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**THE CULT OF SOCRATES: THE PHILOSOPHER AND HIS
COMPANIONS IN SATIE'S *SOCRATE***

by

Andrea Decker Moreno

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

**HONORS IN UNIVERSITY STUDIES
WITH DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

in

**Music – Vocal Performance
in the Department of Music**

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**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT**

Spring 2013

The Cult of Socrates: The philosopher and his companions in Satie's *Socrate*

Satie's *Socrate* is an enigma in the musical world, a piece that defies traditional forms and styles. Satie chose for his subject one of the most revered characters of history, the philosopher Socrates. Instead of evaluating his philosophy and ideas, Satie created a portrait of Socrates from the most intimate moments Socrates spent with his followers in Plato's dialogues.

Life of Socrates

Socrates lived in Athens from 469-399 B.C.E. He was the son of a sculptor. His wife Xanthippe was known as shrew. Very little is known about his early life and education. Socrates developed his own methods for pursuing knowledge through dialogues chiefly with the young. He claimed in the *Apology* that he was sent on a mission by the god Apollo. The Delphic oracle proclaimed Socrates was the wisest of all men, and, sure that the oracle must be mistaken, Socrates decided to find who the wisest man was. He spoke to artisans, politicians, and poets, and discovered none of them knew as much as they thought they knew. Socrates realized he was wiser than all men in one way: he knew he knew nothing.

In Socrates' search for knowledge, he angered much of Athens. Some of his pupils became corrupt or violent, even committing treason against Athens during the Peloponnesian War. In 399 B.C.E. the city brought Socrates to trial for impiety and corrupting the young. In his defense, Socrates claimed he'd done nothing unjust his whole life, and that he should receive honors from the city instead of punishment. The jury responded by giving Socrates the death sentence, which was carried out some time

later by a group of Eleven officials in charge of prisons and executions, who compelled him to drink hemlock.

Life of Satie

Erik Satie was born in Honfleur, France in 1866. In his childhood, Satie had two main influences: his eccentric uncle, and the organist at the local church who gave Satie his first piano lessons. These influences shaped Satie's character in his "love for music, and his irrepressible irreverence and deep-rooted hatred of convention in all its forms" (Myers 14). "At an early age [...] he was attracted by Gothic art and Gregorian Plainsong which appealed to the mystical side of his nature" (Myers 28). "All his life he was interested in ritual and ceremonial [...] at the same time there is no evidence that he was definitely religious" (Myers 28). He was educated at the Paris Conservatoire, where his teachers had negative opinions of his talent and motivation. He famously lived in the Montmartre district of Paris and played at the Chat Noir, wearing a long beard and top hat (Myers 34). He befriended great musicians and artists, including Claude Debussy. He never became as popular as Debussy; indeed, Satie feigned disinterest in public opinions. Rollo Myers writes that "Erik Satie [...] would rather live with his thoughts in poverty than without them in prosperity" (Myers 29). His most famous works were miniatures for piano, often taking the form of musical jokes. He would give his compositions sarcastic titles and insert "humorous text so as to disarm the critics in advance" (Myers 44). Satie only had one intimate relationship, with an artist named Suzanne Valadon who broke his heart. Though he spent time with bohemian elements of French society, he often claimed to be asexual. Satie died in 1925 from cirrhosis of the liver, the result of a life of heavy drinking.

Circumstances of the piece

An equally important figure in the composition of *Socrate* was the Princesse de Polignac, a wealthy lesbian American expatriate, also known as Winnaretta Singer, who commissioned it. “In 1916 [she] approached Erik Satie with an unusual commission, asking for music to accompany a reading of Plato’s dialogues in the ancient Greek for herself and two of her close friends” (Dorf 87). She tells of the commission herself in her memoirs:

