

soirées in Paris, it was produced by Walter Serner and precisely coordinated by Tzara. As Tzara alliteratively put it: '1500 persons filled the hall already boiling in the bubbles of bamboulas.' Hans Richter and Arp painted the sets for the dances by Suzanne Perrottet and Käthe Wulff, consisting of black abstract forms – 'like cucumbers' – on long strips of paper about two yards wide. Janco constructed enormous savage masks for the dancers and Serner armed himself with several curious props, among them a headless dummy.

The performance itself began on a sombre note: the Swedish film maker Viking Eggeling delivered a serious speech about elementary 'Gestaltung' and abstract art. This only irritated the audience primed for the usual combative confrontation with the Dadaists. Nor did Perrottet's dance to Schoenberg and Satie pacify the restless crowd. Only Tzara's simultaneous poem *Le Fièvre du mâle* ('The Fever of the Male'), read by twenty people, provided the absurdity they had anticipated. 'All hell broke loose', Richter noted. 'Shouts, whistles, chanting in unison, laughter all of which mingled more or less anti-harmoniously with the bellowing of the twenty on the platform.' Then Serner carried his headless dummy onto the stage, presenting it with a bouquet of artificial flowers. When he began reading from his anarchistic manifesto, *Letzte Lockerung* ('Final Dissolution') – 'a queen is an armchair and a dog is a hammock' – the crowd responded violently, smashing the dummy and forcing an interval of twenty minutes on the proceedings. The second part of the programme was somewhat more sedate: five Laban dancers presented *Nor Kakadu*, their faces covered by Janco's masks and bodies concealed in weird funnel-shaped objects. Tzara and Serner read more poems. Despite the peaceful finale, Tzara wrote that the performance had succeeded in establishing 'the circuit of absolute unconsciousness in the audience which forgot the frontiers of education of prejudices, experienced the commotion of the NEW'. It was, he said, Dada's final victory.

Actually, the Kaufleuten performance only marked the 'final victory' of Zurich Dada. To Tzara it was evident that after four years of activities in that city, it had become necessary to find fresh ground for Dada's anarchy if it was to remain at all effective. He had been preparing a move to Paris for some time: in January 1918 he had begun a correspondence with the group which in March 1919 was to found the literary magazine *Littérature* – André Breton, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon and others – hoping for contributions to *Dada 3* and their tacit support of Dada. Only Soupault replied with a brief poem, and although the whole Paris group, including Pierre Reverdy and Jean Cocteau, sent material for *Dada 4-5* (May 1919), it had become obvious that from such a distance not even the energetic Tzara could coerce the Parisians into further participation. So, in 1919, Tzara made his way to Paris.

Surrealism

First Paris performance

Tzara arrived unannounced at Picabia's home and spent his first night in Paris on a sofa. The news that he was in town quickly spread and he soon became the focus of attention of the avant-garde circles, just as he had anticipated. At the Café Certà and its annexe the Petit Grillon, he met the *Littérature* group with whom he had been corresponding, and it was not long before they arranged the first Dada event in Paris. On 23 January 1920, the first of the *Littérature* Fridays took place at the Palais des Fêtes in the rue Saint-Martin. André Salmon opened the performance with a recital of his poems, Jean Cocteau read poems by Max Jacob, and the young André Breton some by his favourite, Reverdy. 'The public was delighted', wrote Ribemont-Dessaignes. 'This, after all, was being "modern" – Parisians love that.' But what followed brought the audience to its feet. Tzara read a 'vulgar' newspaper article prefaced by an announcement that it was a 'poem' and accompanied by 'an inferno of bells and rattles' shaken by Eluard and Fraenkel. Masked figures recited a disjointed poem by Breton, and then Picabia executed large drawings in chalk on a blackboard, wiping out each section before going on to the next.

The matinée ended in an uproar. 'For the Dadaists themselves this was an extremely fruitful experiment', wrote Ribemont-Dessaignes. 'The destructive aspect of Dada appeared to them more clearly; the resultant indignation of the public which had come to beg for an artistic pittance, no matter what, as long as it was art, the effect produced by the presentation of the pictures and particularly of the manifesto, showed them how useless it was, by comparison, to have Max Jacob's poems read by Jean Cocteau.' Once again, Dada had 'triumphed'. Although the Zurich and Paris ingredients were the same – provocations against a respectful audience – it was clear that the transplant had been successful.

The following month, on 5 February 1920, crowds gathered at the Salon des Indépendants, lured by an advertisement stating that Charlie Chaplin would make an appearance. Not surprisingly, Chaplin was quite ignorant of his supposed presence. Similarly unaware of the falsity of the pre-performance publicity was the audience, which had to make do with thirty-

eight people reading various manifestos. Seven performers read the manifesto by Ribemont-Dessaignes warning the public that their 'decaying teeth, ears, tongues full of sores' would be pulled out and their 'putrid bones' broken. This barrage of insults was followed by Aragon's company chanting 'no more painters, no more musicians, no more sculptors, no more religions, no more republicans . . . no more of these idiocies, NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING!' According to Richter: 'These manifestos were chanted like psalms, through such an uproar that the lights had to be put out from time to time and the meeting suspended while the audience hurled all sorts of rubbish on to the platform.' The meeting broke up on an exciting note for the Dadaists.

Pre-Dada performance in Paris

Despite the apparent outrage of the Parisian public, the audience of the twenties was not entirely unfamiliar with such provocative events. For example, Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* of twenty-five years earlier still retained a special place in the history of performance scandals and, needless to say, Jarry was somewhat of a hero to the Parisian Dadaists. The music of the eccentric French composer Erik Satie, for example the one-act comedy *Le Piège de*

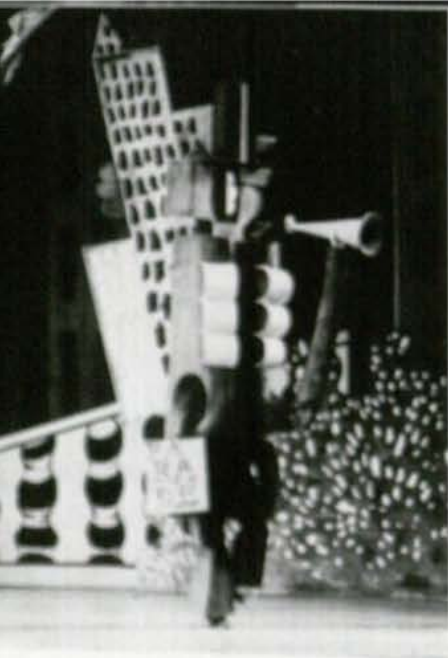
61 Scene from Raymond Roussel's *Impressions d'Afrique*, presented for one week at the Théâtre Fémina, 1911. The setting shows the début of the Earthworm Zither Player, whose secretions struck the chords of the instrument producing 'music'



