, *Monsieur Croche*, 193.

texts so hard and laborious to decipher as to discourage the herd of people who treat it as casually as they do a handkerchief. Instead of spreading music among the populace, I propose the foundation of a ‘Society of Musical Esotericism.’”¹³⁶

HUMOR, ABSURDITY, AND SATIRE

Critique through humor, long a staple of French entertainment, was another way the French expressed dismay with republican ideology. Georges Fragerolle, a composer who worked at the Chat Noir, began to promote what he called *fumisme*. “Fumistes” were those who, using skepticism and humor, made art for art’s sake with no social or humanitarian agenda. Phillip Dennis Cate has called it “politically incorrect” art, whose only purpose was to counteract the pomposity and hypocrisy of modern life. An example of this was Eugène Bataille’s portrait of the Mona Lisa smoking a pipe (1887). Fragerolle’s spirit also permeated the literary journal *Le Chat Noir*, which published political spoofs and used parody and the absurd “to put the establishment—political, social, or artistic—on edge.” As Cate explains, “part of this fumiste process was also the promotion of itself and the Montmartre artistic community as the one, true regenerative force in French culture”—a kind of ideal society in contrast to real Paris.¹³⁷

Another group initially associated with Le Chat Noir, “Les Incohérents,” also practiced caricature and satire. In their songs, balls, and exhibitions between 1882 and 1893, they poked fun, not only at political scandals, but also at French *mœurs*, fashionable people, and solemnity of all kinds.¹³⁸ Their leader Jules Lévy pointed out, “Seriousness wears one out, gaiety regenerates.”¹³⁹ In August 1882,

136. Letter to Ernest Chausson, 3 September 1893, in *Debussy Letters*, ed. François Lesure and Roger Nichols, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 51.

137. Phillip Dennis Cate, “The Spirit of Montmartre,” in id. and Mary Shaw, eds. *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor, and the Avant-Garde, 1875–1905* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Zimmerli Art Museum, 1996), 23, 27, 38.

138. The Musée d’Orsay put on an exhibition about the Incohérents from 25 February to 31 May 1992 and produced an accompanying text, *Arts incohérents: Académie du dérisoire*, ed. Luce Abélès and Catherine Charpin (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992), complete with chronology, bibliography, and essays by Abélès and Charpin. Among the participants were Rodolphe Salis, Emile Goudeau, Georges Auriant, Alphonse Allais, Mac-Nab, Coquelin Cadet, Charles Cros, Eléonore Bonnaire, Caran d’Ache, André Gill, Henry Gray, Alfred Jullien, Ponvoisin, Jules Chéret, and esp. Jules Lévy, who founded a publishing house to promote their work and edited their publications. Besides those at the Eden-Théâtre, they held balls and exhibitions at the Folies-Bergère, Casino de Paris, Folies-Marigny, Moulin-Rouge, Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, and throughout the provinces. See also the discussion in chapter 8 above.

139. Jules Lévy, “Manifeste de l’Incohérence,” *Courrier français*, 12 March 1883, cited in *Arts incohérents*, ed. Abélès and Charpin, 78.

Les Incohérents set up their first exhibition at a fundraiser given by the Concerts Besselièvre on the Champs-Élysées. Seeking to abolish logic and common sense as well as provide an alternative to pessimism, they also took on the nature of art itself. One work was entitled, *Beefsteak with Spinach, Painting on Porcelain*. Another consisted of a painting on a man's back. Some fabricated their watercolors out of saliva or seltzer water, their oil paints out of coconut oil or chocolate. There were also works made of perishables, such as little balls made of fresh white bread glued on the faced of a "*convalescent*" to suggest boils, and everyday objects, such as a chimney sweeper's head coming out of a stovepipe.¹⁴⁰ The juxtaposition of incongruous, absurd images with art music delighted the fashionable public, who returned to two more "Contre-Salons" that fall. They also attended benefits and showed up at subsequent events at a temple of high art, the Eden-Théâtre, where the Concerts Lamoureux performed Wagner.