“I was very anxious to know Satie, and I intended to ask him to write music for the Death of Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedo*. I asked Jeanne Bathori to bring him to dinner one evening. He was then a man of about 52, neither tall nor short, very thin, with a short beard. He invariably wore pince-nez, through which one saw his kindly but rather mischievous pale blue eyes, always ready to twinkle as some humorous thought crossed his mind...At the time when I met Satie I had been learning a little Greek and was becoming more and more enthusiastic as I managed to read the tragedies of Euripides or the Dialogues of Plato in the original text. Satie was equally enthusiastic, so he decided to write music for the *Death of Socrates*, and after much thought suggested that the scene should be set in a small salon in the Empire Style in which, in armchairs, Madame de Wendel and Argyropoulo who knew Greek perfectly, and I myself, would read in turns the glorious words of Plato. At first this seemed an excellent idea, and we spent many evenings talking it over, but in the end Satie decided to give up the idea of the Empire Salon and the have no scenery at all, and he wrote an oratorio [sic] for a woman’s voice and a small orchestra. There is no doubt that this is his

masterpiece, and nothing could be more moving than this music written for the beautiful words of Plato. When he had finished it he sent me the score, which is now [1945] in Paris in my collection of musical manuscripts. Jeanne Bathori sang *Socrate* for the first time in my music room accompanied by the ethereal music of Satie” (Polignac 137-8).

The Princesse had taken a trip to Greece a few years earlier, which she described as a nearly religious experience (Dorf 94). “She mentioned in her memoirs that she was drawn to the Grecian aspect of some of Satie’s works” (Dorf 90) when she chose him for this task. Reading Greek was an unusual, even taboo occupation for a woman in this period. For this reason, according to Dorf, and because of the Princesse’s own sexuality and the piece’s structure, with women singing men’s parts, many writers have analyzed *Socrate* as:

“an act of sexual defiance: an opportunity for the Princesse to express her sexuality within the safe setting of her salon. However, what is most striking is the great care taken by Satie and Polignac to eliminate any reference, even oblique, to sex from Plato’s original text [...] Characters are essentially made asexual, and this is particularly striking when we think about the texts Satie and Polignac chose to set. The first movement of *Socrate* takes its text from Plato’s *Symposium*, one of Plato’s most sexually explicit dialogues. All references here to the sexual relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates are removed” (Dorf 94-5).

Why would Satie and Polignac tread so carefully? Dorf argues the Princesse knew her survival in Parisian society depended upon her restraint (Dorf 93). Both Satie and

Polignac tried to keep their personal lives very private, and they dared not show overt sexuality in a public piece of music (Dorf 95). American newspapers already mocked her marriage as a farce (Kahan 37), and Parisian gossip columnists had pegged her as a target (Dorf 93). Whether *Socrate* was intentionally desexualized or not, the Princesse clearly loved the piece. In fact, upon the death of a good friend and lover, “she reopened the doors of her home and welcomed select guests to hear Satie’s *Mort de Socrate*” (Dorf 98).

Text

Though at first Satie intended to set the dialogues in their original Greek, he eventually decided on a peculiar French translation by Victor Cousin. Satie said the ‘flatness’ of this translation appealed to him (Dossena 17). Satie never recorded why he chose the texts he did, but Polignac herself may have “helped select which passages of Plato’s dialogues to set, since Satie notebooks clearly show that the libretto was written and finalized before the composer started making musical sketches” (Dorf 91).

For the first piece, Satie chose to set a selection of Alcibiades’ speech from Plato’s *Symposium*. In the *Symposium*, Socrates attends a drinking party. Socrates has recently bathed and is wearing shoes, which was not his usual habit. Instead of drinking, the group decides to give speeches honoring Eros, the god of love. Some of the company praise Eros as the oldest and most distinguished god, some as the youngest and most beautiful, some as the best god for giving happiness. Some divide him in two, with one Eros to rule honorable love and one to rule lust.

Socrates, in contrast to the others, claims in his speech that Eros is not beautiful and happy, but ugly, old, poor, and without shoes, a character much like Socrates himself.

Socrates argues Eros is characterized by desire, and we do not desire that which we already possess. As a result, Eros must be ugly, since he desires beauty, and miserable, because he desires happiness. Love, then, is desire, and for Socrates Eros is the desire for knowledge and truth. Eros becomes Socrates himself: an ugly, poor man who seeks truth.

