

INTRODUCTION to *Debussy was my Grandfather*, a play by Garry O'Connor

The title of this work comes from a curious episode. In May 2012 I was round at my brother John's flat in London, opposite Olympia. He had just come back from Portugal, where he'd been staying with friends. He made an astonishing disclosure. He had been invited to a party in Lisbon given by Stefan Von Breisky, an Austrian aristocrat who lived in Portugal, and here he was introduced to Jo-Jo Capstick, an American woman who had once been a pupil of our great-aunt, the soprano Dame Maggie Teyte, one of the great English singers of the twentieth century, and among many other roles a famous Mélisande in *Pelléas and Mélisande*. Teyte was coached by the composer Claude Debussy for nine months before she sang *Mélisande* in public at the Opéra-Comique. Jo-Jo, on being introduced to my brother as the son of Rita O'Connor, our mother, at once came out with this astonishing allegation: 'Everybody knows that Rita was Maggie Teyte's daughter, Debussy her father – and that you are Maggie Teyte's grandson!'

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