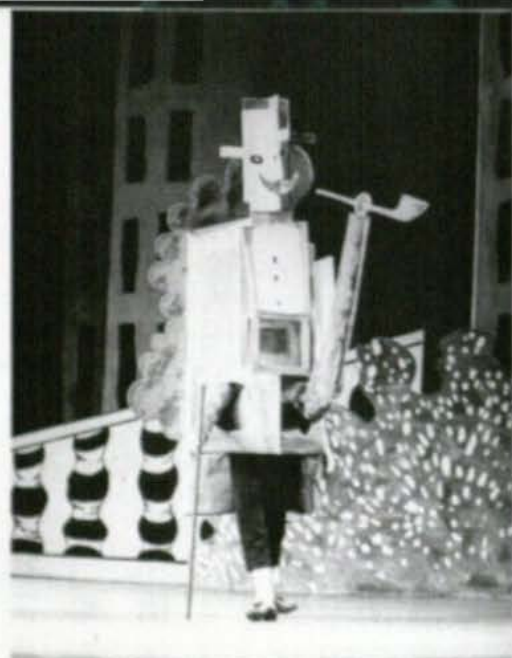
Méduse and his concept of 'furniture music' (*musique d'ameublement*), also contained many anticipations of Dada, while Raymond Roussel captured the imagination of the future Surrealists. Roussel's notorious *Impressions d'Afrique*, an adaptation of his 1910 prose fantasy of the same name, with its contest of 'The Incomparables Club' including the début of the Earthworm Zither Player – a trained earthworm whose drops of mercury-like 'sweat' sliding down the chords of the instrument produced sound – was a particular favourite of Duchamp, who attended its one-week run at the Théâtre Fémina (1911) along with Picabia.

The ballet *Parade* too, the collaborative work of four artists each masters in their own fields, Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau and Léonide Massine, had in May 1917 come in for its own noisy opposition from press and public alike. Indirectly employing Jarry-style tactics, *Parade* provided the Parisian public, just recovering from the long crises of the war, with a taste of what Guillaume Apollinaire described as the 'New Spirit'. *Parade* promised to 'modify the arts and the conduct of life from top to bottom in a universal joyousness', he wrote in the programme preface. Although only rarely performed, then as now, the ballet set the tone for performance of the postwar years.

Satie worked a full year on the text provided by Jean Cocteau. 'A simple roughly outlined action which combines the attractions of the circus and the music hall', it read. 'Parade', according to the Larousse dictionary and to Cocteau's notes, meant a 'comic act, put on at the entrance of a travelling theatre to attract a crowd'. So the scenario revolves around the idea of a travelling troupe whose 'parade' is mistaken by the crowd for the real circus act. Despite desperate appeals from the performers, the crowd never enters the circus tent. To prepare the scene, Picasso painted a drop curtain – a Cubist depiction of a cityscape with a miniature theatre at its centre. Satie's *Prelude of the Red Curtain* opened the production. The action itself began with the First Manager dressed in Picasso's ten-foot-high Cubist costume dancing to a simple rhythmic theme, endlessly repeated. The Chinese Prestidigitator, mimed by Massine himself in pigtail and brightly coloured costume of vermilion, yellow and black, was followed by the appearance of a second manager, the American Manager. Dressed as a skyscraper, this figure stamped with 'an organized accent . . . with the strictness of a fugue'. Jazz passages, described in the score as 'sad', accompanied the dance of the Little American Girl, who mimed the actions of catching a train, driving a car, and foiling a bank robbery. The Third Manager performed in silence on horseback and introduced the next act, two Acrobats who tumbled to a fast waltz of xylophones. The finale recalled various themes from the preceding sequences, and ended with the Little American Girl in tears as the crowds refused to enter the circus tent.



62 Picasso's costume for the American Manager in *Parade*, 1917



63 Picasso's costume for the First Manager in *Parade*, 1917



64 Set for *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*, 1921

Parade was greeted with outrage. Conservative critics dismissed the entire production: the music, orchestrated by Satie to include some of Cocteau's suggestions for 'musical instruments', such as typewriters, sirens, aeroplane propellers, Morse tappers and lottery wheels (only a few of which were actually used in the production), was considered as 'unacceptable noise'. Satie's reply to one such critic – 'vous n'êtes qu'un cul, mais un cul sans musique' even resulted in a court case and then a lengthy appeal to lessen the heavy sentence imposed on him. In addition, critics objected to the enormous costumes which they felt made nonsense of traditional ballet movements. Nevertheless the scandal of *Parade* confirmed Satie's reputation at fifty (just as *Ubu Roi* had made Jarry's at twenty-three), and it set a mood for future productions by Apollinaire and Cocteau among others.

Apollinaire and Cocteau

Apollinaire's preface to *Parade* had correctly anticipated the emergence of this New Spirit; moreover, it suggested that the New Spirit contained a notion of 'surrealism [surréalisme]'. There was, in *Parade*, he wrote, a 'sort of surrealism in which I see the point of departure for a series of manifestations of the New Spirit'. Encouraged by this atmosphere, Apollinaire finally added the last scene of Act II and a prologue to his own play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* ('The Breasts of Tiresias'), actually written in 1903, the year that he met Alfred



65 A scene from Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, 24 June 1917

66 Cocteau reciting through a megaphone in his production of *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*, 1921



Jarry, and presented it one month after *Parade* in June 1917 at the Conservatoire René Maubel. In his introduction Apollinaire expanded his notion of surrealism: 'I have invented the adjective *surrealist* . . . which defines fairly well a tendency in art, which if not the newest thing under the sun, at least has never been formulated as a credo, an artistic and literary faith.' This 'surrealism' protested against the 'realism' of theatre, he wrote. Apollinaire went on to explain that this idea had developed naturally from contemporary sensibilities: 'When man wanted to imitate walking he created the wheel, which does not resemble a leg. In the same way, he has created surrealism.'

Employing some of Jarry's own ideas, such as representing the entire people of Zanzibar (where the action takes place) in one actor, he also included among the props a newspaper kiosk, which 'talked, sang and even danced'. The work was essentially an appeal to feminists who 'do not recognise the authority of men' not to abandon their child-producing facilities in the process of their emancipation. 'Because you made love to me in Connecticut/Doesn't mean I have to cook for you in Zanzibar', shouted the heroine Thérèse through a megaphone. Then she opened her blouse and let fly her breasts – two enormous balloons, one red one blue – which remained attached to her body by strings. With these all too prominent signs of her sex, she decided that it would be better to sacrifice beauty 'that may be the cause of sin', by getting rid of breasts altogether, and she exploded them with a lighter. With a full growth of beard and moustache, she announced that she would change her name to the masculine 'Tirésias'.

Les Mamelles de Tirésias was prophetically subtitled a 'drame sur-réaliste'. Apollinaire cautioned that 'in abstracting from contemporary literary movements a tendency of my own, I am in no way undertaking to form a school'; nevertheless, seven years later, the term 'Surrealist' came to describe exactly that.

64.66 Only four years later, in 1921, Cocteau elaborated this new aesthetic in his first solo production, *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. Resembling both *Ubu Roi* and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, this used many of the same techniques of the earlier works, particularly the habit of representing crowds in one person, as though this were the most basic and effective means to counteract traditional realist theatre. It also employed the vaudeville habit of a master and mistress of ceremonies announcing each new sequence and explaining the action to the audience. The performers, members of the Ballets Suédois, mimed to the direction of figures dressed as phonograph machines with horns for mouthpieces. Against a painted set of the Eiffel Tower, the work according to Cocteau could have 'the frightening appearance of a drop of poetry seen under a microscope'. This 'poetry' ended with a child shooting the entire wedding party in an attempt to get at some macaroons.