Among the numerous works they exhibited in 1882, a completely black painting by Paul Bilhaud entitled *Combat de nègres dans une cave, pendant la nuit* ("Negroes fighting in a cellar, at night") became the inspiration for a series of monochromatic paintings by Alphonse Allais, editor in chief of the *Chat Noir* weekly and frequent spoof artist, who made one of pure white. In their 1883 exhibition, he attached a blank piece of paper to the wall with the explanation, "Born in Honfleur of French, but honest parents. Student at the Abnormal Inferior School: 3, place de la Sorbonne. No. 3: *First Communion of Chlorotic Young Girls in Snowy Weather. (Acquired by the State.—I am the State.)*"¹⁴¹ This was followed in their 1884 exhibition by the red painting entitled *Tomato Harvest on the Shore of the Red Sea, by Apoplectic Cardinals* and a musical score, "Great sorrows are mute: Incoherent funeral march" (ex. 21). It contained a blank staff with 24 bars but no notes, only the tempo indication, *lento rigolando*. In 1897, Allais published a collection of these, *Album primo-avilesque* (April foolish album), including the "Funeral March." This time he prefaced it with performance instructions: "Great sorrows being mute, the performers should occupy themselves with the sole task of counting the bars, instead of indulging in the kind of indecent row that destroys the august character of the best obsequies."¹⁴²

Such works were precursors of Alfred Jarry's nonsensical play *Ubu Roi* (1896)

140. Ibid., 69–73.

141. "Ecole anormale inférieure" is a play on the country's prestigious Ecole normale supérieure; "L'Etat, c'est moi" is an allusion to a statement by Louis XIV. Luce Abélès, "Naisance des Arts incohérents: Une Conjoncture favorable," and Catherine Charpin, "Le Magasin incohérent," in *Arts incohérents*, ed. Abélès and Charpin, 21, 70.

142. These are reproduced in Cate, "Spirit of Montmartre," and Steven Whiting, "Music on Montmartre," in *The Spirit of Montmartre*, ed. Cate and Shaw, 8–9, 31, 158. See also Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian*, 80–81, n. 52. This work is a kind of precedent to John Cage's 4'33".

MARCHE FUNÈBRE

COMPOSÉE POUR LES

FUNÉRAILLES D'UN GRAND HOMME SOURD

Lento rigolando.

25

T. C. V. P.

as well as Dadaist, Surrealist, and Fluxus art. They also shed light on the attitudes, music, and drawings of Erik Satie, a fellow Honfleurian and friend of Allais's, who played piano at the Chat Noir from December 1887 to 1891.¹⁴³ Scholars have shown how deeply Allais's bluffing practices and audacious attitudes affected Satie, a “musical Allais” who also assumed many irreverent pretenses and refused to be taken in by success with the establishment.¹⁴⁴ The composer too liked to shock with humorous titles (e.g., “Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear”). Beginning with *Gnossiennes* (1889–91), he replaced the typical performance instructions in Italian like *cantando* or *dolce* with ironic or absurd suggestions to the performer in French. These included, “Wonder about yourself,” “Don't be proud,” “Counsel yourself cautiously,” and “Think right” (see ex. 22). (These continued in *Le Fils des étoiles* [1892] and *Pièces froides* [1897], later developing into narrative commentaries on musical conventions used in *Avant-dernières pensées* [1915].)