At this point in the conversation, Alcibiades, an incredibly talented politician and military leader, bursts into the party, already drunk. When he sees Socrates, he accuses Socrates of ambushing him. In turn, Socrates jokes that Alcibiades abuses him in jealousy. Socrates taught philosophy to the young Alcibiades. On this night, Alcibiades is about to embark on the Sicilian expedition, the turning point of the Peloponnesian War. Accused of destroying sacred statues in Athens and called back from the expedition to stand trial, Alcibiades would defect to Sparta, resulting in the loss of the Peloponnesian War for Athens. Alcibiades may have mutilated the statues the night of this symposium in his drunken revel. Alcibiades betrays Athens, and the city brings Socrates to trial for corrupting the young.

Alcibiades chooses to give a speech about Socrates instead of Eros. Satie sets the beginning and end of this speech, in which Alcibiades tells us Socrates plays upon the souls of men like a pan does on a flute. Oddly, Satie chooses to omit the section in which Alcibiades admits to trying, in vain, to seduce Socrates. The dialogue ends in drunken revelry, but Socrates, remaining lucid, drinks and converses about poetry and philosophy until everyone else falls asleep.

Satie takes his second text from Plato's *Phaedrus*. "In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates convinces his interlocutor that the greatest good is the madness inspired by love and that philosophy itself should participate in this madness [...] This conversation takes place

while the two [...] are reclining in the shade among the trees outside Athens” (Pulchner 47). Satie again chooses not to set the philosophic discussion; instead he sets the very beginning, when Socrates and Phaedrus look for a place to sit before philosophizing, showing that Satie cared more about creating a portrait of Socrates and his friends and followers than philosophy. In this section, Socrates behaves much like a tourist, exclaiming over the beauty of the river and the grass. Socrates spent most of his life in Athens, speaking to the young in the marketplace. He was not accustomed to the world outside the city. Satie also includes a part of the conversation in which Phaedrus asks Socrates whether there’s any truth to the myth that Boreas swept Oreithyia away with the wind. Socrates shows himself to be a doubter, saying that many thinkers search for explanations for myths in the natural world. Socrates, however, claims it takes much leisure to examine these myths, and since he has not yet accomplished knowing himself, he thinks it not useful to examine foreign things.

Satie sets the beginning and end of the *Phaedo* for the third piece. Again he eliminates most of the complicated philosophy in favor of text showing Socrates’ character and the love of his friends. In the *Phaedo*, Phaedo tells Echebrates, a fellow philosopher, the events surrounding Socrates’ death. Socrates has been condemned to death for impiety and corrupting the young. On this day, Phaedo, Crito and Socrates’ other followers go to the prison and converse with Socrates about death. In the last hours before Socrates must drink the hemlock, he comforts his followers by giving a logical argument for the immortality of the soul and not fearing death. The philosopher seeks always to moderate the desires of the body, and knows that while his soul is tied to his body, he will never see truth. Because of this, Socrates argues, the business of philosophy

is dying, so a philosopher need not fear death. Socrates' followers remain distraught. Socrates calmly takes the hemlock, while his followers and prison guard mourn.

Satie said of the text, "Plato is a perfect collaborator, very gentle and never importunate. What a dream!" (Dossena 3).

Composition and musical analysis

Many listeners consider Satie's setting unusual. Satie wrote that he wanted the music "to be as white and pure as Antiquity," and described it as "a return to classical simplicity with a modern sensibility" (Dossena 3). He also admitted *Socrate* was problematic and "impossible to pigeonhole" (Dossena 3). Though Satie called it a symphonic drama, it used only a small orchestra and hardly seems dramatic. As Gillmor points out, *Socrate* is not a dramatic setting of Plato's words, but "a musicalization of their meaning, for the music is devoid of rhetoric and sentimentality [...] The dynamic level only occasionally rises above mezzo forte" (Gillmor 222). Satie himself wrote, "It is as if the drama were concealed in the music, so that the real actions happen in the mind of the listener, who thus becomes a participant in the drama." The Princesse de Polignac intended it "to be read, rather than simply sung" as a dramatic work (Dossena 3). For that reason, I will make no attempt to "act" the characters tonight, but will instead read the words without drama and allow you to imbue them with emotion. Orledge points out, "Its title 'symphonic drama' would appear to be a misnomer, until one realizes that it is symphonic insofar as its main motifs all appear in the orchestra, and dramatic insofar as it describes the events leading to the drama of Socrates' death in its final part" (Orledge 133).