Typically the action was accompanied by noise music. But Cocteau had anticipated a new mixed media genre in French performance which would remain on the edges of theatre, ballet, light opera, dance and art. This 'revolution which flings doors wide open . . .', he wrote, would allow the 'new generation to continue its experiments in which the fantastic, the dance, acrobatics, mime, drama, satire, music and the spoken word combine'. *Les Mariés*, with its mix of music hall and absurdity, seemed to have taken the irrationality of Jarry's Pataphysics as far as it could go. Yet at the same time, the profusion of such performances provided an excellent excuse for the Dadaists to devise entirely new strategies.

Dada-Surrealism

The editors of *Littérature* devoted considerable space to these contemporary events, to Jarry and the twenty-fifth anniversary of his *Ubu Roi*. In addition they provided their own roll-call of anti-heroes, among them Jacques Vaché, a young nihilist soldier and friend of Breton. Vaché's refusal to 'produce anything at all' and his belief in the fact that 'art is an imbecility', expressed in letters to Breton, endeared him to the Dadaists. There he wrote that he objected to being killed in war and that he would die only when he wished to die, 'and then I shall die with somebody else'. Shortly after the Armistice, Vaché, twenty-three years old, was found shot dead with a friend. Breton's epitaph equated Vaché's brief life and premeditated death with Tzara's Dada proclamations of a few years earlier. 'Jacques Vaché quite independently confirmed Tzara's principal thesis', he wrote. 'Vaché always pushed the work of art to one side – the ball and chain that hold back the soul even after death.' And Breton's final remark – 'I do not think that the nature of the finished product is more important than the choice between cake and cherries for dessert' – summed up the spirit of Dada performances.

Consequently Breton and his friends saw the Dada soirées as a vehicle for such beliefs as well as a means to recreate some of the sensational scandals that the much admired Jarry had achieved. Not surprisingly, their search for scandal led them to attack in those places where their insults would be most felt; for example at Leo Poldes's exclusive Club du Faubourg, in February 1920. Essentially an enlarged version of the earlier Indépendants fiasco, their captive audience included such persons of public repute as Henri-Marx, Georges Pioch and Raymond Duncan, Isadora's brother. The Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine was another stronghold of the intellectual and moneyed élite which supposedly represented the 'height of revolutionary activity' in France's educated circles. When the Dadaists performed there a few weeks later, Ribemont-Dessaignes pointed out that the only appeal of Dada to this informed gathering was its anarchy and its

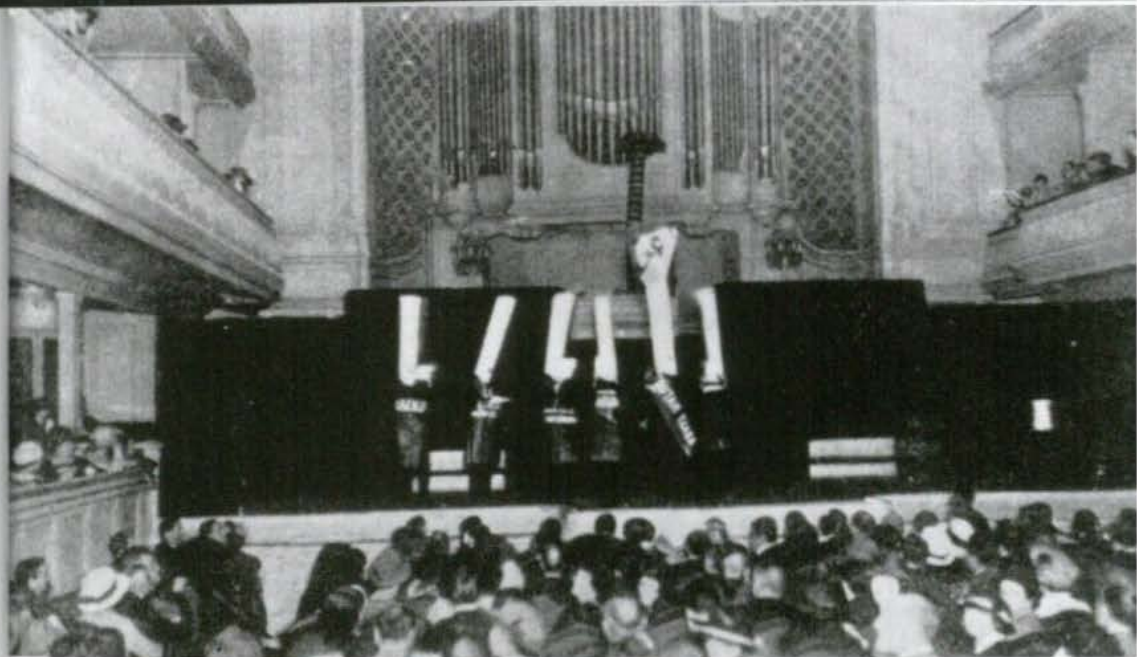
'revolution of the mind'. To them, Dada represented the destruction of established order, which was acceptable. What was unacceptable, however, was the fact that they saw 'no new value arising from the ashes of past values'.

But this was precisely what the Parisian Dadaists refused to provide: a blueprint for anything better than what had gone before. Nevertheless this question did cause a rift in the new Dada contingent. Clearly it would have been pointless, they argued, to continue with soirées based on the Zurich formula. Some even felt that Dada ran the risk of 'turning to propaganda and consequently becoming codified'. So they decided to stage a large demonstration before a less homogeneous crowd, at the Salle Berlioz in the famed Maison de l'Oeuvre; on 27 March 1920 they presented a carefully planned performance which according to Ribemont-Dessaignes was arranged in a mood of collective enthusiasm. 'The attitude of the public was one of amazing and unprecedented violence', he wrote, 'which would have seemed mild beside Mme Lara's performance of Apollinaire's *Mamelles de Tiélias*'. The Dada-Surrealist group of Breton, Soupault, Aragon, Eluard, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Tzara and others, presented their own plays in what was, in many ways, not unlike a grand variety show.

The programme included Tzara's Zurich success *La Première Aventure céleste de M. Antipyrine*, *Le Serin muet* by Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Le ventriloque désaccordé* by Paul Dermée, and Picabia's *Manifeste cannibale dans l'obscurité*. Also performed was Breton's and Soupault's *S'il vous plaît*, one of the first scripts to use automatic writing before it became one of the preferred techniques of the Surrealists. A three-act performance, each entirely unrelated to the others, the first tells the brief tale of Paul (the lover), Valentine (his mistress) and François (Valentine's husband) who over a 'cloud of milk in a cup of tea' end their relationship with a shot-gun as Paul shoots Valentine. The second act takes place, according to the script, in 'an office at four o'clock in the afternoon' and the third in 'a café at three o'clock in the afternoon', including such lines as 'Automobiles are silent. It will rain blood', and ending with: 'Don't insist, sweetheart. You'll regret it. I've got the syph.' The last line of the script noted: 'The authors of *S'il vous plaît* do not want the fourth act printed.'