However, Allais and the Chat Noir were not the only stimuli for such ideas. Wagner too served as a foil for Satie's imagination, one largely overlooked by Satie scholars. In performance instructions such as those noted above, I would argue, Satie was also parodying the self-seriousness of Wagner and Wagnerians, taking

143. Thereafter Satie played at the Auberge du Clou and the Café de la Nouvelle Athènes.

144. Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian*, 80–85, and Gillmor, *Satie*, 65–70.

aim at what performers were supposed to be thinking of when playing this music and how listeners behaved at Wagnerian concerts. By the mid 1880s, when enthusiasm for Wagner's music had turned admirers into a sect and concerts into pseudo-religious rituals, audiences were expected to contemplate the symbols represented in the music—such as the holy banquet resembling Christ's Last Supper in *Parsifal*—and, inspired by the redemption and salvation promised therein, use it to pursue their own internal purification. This required the utmost concentration, silent and still composure during long Wagnerian acts performed without benefit of the stage, and, some thought, the abandonment of will and reason. Satie's instructions bring attention to the ethical ramifications associated with performing and listening to music and to the paternalistic nature of composition during these times.

In his music too, Satie seems to have taken on what Wagner explored in *Parsifal*, removing the emotional, religious, and idealistic associations. At the same time, he plays with simplicity and stasis and pushes listeners' tolerance for lengthy works to the limits. Perhaps in part a product of his status as an outsider, someone with little compositional training,¹⁴⁵ Satie reduced his musical materials to a minimum. This allowed him to forge an original perspective on simplicity, distinct from the lightness of café songs or the naïveté of *chansons populaires* and, ironically, both serious and musically important. His *Gymnopédies* (1888) borrow the waltz rhythms of the *café-concert* without the sentimentality. Simplicity here means achieving effect with the fewest musical means. Three pieces emanate from a single musical idea.

Working with short musical ideas with few formal implications also gave him new freedoms. The first *Gnossienne* (1890) consists of three ideas, essentially only four notes each (table 3 and ex. 22). Doing away with bar lines and key signatures, Satie uses a four-beat ostinato in the left hand to ensure continuity through a regular pulse, while the right hand juggles extensions of two melodic formulae, an initial one (a) and a cadential one (b). Their repetition makes up three distinctive phrases—two antecedents, x and z, and one consequent, y—and organizes the piece into two sections, each having two parts consisting of two elements. Just as none of the motives has any true “middle,” neither does the piece, every element of which is either a beginning or an end. Musical stasis arises when, with the same musical ideas penetrating every level of the work's construction, there is no conflict, no structural tension, and thus no structural motion. Instead, there

145. From 1879 to 1882 and in 1885–86 Satie was enrolled in piano classes at the Conservatoire, where he was perceived as “not ordinary” and very weak at sight-reading. In 1883–84, he audited a harmony class there. He never won a prize. His father, Alfred, was also a self-taught composer and published his “Picking-Clause Polka” in *Mélomane*, 30 June 1888. Archives nationales, AJ³⁷ 239.2, and Gillmor, *Satie*, 9–12, 16–17.

TABLE 3. Analysis of Satie's *Gnossienne* No. 1

melodic formulas: 

a antecedent b₁ consequent b₄ cadential

form: X X Y Y, Z Z Y Y / X' X' Y Y, Z Z Y Y

X = a₁ b₁ a₁ b₂ a₁ b₃ b₄

Y = b₅ b₅ b₄

Z = a₂ b₆ b₄

X' = a₁ b₁' a₁ b₂'

EX. 22 Satie, *Gnossienne* no. 1 (1890), first published in *Figaro musical*, September 1893.

This piece perhaps refers to dances of an imaginary past and, with its absence of bar lines, recalls the music of Louis Couperin. While a waltz, mazurka, gavotte, and bourrée (the last dedicated to d'Indy) appeared in the magazine's principal selection of instrumental scores, Satie's work was classed with "Variety and Musical Curiosities," along with a Basque war song, music commemorating the Franco-Russian alliance, and a posthumous Pater noster by Liszt.

Leut.