Although Satie clearly meant for the roles to be sung by women, the number of woman singers intended is hotly contested. In at least one of his letters, Satie specified four singers, but the instructions in the music simply say “pour voix” and one woman sang all the parts at the piece’s premiere. The current performance practice seems to be assigning one voice per part (Schweitzer), but tonight I will sing all the parts.

Two significant musical issues to listen for in *Socrate* are the musical motifs in the orchestra and the whiteness, or flatness, Satie describes. Very few memorable melodic motifs occur in the vocal line, which follows a plainchant-like syllabic patten, but a few motifs in the orchestra come to dominate the texture. For example, in all three sections, rising scales occur between phrases. In the final part, this rising scale comes to symbolize Socrates rising towards truth, as typified by his death. The first measures of *Mort de Socrate* introduce this rising tetrachord (accompanist plays the passage).

According to Gillmor, “This four-note figure, softly oscillating between minor triads on E and A, will gradually and inexorably come to dominate the movement, insinuating itself into the listener’s imagination as a kind of musico-poetic symbol of the serene and stoic death of the great philosopher” (Gillmor 223). It appears again when Socrates’ follower Crito is ordered to bring the poison and when Phaedo describes how they cried after Socrates drank (Orledge 136).

The intentional flatness of *Socrate* may be its most perceived characteristic to an audience. According to Dossena, “The musical ‘surface’ of *Socrate* is indeed a flat plain, impenetrable to an analysis in search of high mountains or landmarks standing out against the horizon” (Dossena 14). Satie composed *Socrate* this way in an attempt to imitate Greek enlightenment and the pureness of Socrates’ philosophy, “to be as white

and pure as Antiquity.” Satie’s *Gymnopédies*, short piano pieces composed nearly fifteen years earlier, were also intended to have a Greek feeling, which Satie achieved by using dance rhythms. “In contrast to the *Gymnopédies*, “there are no piquant notes, no overt dance rhythms [...] Rather, we get quasi-plainchant vocal lines, and a much broader sense of fluidity” (Dorf 90). Satie achieves this fluidity using several composition techniques. First, he relies on “the force of rhythmic continuity” (Fulcher 147).

“The rhythms, almost without exception, are derived from combinations of only two note values (quarters and eighths)” (Gillmor 222), and tempos vary between pieces only subtly. Also, according to Orledge, Satie uses a “low dynamic level, slow pulse, and motivic preoccupation with the bare interval of the perfect fourth” (Orledge 133), as in the Socrates motif, to create the flat, monochrome effect.

To some listeners, the flat effect is unpalatable and even boring. However, Satie was pleased with the effect. In his letters, he claimed, “I’m very happy with my work,” and called it his “most important work” (Dossena 3). I personally find that this effect enables listeners to focus on the words being relayed, as the *Princesse de Polignac* wished.

Reception of the piece

Not everyone found *Socrate* as pleasing as Satie. *Socrate*’s initial reception was lukewarm. Gillmor writes,

“As was almost always the case with a Satie premiere, *Socrate* received a remarkably mixed reception at the hands of the critics, many of whom no doubt had expected another Satie ‘joke’ and were, not surprisingly, puzzled by the seriousness of the music. Jean Marnold, powerful critic for the *Mercure de*

France, saw *Socrate* as a total nullity, a string of relentlessly reiterated phrases” (Gillmor 218).

Socrate was enthusiastically received by conservative elements of French society, which praised it, in spite of Satie’s public participation with the French Socialist Party (Fulcher 150). In contrast, an unnamed correspondent for the London *Observer* wrote “The work is of interminable length...Everybody seemed bored, and wondered when it would finish; but so afraid have we grown of being accused of lack of understanding that there was plenty of applause and very few hisses and unfriendly cries” (Gillmor 218).

Satie did not only confound the critics of his time. Similar differences in opinion about *Socrate* exist to this day. Dorf writes,

“The work that became *Socrate* has only confused countless scholars who have tried in vain to place it within one specific style or movement. The work’s clear, simply adorned musical lines have been viewed as modernist, neoclassical, and even minimalist, but all scholars seem to agree that it really defies categorization. Its singularly bizarre qualities were not lost on the composer himself, either, for after the first public performance of *Socrate*, the composer turned around to witness the audience giggling and snickering. “Étrange n’est-ce pas?” he remarked to the man sitting next to him” (Dorf 87-8).