Salle Gaveau, May 1920

The Salle Berlioz performance had been an attempt to give a new direction to Dada activities. But it did nothing to placate those of the group strongly resisting the inevitable standardization of Dada performances. Picabia especially was highly critical; he was against all art which smacked of officialdom, whether André Gide – 'if you read André Gide aloud for ten minutes your mouth will smell bad', or Paul Cézanne – I hate Cézanne's



67 Dada Festival in the Salle Gaveau

68 Programme of the Dada Festival, 26 May 1920, at the Salle Gaveau, Paris

69 Breton with a placard by Picabia at the Dada Festival



paintings, they irritate me.' Tzara and Breton, the most forceful members of the group, who both equated Dada's fate with their own, were decidedly at odds as to where Dada would lead and how. But they managed to maintain some kind of working relationship, long enough to plan the next Dada 67-9 onslaught—the Dada Festival held at the plush Salle Gaveau on 26 May 1920.

A large crowd, lured by past performances and the advertisement that the Dadaists would have their hair shaved on stage, gathered at the hall. Although the hair cutting did not take place, a varied programme and curious costumes had been prepared beforehand for their amusement. Breton appeared with a revolver tied to each temple, Eluard in a ballerina's tutu, Fraenkel in an apron, and all the Dadaists wore funnel-shaped 'hats' on their heads. Despite these preparations, the performances themselves were unrehearsed, so that many of the events were delayed and broken up by shouts from the audience as performers attempted to straighten out their ideas. For example, Tzara's *Vaseline symphonique* presented the orchestra of twenty with considerable difficulties. Breton, who, by his own confession, had a horror of music, was openly hostile to Tzara's attempts at orchestration, and the Gaveau family was reportedly equally outraged to hear the great organs resound to the rhythm of a popular foxtrot, *Le Pélican*. Then Soupault, in a piece entitled *Le célèbre illusionniste*, let loose multi-coloured balloons bearing the names of famous people, and Paul Dermée presented his poem *Le Sexe de Dada*. Tzara's *La Deuxième Aventure de Monsieur Aa*, 70 *l'Antipyrine* resulted in eggs, veal cutlets and tomatoes raining down on the performers, and Breton's and Soupault's brief sketch *Vous m'oublierez* received similar treatment. Nevertheless the madness that manifested itself that night in the elegant hall created an enormous scandal, which of course was regarded as a great achievement by the somewhat disenchanted group, despite the fact that they were by then considerably at odds with one another.



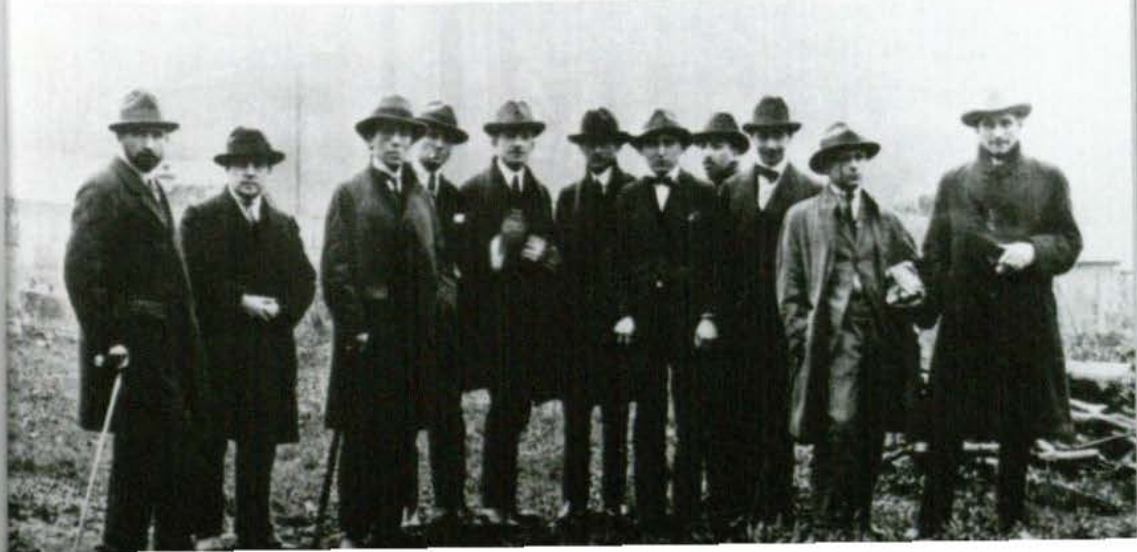
70 Scene from *Vous m'oublierez* at the Dada Festival, with Paul Eluard (standing), Philippe Soupault (kneeling), André Breton (seated) and Théodore Fraenkel (with apron)

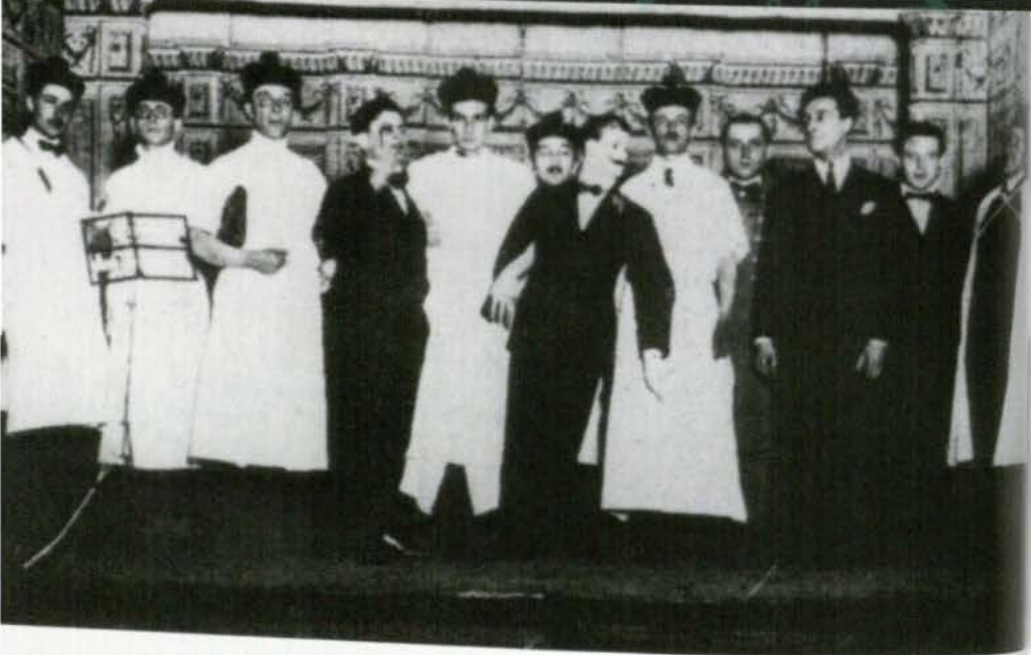
71 Opposite: The Dada excursion to the church of St Julien le Pauvre, 1920. From left to right, Jean Crotti, a journalist, André Breton, Jacques Rigaut, Paul Eluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Benjamin Péret, Théodore Fraenkel, Louis Aragon, Tristan Tzara and Philippe Soupault

Excursion and the Barrès Trial

The performers were slow to recover from the Salle Gaveau festival. They met at Picabia's home or in the cafés to discuss a way out of the impasse of regular soirées. It had become obvious that the public was by then ready to accept 'a thousand repeat performances' of the evening at the Salle Gaveau, but Ribemont-Dessaignes insisted that 'at all costs, they must be prevented 71 from accepting a shock as a work of art'. So they organized a Dada excursion to the little-known, deserted church of St Julien le Pauvre on 14 April 1921. The guides were to be Buffet, Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Fraenkel, Huszar, Péret, Picabia, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Rigaut, Soupault and Tzara. However, Picabia, long dissatisfied with the course of Dada's activities, withdrew from the excursion on the actual day. Posters advertised the event throughout the city. They promised that the Dadaists would remedy the 'incompetence of suspect guides and cicerones', offering instead a series of visits to selected sites, 'particularly those which really have no reason for existing'. Participants in these events, they assured, would immediately 'become aware of human progress in possible works of destruction'. In addition the posters contained such aphorisms as 'cleanliness is the luxury of the poor, be dirty' and 'cut your nose as you cut your hair'.