X

X

(continued)

EX. 2.2 (continued)

\bar{a}_1 \bar{b}_2 \bar{a}_1

\bar{b}_3 \bar{b}_4

Très luisant (Shining)

\bar{b}_5 \bar{b}_5 \bar{b}_4
Y

\bar{b}_5 \bar{b}_5 \bar{b}_4
Y

Questionnez (Questioning)

\bar{a}_2 \bar{b}_6
Z

is intensification, deepening awareness of one idea or state of mind rather than constant movement from one to the next. In Wagner's *Parsifal*, these values appear as the goals of a man's life and are identified with the holy man and salvation, but only in the music for the temple of the Holy Grail does "time becomes space." In Satie's music, they penetrate the compositional process and create a kind of musical décor as static as the paintings by Puvis de Chavannes he so loved. By taking simple ideas, reduced to the fewest details, and by repeating rather than developing their essential traits, Satie was able to experiment with a new approach to musical form.¹⁴⁶

With *Vexations* (1893), Satie explicitly takes on the notion of music as something that can contribute to a sense of harmony or serve as a model for progress as linear evolution. The work consists of the constant repetition of a short succession of 6/3 chords over a 13-beat theme, whose only logic is the systematic alternation between diminished fifths and diminished and augmented fourths (ex. 23). Whereas chords built of intervals of a fourth dominate the act 1 prelude to *Le Fils des étoiles*, where they serve a mystical function, here Satie treats them and the diminished fifths (tritones) as novel ways to harmonize a bass theme. The effect is to assimilate them as acceptable, as might a good republican looking for new material with which to expand one's harmonic horizons, although much more boldly than Théodore Dubois allows for in his *Notes et études d'harmonie* (1890).¹⁴⁷ This tongue-in-cheek exercise, which Steven Whiting compares to verbal games practiced at the Chat Noir, was to be introduced in "the greatest silence and with serious immobility" before being performed 840 times (or 168 times, depending on how one construes Satie's repeated motive).¹⁴⁸ Whiting thinks that, given this and the fact that it was never published, Satie wrote it for himself, perhaps to calm himself after a souring

146. For a discussion of the importance of simplicity and stasis in Satie's music, see Jann Pasler, "Debussy, Stravinsky, and the Ballets Russes: The Emergence of a New Musical Logic" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1981), chap. 8, "A New Concept of the Musical Object: The Musical Instant."

147. In reissuing Henri Reber's classical tonality treatise, Dubois expanded it to include discussion of the use of diminished fifths and the preparation/resolution of dissonant chords.

148. Whiting, in his *Satie the Bohemian*, 179–80, and "Serious Immobilities: Musings on Satie's *Vexations*" (paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Washington, D.C., 27 October 2005), analyses the piece as a *quatrain holorine*, a poem whose rhymes include entire lines and therefore end up being nonsensical. Successions of chords often sound the same, although they are written differently, and the second harmonization of the theme is a mirror image of the first. Chat Noir poets used them to satirize the eloquence of Parnassian poetry. In *Art News Annual*, 1958, John Cage explained: "To be interested in Satie one must be disinterested to begin with, accept that a sound is a sound and a man is a man, give up illusions about ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited clap-trap" (cited in Orledge, *Satie*, 259). In 1963, Cage organized a full performance of *Vexations*.

EX. 23 Satie, *Vexations* (1893).

This work consists of 34 chords to be repeated 840 times. The thirteen-beat bass theme, reiterated at the bottom of the example and used twice here in its entirety with the same harmonizations, albeit in different forms, consists of eleven chromatic notes expanding up and down from middle C. The missing note, G#, comes once in the right hand in the thirteenth chord.

Très lent

À ce signe il sera d'usage de présenter le thème de la Basse.

affair with Suzanne Valadon. For performers who take the 840 repetitions of the entire work, which could last for from twelve to twenty-four hours, this turns the experience of music into a dialectic of listening and nonlistening.¹⁴⁹ The piece may have been influenced by the surfeit of genres in popular venues that undoubtedly turned music into a background phenomenon or demanded only partial attention. Its radical implications were not understood until the twentieth century.