Annotated Bibliography

Benardete, Seth, and Allan David Bloom, trans. *Plato's Symposium*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001. Print.

Modern English translation of *Plato's Symposium*, crucial for understanding the dialogue Satie set.

Bloom, Allan David. *Love and Friendship*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. Print.

This crucial essay analyzes *Plato's Symposium*.

Brann, Eva, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, trans. *Plato's Phaedo*. Newburyport:

Focus, 1998. Print.

A modern translation of *Plato's Phaedo*.

Dorf, Samuel N. "'Étrange N'est-ce Pas?": The Princesse Edmond De Polignac, Erik

Satie's *Socrate*, and a Lesbian Aesthetic of Music?" *Queer Sexualities in French and Francophone Literature and Film*. Ed. James T. Day. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 87-99. Print.

A chapter in this book tells the commission, composition, and reception of *Socrate* from a gender and sexuality point of view, dealing especially with the Princess de Polignac and Satie's treatment of *Plato's Symposium*.

Dossena, Pietro. "À la recherche du vrai Socrate." *Journal of the Royal Musical*

Association 133.1 (2008): 1-31. Taylor & Francis, Ltd. Web.

Title translated means "in search of the true *Socrate*." Includes many useful quotes from Satie about the work, taken from his letters. The article contains an analysis of the piece built from Satie's composition notebooks and points out a cantus firmus Satie uses when Alcibiades praises Socrates' sacred nature.

Fulcher, Jane. *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940*.

New York: Oxford UP, 2005. *Ebrary*. Web. 13 Oct. 2012.

A chapter of this book evaluates how Satie as a composer and *Socrate* in particular were influenced by the political ideals of the French Left.

Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Boston: Twayne, 1988. Print.

Respected biography of Satie that includes information about *Socrate*.

Harding, James. *Erik Satie*. New York: Praeger, 1975. Print.

Useful biography of Satie.

Kahan, Sylvia. *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer, Princesse De*

Polignac. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester, 2003. *Ebrary*. Web. 13 Oct.

2012.

A likely useful biography of the Princesse de Polignac, who commissioned *Socrate* from Satie.

Kremer, Mark, trans. *Plato's Apology of Socrates*. Newburyport: Focus, 2006. Print.

The Platonic dialogue in which Socrates is condemned to death, this dialogue is necessary for understanding the *Phaedo*.

Myers, Rollo H. *Erik Satie*. New York: Dover Publications, 1968. Print.

Useful biography of Satie.

Nichols, James H, trans. *Plato's Phaedrus*. New York: Cornell University, 1998. Print.

A modern translation of *Plato's Phaedrus*.

Orledge, Robert. *Satie the Composer*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. *Google Books*.

Web. 11 Oct. 2012.

Book contains an analysis of the final part of *Socrate*, emphasizing the "Socrates theme" of rising tetrachords.

"Paris Week by Week: Erik Satie," *Observer*, 8 May 1921, 7.

A scathing review of an early performance of *Socrate*.

Princesse Edmond de Polignac, "Memoirs," *Horizon* 12 (August 1945):137-38.

The Princesse details the composition and premiere of *Socrate* in her own words.

Puchner, Martin. *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*.

New York: Oxford UP, 2010. *Ebrary*. Web. 13 Oct. 2012.

A likely useful book that evaluates presentations of Platonic dialogues in theatre.

Satie, Erik. *Socrate*. Paris: Editions De La Sirene, 1919. Print.

The music itself as originally published for voice and piano.

Schweitzer, Vivien. "Ah, to Hum a Few Bars of Plato." Rev. of *Socrate*. *New York*

Times 1 Nov. 2010, Arts sec.: n. pag. Web. 10 Oct. 2012.

Some interesting thoughts on a recent performance of *Socrate*.

Thucydides, Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley. *The Landmark Thucydides: A*

Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War. New York: Free, 1996. Print.

Important insights into the character and actions of Alcibiades.

Wright Roberts, W. "The Problem of Satie." *Music and Letters* 4.4 (1923): 313-20. Print.