Despite the promise of an unusual excursion led by Paris's youthful celebrities, the lack of an audience, partly attributed to the rain, was not encouraging. 'The result was what followed every Dada demonstration; collective nervous depression', commented Ribemont-Dessaignes. This depression was short-lived, however. They dismissed the idea of future tours and turned instead to their second alternative to soirées, arranging the *Trial and Sentencing of M. Maurice Barrès by Dada* on 13 May 1921 at the Salle des 72 Sociétés Savantes, rue Danton. The object of their attack, an eminent established writer, Maurice Barrès, had been only a few years earlier





72 Trial of Maurice Barrès, 13 May 1921

somewhat of an ideal for the French Dadaists. According to the prosecution, Barrès had turned traitor when he became the mouthpiece of the reactionary newspaper *L'Echo de Paris*. The court representatives comprised Breton, the presiding judge, assisted by Fraenkel and Dermée, wearing white caps and aprons. Ribemont-Dessaignes was the public prosecutor, Aragon and Soupault the defence counsel, and Tzara, Rigaut, Péret and Giuseppe Ungaretti, among others, the witnesses. All wore scarlet caps. Barrès, tried by proxy, was himself represented by a wooden tailor's dummy. The accused was indicted for 'an offence against the security of the mind'.

The trial gave a public airing to the deep-rooted enmities that had been slowly brewing between Tzara and Breton, Picabia and the Dadaists. In fact Dada itself was on trial. It was also a signal for those for and against Dada to state their positions. Breton, who conducted proceedings in all seriousness, attacked the witness Tzara for his testimony that 'we are all nothing but a pack of fools, and that consequently the little differences – bigger fools or smaller fools – make no difference'. Breton's irritated reply was: 'Does the witness insist on acting like an utter imbecile, or is he trying to get himself put away?' Tzara retaliated with a song. Picabia made a brief appearance, having already published, two days earlier, his own repudiation of Dada in anticipation of the trial. 'The bourgeois represents the infinite', he wrote. 'Dada will be the same if it lasts too long.'

New directions

Following the trial, relations were strained between Picabia, Tzara and Breton. Those on the sidelines of this battle, Soupault, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Aragon, Eluard and Péret, organised a Dada Salon and exhibition at the Galerie Montaigne, which opened in June 1921. Breton and Picabia refused to have anything to do with it. Duchamp, who had been invited to contribute from New York, replied by telegram: 'peau de balle' [balls to you!].

Tzara however presented his work *Le Cœur à gaz* ('The Gas Heart'); first performed at this show, it was a complicated parody on nothing, with the characters, Neck, Eye, Nose, Mouth, Ear and Eyebrow dressed in elaborate cardboard costumes designed by Sonia Delaunay. Tzara introduced the event thus: 'It is the only and greatest three-act hoax of the century. It will satisfy only industrialized imbeciles who believe in the existence of men of genius.' Neck would remain downstage during the performance, Nose opposite, confronting the audience, the script explained. All the other characters would enter and leave as they pleased. The performance opened with Eye chanting monotonously: 'Statues, jewels, roasts', over and over, followed by 'Cigar, pimple, nose/Cigar, pimple, nose'. At this point Mouth commented, 'The conversation is lagging isn't it?' And the entire 'face' echoed this line for several minutes. At one point, a speaker stationed above the audience's heads, facing the stage, commented: 'It's charming, your play, but one can't understand a word of it.' The three acts continued with equally curious unrelated sentences, always at cross-purposes, and ended with the entire 'face' chanting 'go lie down/go lie down/go lie down'. Typically this verbal event ended in a brawl, with Breton and Eluard leading the attack against Tzara.

Meanwhile Breton was planning an event of his own. It was to be the Congress of Paris 'for the determination of directives and the defence of the modern spirit', scheduled for 1922. It would bring together all the various tendencies in Paris and elsewhere, with various groups represented by the artist-editors of the new magazines: Ozenfant (*L'Esprit Nouveau*), Vitrac (*Aventure*), Paulhan (*Nouvelle Revue Française*) and Breton (*Littérature*). Speakers would include Léger and Delaunay and, of course, the Dadaists. But the failure of the congress also marked the final break of Breton, Eluard, Aragon and Péret with the Dadaists. For Tzara contested the whole idea, finding it a contradiction in terms of Dada attitudes, to be presented on a comparative platform with Purists, Orphists and so on. Even before the event was finally cancelled, magazines published the various arguments for and against the congress. Breton made the mistake of using a 'common newspaper' in which to describe Tzara as an 'interloper from Zurich' and a 'publicity-seeking impostor'. This brought about the Dada contingent's



71 Costumes by Sonia Delaunay for Tristan Tzara's *Le Cœur à gaz*, revived for the *Soirée du Cœur à barbe* at the Théâtre Michel, 6-7 July 1923

resignation, published in a manifesto, *Le Cœur à barbe* ('The Bearded Heart').

A soirée held under the same name in July 1923 provided the ideal platform for the antagonisms that had brought about the failure of the congress to be aired once more. Following a programme of music by Auric, Milhaud and Stravinsky, designs by Delaunay and van Doesburg, and films 73 by Sheeler, Richter and Man Ray, Tzara's second performance of *Le Cœur à gaz* became the focus of a nasty scene. Breton and Péret protested loudly from the stalls, before climbing onto the stage to engage in a physical battle with the performers. Pierre de Massot escaped with a broken arm and Eluard, after having fallen into the stage sets, received a bailiff's note demanding 8000 francs for damages.

While Tzara stood firmly for the rescue and preservation of Dada, Breton announced its death. 'Though Dada had its hour of fame', he wrote, 'it left few regrets.' 'Leave everything. Leave Dada. Leave your wife. Leave your mistress. Leave your hopes and fears. . . . Set off on the roads.'

Bureau of Surrealist Research

The year 1925 marked the official foundation of the Surrealist movement with the publication of the *Surrealist Manifesto*. By December of that year, the new group had published the first issue of the magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste*. They had their own premises, the Bureau of Surrealist Research—

'a romantic inn for unclassifiable ideas and continuing revolts'—at 15 rue de Grenelle. According to Aragon, they hung a woman on the ceiling of an empty room, 'and every day received visits from anxious men bearing heavy secrets'. These visitors, he said, 'helped elaborate this formidable machine for killing what is in order to fulfil what is not'. Press releases were issued carrying the address of the bureau, and newspaper advertisements specified that the research bureau, 'nourished by life itself', would receive all bearers of secrets: 'inventors, madmen, revolutionaries, misfits, dreamers'.