Increasingly, rational thought came under attack for its limits on human understanding. Science had “reduced, assimilated, identified, everywhere invented repetition.”¹⁵⁰ People began to question the predictable recurrence of comparable

149. See Nancy Perloff’s review of Whiting’s *Satie the Bohemian* in *Music and Letters* 81 (May 2000): 328.

150. Jacques Rivière, “Introduction à la métaphysique du rêve,” *Nouvelle revue française*, 1 November 1908, 255.

phenomena and look beyond what is knowable through the scientific method. In 1889, Henri Bergson attacked his culture's "mechanistic" conception of nature: "Mechanism . . . assumes that the materials which it synthesizes are governed by necessary laws, and although it reaches richer and richer combinations . . . yet it never gets out of the narrow circle of necessity within which it first shut itself up."¹⁵¹ The world of the unconscious suggested to him and others another reality, one characterized by mystery and magic. So, too, did Jean-Martin Charcot's experiments in hypnosis at the Salpêtrière hospital, in which he explored the heightened suggestibility of trance.

In this context, music's utility was ripe for reconsideration. Since the republicans were in control, the country had spent considerable attention on its collective concerns—the need to train citizens, build a coherent *esprit public*, and expand France's presence abroad. The republican ideology never really addressed the inner domain of humans, particularly their spirituality. Republicans hoped people would achieve self-growth through education and educational practices such as musical performance. But beyond encouraging these activities, they theorized little how this worked. And to the extent that republicans validated the public aspects of music and music-making and focused on music's capacity to express and inspire collective feeling, they undervalued and failed to understand what music contributed to one's internal universe.

Ironically, virtually everyone found music a mystery. For Hugo, sounding remarkably like the symbolists, "Music is the art of the vague . . . it satisfies a feeling for the infinite, the ineffable . . . It begins where reason leaves off. It needs the distant, the dusky, the moonlight, the floating and the veiled. It moves one obscurely."¹⁵² Although Saint-Saëns believed that art should be both "useful and moral," he saw music as the "most mysterious" of the arts, one that makes up an ideal sphere.¹⁵³ In the late 1880s, as avant-garde writers, painters, and musicians grew frustrated with the demands of expressive clarity and the limitations of traditional form, they turned to music *because* of its pleasurable obscurity rather than the order it could impose on sound. Whether approached with great seriousness by Wagner or humorously by Satie, music became a practice directed at the self,

151. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. R. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 140.

152. In his *Livre d'or de Victor Hugo*, Emile Blémont claims to have copied these words from Hugo. They are cited in Julien Tiersot, "Le Centenaire de Victor Hugo," *Ménestrel*, 2 March 1902, 66.

153. Saint Saëns, "Art for Art's Sake," *Musical Memories*, trans. in Studd, *Saint-Saëns*, 295–97.

rather than the community, and one enabling self-exploration, that most murky of domains. Its abstractions allowed one to contemplate, not only one's internal universe, but also the creative process itself. In his attempt to understand the nature of intuition, Debussy shifted the burden of musical expression from sentiment to nature and the imagination, exploring musical equivalents for memories, fugitive impressions, and the "mystery of an instant." This music suggested that the intuitions of the unconscious proceeded by evocation, subtle connections, and analogies. In addition to stimulating sensuous auditory pleasures, as well as deep emotional and spiritual experiences, music was thus increasingly valued for the charm of its obscurity and what its mysteries offered the imagination. It could provoke the listener to be creative and thereby contribute to growth in inner awareness.

Saint-Saëns had to admit that the public's emerging "taste for the mysterious and the incomprehensible" prepared it for the invasion of strangeness at the Universal Exhibition of 1889. He attributed the success of the Annamite theater and other exotic performances to these attitudes. Wagner's music contributed as well. As Saint-Saëns pointed out, most people who went to Bayreuth did not understand German, knew little about music, and did not want to understand. They just came to be "hypnotized."¹⁵⁴ This was not necessarily a problem for republicans if the desire to be enchanted by the unknown made people more tolerant of difference and open to learning from it.

154. Cited in A. Héler, "Drame lyrique et drame musical," *L'Art musical*, 31 January 1890, 10.