This source is contemporary to Satie and mentions *Socrate* as having elements of mysticism and idealism and being a return to "the serious spirit and the Greek inspiration of [Satie's] younger days" (320).

Literature Review

General topic:

I have researched Erik Satie's famous work *Socrate*. In order to learn about this piece, I've researched Erik Satie himself and *Socrate* in particular. In addition, because this piece uses texts from Platonic dialogues, I've also researched Socrates and read several of the dialogues.

Overall trends:

Scholars discuss *Socrate* from many perspectives: in terms of being a musical departure for Satie, a return to his obsession with Greek forms, and in terms of sexuality, because *Socrate* was commissioned by a known lesbian and set for women's voices.

My guiding research questions have been: Why did Satie choose the text he chose? Why did he set it for women's voices? Why is the piece so musically repetitive? This lit review will be organized by topic, beginning with pertinent information about Socrates and Satie, continuing to musical analyses of *Socrate*, ending with critical reception of the piece. Literature not pertinent to performance of the piece, such as extra biographical information or in depth analyses of Satie's other compositions, will not be included.

Life of Socrates:

An important aspect of this piece is Socrates himself. For biographical character information, I turned to Plato's dialogues and related essays. I used the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Apology* to find his birth and death dates, wife's name, relationship with students, and military service. The *Symposium* includes

details about his military service and personal habits. I used Seth Benardete's translation on advice from a thesis committee member, in addition to Allan Bloom's essay *Love and Friendship*, which helped me interpret the dialogue. I used the Eva Brann translation of the *Phaedo* to understand the events surrounding Socrates' death. The *Phaedrus*, translated by James Nichols, provides further insight into Socrates' character. The *Apology*, translated by Mark Kremer, was necessary to understand the events of the *Phaedo* and the reason for Socrates' death.

Life of Erik Satie:

My main source for Erik Satie's biographical information was Rollo H. Myers' biography *Erik Satie*. I also consulted Alan M. Gillmor's and James Harding's biographies of Satie, and found them to concur with Myers', though Gillmor's biography mainly included analyses of Satie's compositions, which was less useful to my research, excepting his chapter on *Socrate*. These three are the main sources in the literature for Satie's life. Because I only required the basics of his life and character for my presentation, I used only these sources.

Circumstances of the Piece:

For this section, I had to understand events in Satie's life surrounding this composition, in addition to the life of the woman who commissioned it, the Princesse Edmond de Polignac. I chose to focus on the Princesse, and used her own memoirs, a biography by Sylvia Kahan, and an essay by Samuel Dorf. The Dorf essay evaluates *Socrate* from the perspective of gender and sexuality issues, and has proven to be an invaluable source. The Kahan biography goes into significant detail on other life events that were not always pertinent to this issue, but backed up other

sources on the significant events surrounding *Socrate*. Her memoirs provided an excellent quote for me to use in the presentation about her perspectives on the piece and memories about its commission. Again, as I only required information pertinent to *Socrate*, I focused on these sources.

Text:

For this section I again used the Platonic dialogues I discussed in the Life of Socrates section. I also found an text that dealt with presentations of Platonic dialogues in theatre settings, but it was only partially useful, as it did not include much information about *Socrate* or the dialogues themselves. For most of this section, I relied upon my own close reading of the dialogues, guided by a thesis committee member.

Composition and Musical Analysis:

Pietro Dossena wrote an article that included many useful quotes from Satie's letters about *Socrate* and an analysis of how it was composed, constructed from Satie's composition notebooks. Robert Orledge provided an entire analysis of the final section of *Socrate*, explaining the theme of rising tetrachords. In Dorf's article about sexuality in *Socrate*, there is also contained some analysis. Jane Fulcher, on the other hand, analyzed the music from the perspective of Satie's involvement with the French Left. Gillmor's biography, also mentioned above, included some good analysis.

Reception of the Piece:

Fulcher, Gillmor, and Dorf, all of whom have been mentioned above, provided the most interesting information about critical response to *Socrate*.

Conclusions:

Socrate has been discussed more than I expected for a piece so seldom performed. Many have written about it from different perspectives. I hope to tie those perspectives together into a final product that is interesting, entertaining, and informative to a multi-disciplinary audience. *Socrate* still confounds and fascinates researchers.