



In the late summer of 1918, without waiting for the end of the war, Count Etienne Bonnin de la Bonnetière de Beaumont and his wife, Countess Edith de Taisne de Beaumont, opened their salon in the rue Duroc. Since the state of war had promoted contacts between high society and others (at the front, and in Montparnasse) it now appeared quite natural that the Beaumonts should invite a few artists to their receptions, something that would have been unheard of in the past.

Jean Cocteau, who had shared life in the trenches, or rather behind the lines, with Beaumont, now served as a liaison officer between the two worlds.

On being invited to this first historic evening Satie, who was going through one of his worst moments of loneliness and distress, did not have the courage to take part.

Erik Satie to Etienne de Beaumont

24 August 1918

Cher Ami & Bon Monsieur,

How very sorry I am not to be able to come and hear those fine fellows: I am busy.

You are really too kind to have thought of me and to have invited me so cordially.

Bonjour, cher Monsieur & Ami, forgive me, please, and a thousand times thank you.

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Back in Paris, having got over his experience with the ambulances, Etienne de Beaumont had immediately devoted himself to another innovation, the creation of a Franco-American committee for aid to artists. Satie was one of the first to benefit from these good works.

Erik Satie to Mrs G.M. Tuttle, New York

Arcueil-Cachan, 5 November 1918

Madame — Mr Blair-Fairchild informed me that it was to you that I owed — owe — the gracious aid which he conveyed to me through the good offices of the Franco-American Committee of the Conservatoire (of Paris).

It was very good of you, Madame, to have done for me what you have been so kind as to do, & I thank you with all my heart.

I regret not having been able to do it earlier (to thank you) — as I told Mr Blair-Fairchild. Will you forgive me, Madame, for this delay?

I had flu so badly that I was incapable of writing anything whatever. I couldn't eat; I couldn't drink; I couldn't laugh — or only with one eye; I couldn't dance; I looked like a shadow, but an unpleasant and sorrowful shadow. I could no longer recognize myself & it happened several times that I took myself for someone else.

My sickness greatly amused my doctor. I became horribly ugly, but — fortunately — with a comical and most entertaining ugliness. That's what my doctor tells me. Now I'm saved & to guard against a recurrence of the illness, I constantly carry with me a solid lifebelt on the advice of my druggist — a whimsical man.

Forgive me, Madame, for bothering you with such confidential details.

Please allow me to thank you once more for your kindness and please accept the respectful salutations of him who signs himself

Erik Satie

On Wednesday 2 April 1919 Satie was engaged by Beaumont, for a fee, to play his *Morceaux en forme de poire* with André Salomon at a reception in honour of Queen Mary of Romania. Pierre Bertin, who was one of the guests that evening (or one of the performers? history does not tell us), describes his entry thus:

With two fingers on his mouth as always, Erik Satie crossed the room, headed for the Queen and chatted with her for a long time. When he withdrew, everyone asked him curiously what the Queen had said to him. Erik Satie replied gravely: 'The Queen told me I have a fine old man's head'.

Erik Satie to Edith de Beaumont

Arcueil-Cachan, 4 April 1919

Chère Comtesse & Exquise Dame —

Forgive me for writing to you on paper like this — I have nothing else at hand.

Here is the address of André Salomon: 58 rue Demours, 58, Paris — XVIIe.

How nice it was on Wednesday! The Queen is delightful. I was very happy.

Thank you with all my heart. A thousand good wishes to Monsieur de Beaumont.

Respectueusement vôtre je suis, Madame,

Erik Satie

Friday [11 April 1919]

Chère Bonne Comtesse — I thank you for your kind remittance: . . . it did not fall on deaf ears. Thank you forever and ever.

Please give my good wishes to Monsieur de Beaumont.

Bonjour, chère bonne Comtesse, from your respectful & devoted

Erik Satie

Having always had a weakness for entertainments, Etienne de Beaumont organized a masked ball every year. In *Le Bal du Comte d'Orgel* Raymond Radiguet describes one of these evenings typical of Parisian high society, whose greatest passion, he notes, was to 'put on a disguise'.

Radiguet made no secret of the fact that Anne d'Orgel was intended to be a portrait of Count de Beaumont. 'But Count d'Orgel,' he commented, 'is much better.'

Satie took part in the Beaumont balls. According to Maxime Jacob he even used 'to get furious if his domino was less elegant than Léon Paul Fargue's'. The guests' costumes were supposed, in principle, to be inspired by a theatrical theme laid down each year by the master of the house. In 1923 the theme was 'Antiquity under Louis XIV', in memory, no doubt, of a famous pre-war masked ball given by Paul Poiret to illustrate Lully's *Festes de Bacchus*. This time Satie was even more directly involved, since he was asked to compose the music for a *tableau vivant* to be presented in the course of the evening under the direction of Léonide Massine, a deserter from the Ballets Russes temporarily out of work. No doubt dissatisfied with the choreography of *Parade* (even though this was regarded by everyone — beginning with Cocteau, who claimed to be the true inspirer — as profoundly innovative), Satie suggested to Beaumont that he should not write his score until after Massine had designed the movements of the characters. This procedure, he confided to the painter Moïse Kisling, was the only way he could protect himself from being misinterpreted.

Erik Satie to Edith de Beaumont

[23 March 1922]

Chère & Exquise Comtesse — I telephoned you yesterday. Your express letter reached me at two in the morning as I got home. I'm extremely sorry.

There's nothing I'd like better than to work with Massine.



< Beaumont als orient.Prinz, 1923

At Derain's all three of us talked about this 'initial' choreography: starting off with the choreographer, which is very 'new' and has never been done before.

I'm the one who suggested this idea to Massine.

How sorry I am not to have been able to come! . . .

Mille choses au bon Comte, je vous prie.

Respectueusement: Erik Satie

The Beaumonts' music room, full of gilded woodwork, was dominated by a magnificent organ, built to special order. Satie decided to write a score for this instrument, despite the reservations expressed by Cocteau who, this time, had not permitted himself to be left out. The *Parade* team was reassembled in its entirety when Picasso agreed to design the costumes, as he had done for another of the Beaumonts' balls, the *Bal des Jeux*. The former ballerina from the Ballets Russes, Olga Koklova, who had meanwhile become Madame Pablo Picasso, was to play a part in the *tableau*, involving several characters, which was ultimately to be entitled *La Statue retrouvée* (the discovered Statue) but which for the time being was called *Divertissement*.

Erik Satie to Edith de Beaumont

Arcueil-Cachan, 26th Dec. 1922

Chère Exquise Comtesse — The good Count & you must be thinking very badly of me.

Believe me, it isn't my fault: various events have kept me far from the things I love. . . The *Divertissement* is one of those things — that I love & adore. Yes.

I'm very surprised to see that Jean shares the prejudice of the masses against the organ. . . Odd, isn't it? . . . Yes.

I very much hope to win him over to our cause — our good cause. Yes.

The organ isn't necessarily religious & funereal, good old instrument that it is. Just remember the gilt-painted merry-go-round. Well? . . .

Souvenir amical à tous deux: Erik Satie