The notion of 'automatism' formed the core of Breton's early definition: '*Surrealism*: noun masc., pure psychic automatism, by which an attempt is made to express, either verbally, in writing, or in any other manner, the true functioning of thought.' In addition, Surrealism, it explained, rested on the belief in the 'higher reality of certain hitherto neglected forms of association, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought'.

Indirectly, these definitions provided for the first time a key to understanding some of the motives behind the seemingly nonsensical performances of the preceding years. With the *Surrealist Manifesto* those works could be seen as an attempt to give free rein in words and actions to the oddly juxtaposed images of the dream. Actually, Breton had already by 1919 become 'obsessed with Freud' and the examination of the unconscious. By 1921 Breton and Soupault had written the first 'automatic' Surrealist poem, *Les Champs magnétiques* ('Magnetic Fields'). So although the Parisians accepted the term 'Dada' as a description of their works, many of the performances during the early twenties already had a definitely Surrealist flavour and could in retrospect be considered as Surrealist works.

Even if performances followed the Dada principles of simultaneity and chance as much as they did the Surrealist dream notions, some had fairly straightforward plots. For example, Apollinaire's *Sky Blue*, performed two weeks after his death in 1918, was about three young spaceship adventurers who, finding their ideal woman to be one and the same lady, destroy themselves. Tzara's *Mouchoir des nuages* ('Cloud Handkerchief') of 1924, with lighting designed by the dancer Loie Fuller, told the story of a poet having an affair with a baker's wife. Aragon's *The Mirror Wardrobe* (1923), written in typical 'automatic writing' style, was simply a tale about a jealous husband—the only twist was that the wife constantly urged her husband to open the wardrobe where her lover was in hiding. On the other hand, numerous performances directly interpreted Surrealist notions of irrationality and the unconscious. Roger Gilbert-Lecomte's *The Odyssey of Ulysses the Palimped* (1924) even defied all performance possibilities by inserting into the script long passages 'to be read silently'. And Vitrac's *Le Peintre* ('The Painter') (1922) no more provided a narrative: a curious performance, it involved a painter who first paints a child's face red, then the child's mother's

and finally his own. Each of the characters left the stage in tears, having been branded in this way.

'Relâche'

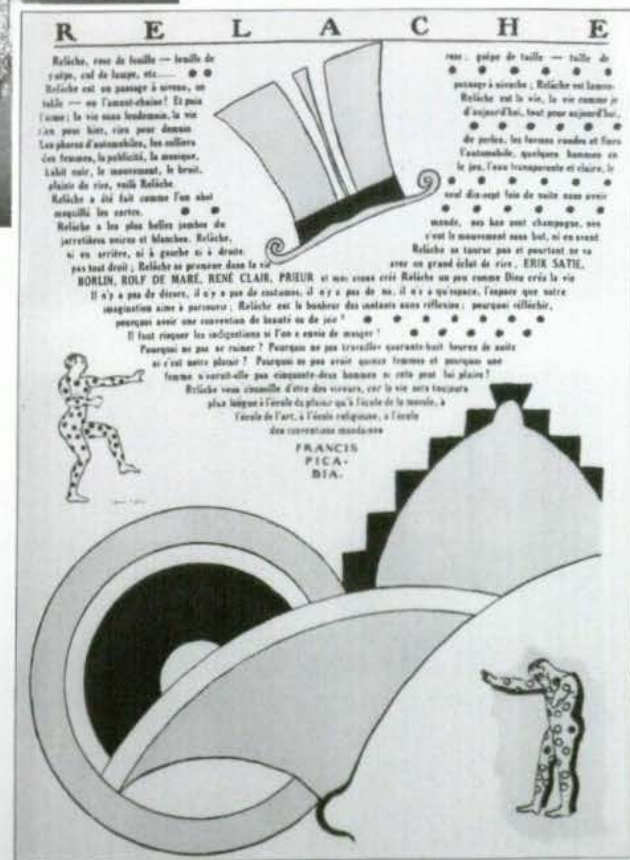
While such Surrealist principles became more strongly asserted in the performances of the mid-twenties, the conflicts between Surrealists, Dadaists and anti-Dadaists continued. For example, the Surrealists, in an attempt to draw Picasso into their ranks, published a letter in *391* and *Paris-Journal* in praise of Picasso's sets and costumes for the ballet *Mercur* (1924). But at the same time they took the opportunity to attack Picasso for his collaboration with Satie, of whom they vehemently disapproved. This response to Satie's music was never explicitly stated (it may simply have been a result of Breton's well-known 'horror of music'), but Satie's association with deserters of the Dada and newly named Surrealist cause, like Picabia, certainly did not help matters. Picabia and Satie retaliated with their 'ballet' *Relâche*, which owed as much to Picabia's commitment to the 'sensation of the new, of pleasure, the sensation of forgetting that one has to "reflect" and "know" in order to like something', as it did to the competition and feuding between the various individuals.

Despite the Surrealists' scorn, Picabia remained an avid admirer of Satie's. He even attributed the initial idea of *Relâche* to the composer: 'although I had made up my mind never to write a ballet,' Picabia wrote, 'Erik Satie persuaded me to do so. The mere fact that he was writing the music for it was for me the best reason.' And Picabia was enthusiastic about the results: 'I consider the music for *Relâche* perfect', he commented. Other collaborators on the performance, Duchamp, Man Ray, the young film maker René Clair and the director of the Ballets Suédois, Rolf de Maré, completed the 'perfect' team.

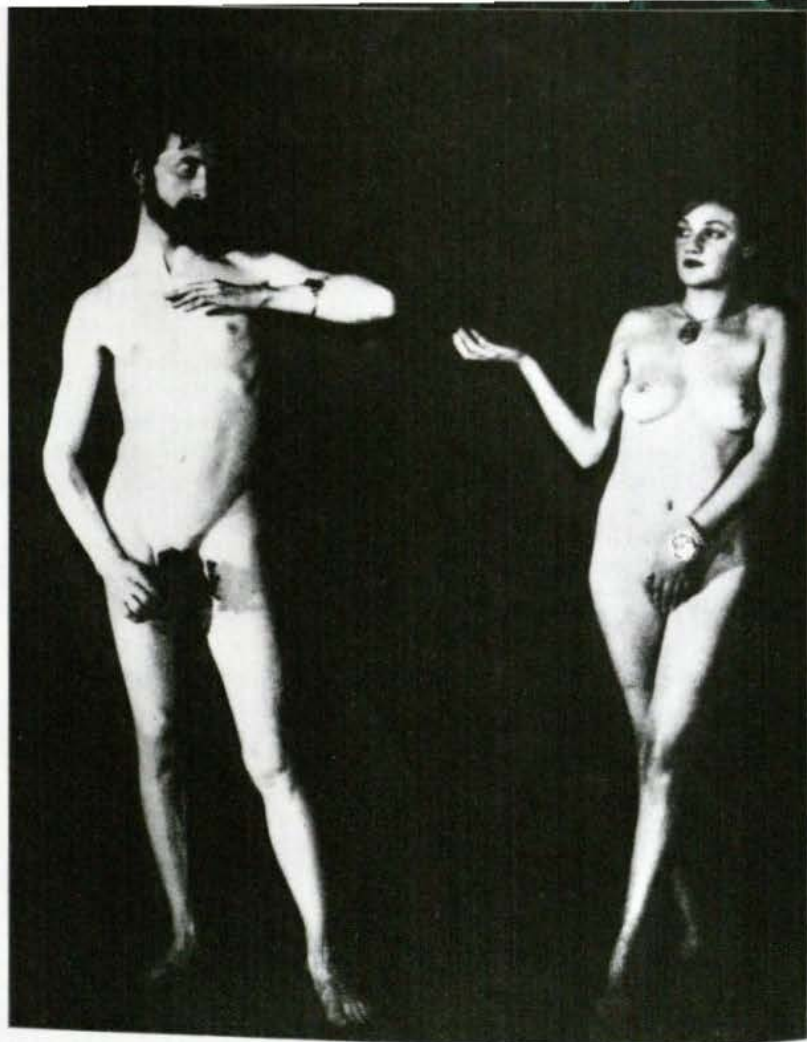
Opening night was scheduled for 27 November 1924. But that evening the principal dancer, Jean Borlin, fell ill. Consequently a sign, '*Relâche*', the theatrical world's term for 'no performance tonight', was pasted on the doors of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. The crowd thought it was yet another Dada hoax, but for those who returned on 3 December, a dazzling spectacle was waiting. First they saw a brief cinematic prologue, which indicated something of what was to follow. Then they were confronted by an enormous backdrop comprising metal discs, each reflecting a powerful light bulb. Satie's prelude, an adaptation of the well-known student song, 'The Turnip Vendor', soon had the audience roaring the scandalous chorus. From then on heckling and laughter accompanied the affectedly plain orchestration and the unfolding of the burlesque 'ballet'.



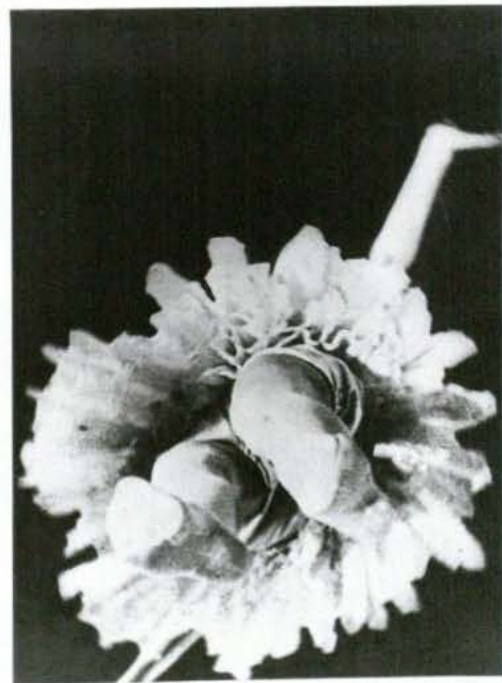
74 Jean Börllin and Edith von Barnsdorff in a scene from Picabia's *Relâche*, 1924, showing part of the wall of large silver disks, each inset with extra bright lights. The music was composed by Erik Satie



75 A page from the programme for *Relâche*, with text and drawings by Picabia

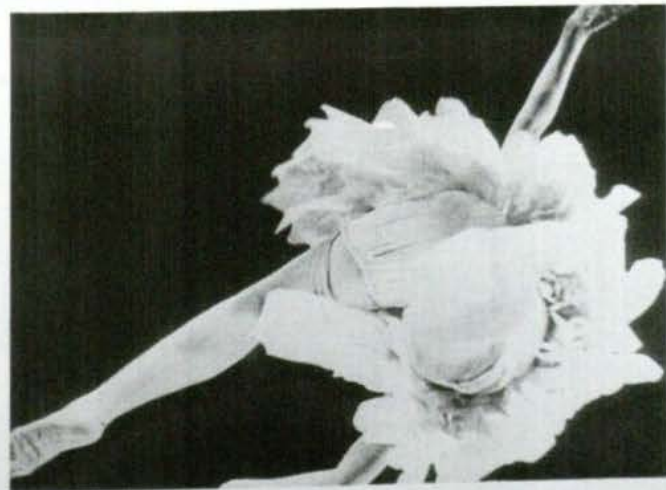


76 Opposite: Duchamp (à la Cranach) as Adam in *Revue Ciné Sketch* by Picabia and René Clair, presented with *Relâche* at a New Year's Eve Party, on 31 December 1924, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées



The first act consisted of a series of simultaneous events: downstage a figure (Man Ray) paced up and down, occasionally measuring the dimensions of the stage floor. A fireman, chain-smoking, poured water endlessly from one bucket into another. A woman in an evening gown sauntered onto the stage from the audience, followed by a group of men in top hat and tails who proceeded to undress. Underneath they wore one-piece suits. (These were Ballets Suédois dancers.) Then came the interval. But it was no ordinary interval. Picabia's film *Entr'acte*, scripted by him and filmed by the young cameraman René Clair, began rolling: a male dancer in a gauze skirt was seen from below, filmed through a glass plate; chess players (Man Ray, Duchamp and adjudicator Satie) were filmed from above, on the roof of

77-79 Stills, from René Clair's film *Entr'acte*, of Picabia dancing. *Entr'acte* was presented 'between acts' of *Relâche*. Duchamp and Man Ray also appeared in the film, playing chess

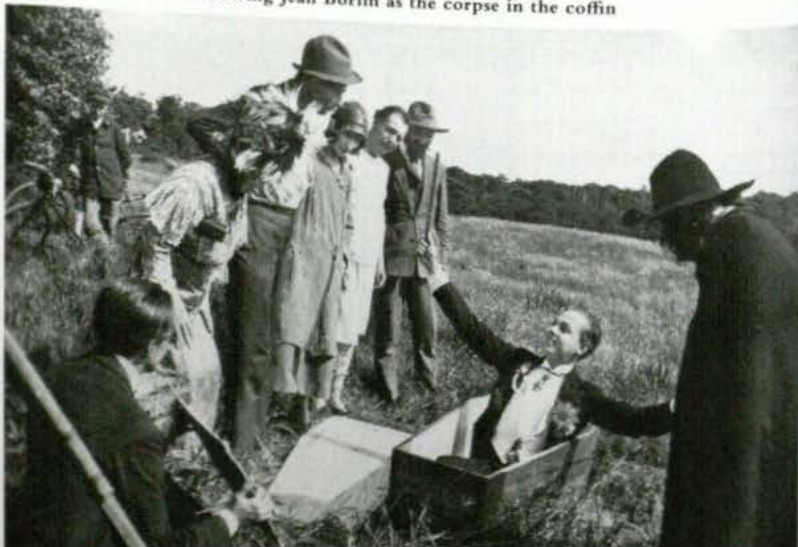


the same Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; a funeral procession took the viewers
 80 through the Luna Park and around the Eiffel Tower as mourners followed a
 camel-drawn hearse decked with advertising posters, bread, hams and
 interlocking monograms of Picabia and Satie; and a soundtrack by Satie
 closely matched the length of each shot in the film. No sooner had the slow-
 motion procession ended with the coffin falling off the hearse and breaking
 81 open to reveal a grinning corpse, than the cast broke through the 'End' paper,
 marking the beginning of the second act.

80 Still from *Entr'acte* of the climactic scene in which a hearse is hauled round the Eiffel Tower by a camel



81 Still from *Entr'acte* showing Jean Börlin as the corpse in the coffin



The stage was hung with banners proclaiming: 'Erik Satie is the greatest musician in the world', and 'if you are not satisfied you can buy whistles at the box office for a few farthings.' Borlin, Edith Bonsdorf and the corps de ballet danced 'gloomy and oppressive' dances. For the final curtain-call, Satie and other creators of the work drove around the stage in a miniature five-horsepower Citroën.

The evening ended inevitably in tumult. The press attacked the fifty-eight-year-old Satie with 'Adieu, Satie . . .' and the scandal was to remain with him till his death less than a year later. Picabia was delighted: '*Relâche* is life,' he wrote, 'life as I like it, all for today, nothing for yesterday, nothing for tomorrow.' Though 'intelligent people, Protestant pastors [may say] it isn't a ballet [or] it is only a Ballet Suédois [or] Picabia is mocking the world', he wrote, it was 'in a word, total success! *Relâche* is not for the erudite, to be sure . . . not for great thinkers, leaders of artistic schools who, like stationmasters, send out trains to the big ships that are always ready to take on board the lovers of "intelligent" art.' Fernand Léger, who had himself in 1923 provided the décor and extraordinary costumes for the Ballets Suédois's *La Création du monde*, declared *Relâche* 'a break, a rupture with traditional ballet'. 'To hell with the scenario and all literature! *Relâche* is a lot of kicks in a lot of backsides whether hallowed or not.' Above all Léger celebrated the fact that *Relâche* had broken the watertight compartment separating ballet from music hall. 'The author, the dancer, the acrobat, the screen, the stage, all these means of "presenting a performance" are integrated and organized to achieve a total effect . . .'

Surrealist love and death

The success of *Relâche* did nothing to deter the Surrealists' own directions. Although *Entr'acte*, more than the 'ballet' itself, had contained elements of the nightmare farces that Surrealists would develop in subsequent performances and films, the unstageable Surrealist 'plays for reading' by Salacrou, Daumal and Gilbert-Lecomte were leading to a dead end. Antonin Artaud was soon to provide a way out of that impasse: he and Roger Vitrac founded the Théâtre Alfred Jarry in 1927, dedicated to that innovator, to 'return to the theatre that total liberty which exists in music, poetry, or painting, and of which it has been curiously bereft up to now'.

Artaud's *Le Jet de sang* ('The Jet of Blood') of 1927 only barely escaped the classification 'play for reading'. Cinematic images ran throughout the brief scenario (less than 350 words): 'a hurricane separates the two [lovers]; then 2 stars crash into each other and we see a number of live pieces of human bodies falling down; hands, feet, scalps, masks, colonnade . . .' The Knight, Nurse, Priest, Whore, Young Man and Young Girl, engaged in a series of

disconnected emotional exchanges, created a violent and lurid fantasy world. At one point the Whore bit 'God's wrist' resulting in an 'immense jet of blood' shooting across the stage. Despite the brevity and virtually unrealisable images of the play, the work reflected the Surrealist dream world and its obsession with memory. When Surrealism would take your hand into death, Breton had written, 'it will glove your hand, burying therein the profound M with which the word Memory begins'. It was this same M that in its distorted way characterized Roger Vitrac's *Les Mystères de l'amour* ('The Mysteries of Love'), produced by Artaud in the same year. 'There is death', Lea concluded at the end of the fifth tableau of this rhetorical work. 'Yes,' Patrick replied, 'the heart is red already as far as the end of the theatre where someone is about to die.' And Lea fired a shot into the audience, pretending to kill a spectator. A 'drame surréaliste', Vitrac's play was perfectly consistent with Surrealism's 'automatic writing' and its own brand of lucidity.

Such lucidity was to dominate the extensive writings of Breton and the numerous Surrealist writers, painters and film makers. But by 1938 when Surrealism had showed its ability to dominate political, artistic and philosophical life, the Second World War was to put a stop to further group activities and performances. As a final gesture, and before Breton would depart for the United States, the Surrealists arranged an International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1938 at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris. This grand finale of works by sixty artists from fourteen nations was presented in a series of rooms described in the catalogue as follows: 'Ceiling covered with 1200 sacks of coal, revolving doors, Mazda lamps, echoes, odours from Brazil, and the rest in keeping.' Also presented were Salvador Dali's *Raining Taxi* and *La Rue Surréaliste* and a dance by Helen Vanel entitled *The Unconsummated Act*, around a pool filled with water lilies.

Despite this exhibition and subsequent shows in London and New York, Surrealist performance itself had already marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. In Paris, from the 1890s on, Jarry's and Satie's inventions had radically altered the course of 'theatrical' developments as well as providing the breeding-ground for the New Spirit, punctuated through the years by Roussel, Apollinaire, Cocteau, the 'imported' and local Dadaists and Surrealists, to name only a few of the extraordinary figures who made Paris a thriving cultural capital for so many years. Surrealism had introduced psychological studies into art so that the vast realms of the mind literally became material for new explorations in performance. Actually Surrealist performance was to affect most strongly the world of the theatre with its concentration on language, rather than subsequent performance art. For it was to the basic tenets of Dada and Futurism – chance, simultaneity and surprise – that artists, indirectly or even directly, turned following the Second World War.

Bauhaus

The development of performance in the twenties in Germany was due largely to the pioneering work of Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus. When he wrote in 1928, 'I have now pronounced the death sentence for theatre at the Bauhaus', at a time when the Dessau City Council had issued a publicly read decree forbidding parties at the Bauhaus, 'including for good measure our next party, which would have been a lovely one', these were the ironical words of a man who had set performance work of the period on its course.

The Stage workshop 1921–3

The Bauhaus, a teaching institution for the arts, had opened its doors in April 1919 in a very different mood. Unlike the rebellious Futurist or Dada provocations, Gropius's Romantic Bauhaus manifesto had called for the unification of all the arts in a 'cathedral of Socialism'. The cautious optimism expressed in the manifesto provided a hopeful yardstick for cultural recovery in a divided and impoverished postwar Germany.

Artists and artisans of widely varying sensibilities, such as Paul Klee, Ida Kerkovius, Johannes Itten, Gunta Stölzl, Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer, Lyonel Feininger, Alma Buscher, László Moholy-Nagy and their families (to name only a few), began arriving in the provincial town of Weimar, taking up residence in and around the stately Grand Ducal Fine Arts Academy, and the former homes of Goethe and Nietzsche. As tutors at the Bauhaus, these people took responsibility for the various workshops – metal, sculpture, weaving, cabinet making, wall-painting, drawing, stained glass; at the same time they formed a self-contained community within the conservative town.

A stage workshop, the first ever course on performance in an art school, had been discussed from the first months as an essential aspect of the interdisciplinary curriculum. Lothar Schreyer, the Expressionist painter and dramatist, and a member of the *Sturm* group in Berlin, arrived to supervise the early Bauhaus performance programme. A collaborative venture from the start, Schreyer and students were soon building figurines for his productions of *Kindsterben* and *Mann* (Schreyer's own works), in line with his