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Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) as Romantic Melodrama. A Proposed Methodology

Jed Wentz

Arnold Schoenberg's *Driemaal sieben Gedichte aus Albert Girauds Pierrot Lunaire* was commissioned by the Austrian actress-reciter-singer Albertine Zehme, who also gave the premiere on October 16th, 1912. It is an atonal work of great musical complexity written for a small chamber ensemble and one reciter (*'Sprechstimme'*).¹ Following the precedent of the premiere, the speaker's role has traditionally been performed by a female. The work's texts – originally written in French, but translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben – are notable for their disturbing and macabre imagery.

This essay traces my plans for a *future* practice-based research project exploring the stylistic performance parameters for this iconic work. This may seem, at first glance, somewhat unnecessary, given that this piece has already received much scholarly attention and countless performances. My concern with the discourse around – and current performance practice for – *Pierrot lunaire* is that it tends to interpret sources dating from around the time of the premiere (i.e., the score, its preface, descriptions of contemporaneous public reactions) in the light of our current, Modernist stance concerning the composer-performer relationship. I propose, however, that we should guard ourselves against projecting a full-blown Modernism onto a work premiered in the late Romantic period and performed by musicians who would have been influenced by the late Romantic style that they heard all around them. In this sense, I would like to shift musicological debate about 'authenticity' in performance² away from 'what *should* Schoenberg's masterpiece sound like' towards 'what *could* it sound like?' The manner for doing so, I propose, is through a carefully primed imagination and a well-trained performing body.

My engagement with this work will therefore be novel in so far as it welcomes Romantic expression in the performance of a work that is now generally conceived of as being entirely Modernist. I propose that such an

¹ The composer's own recording of the first movement 'Mondestrunken' can be heard here: 'Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21, pt. 1: No. 1, Mondestrunken'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir7W179weqg>, accessed 27 June 2022.

² The interminable debate surrounding the concept of 'authenticity' in musical performance is rich, fraught and beyond the scope of this essay. Readers are referred to a classic collection of texts on the topic: R. Taruskin, *Text and Act* (Oxford 1997).

approach can be useful both to performers and scholars,³ even though it does not aim to recover the *exact* ‘sound’ of the 1912 *Pierrot* – indeed, the methodology situates the performance of the melodrama within an historical context while consciously choosing *not* to recreate exactly how it sounded. My research question, then, would be: What happens to Schoenberg’s masterpiece if the performers draw inspiration from the practices of the musical world as it was a century ago (portamento, rubato, linear rather than vertical musical organization⁴), even while other aspects of the performance are wittingly unfaithful to the specifics of the premiere (the sex of the reciter, the language spoken)?

Melodrama as genre

The roots of the melodramatic genre lie in the second half of the 18th century, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau conceived of a ‘*scène lyrique*’ (*Pygmalion* 1762/1770), in which spoken text was performed alternately with music. The genre quickly developed into something more complex, which Edward F. Kravitt has described as a ‘new type’ of melodrama:

The melodramas of Georg Benda (1722-1795), the first composer to develop Rousseau’s conception into highly artistic compositions that influenced his contemporaries, provided excellent examples of the old type. The chief feature that distinguishes these from their successors of the new type bears upon the relationship between the music and the text. In the old type the music and the text usually alternate, whereas in the new style the two are often presented simultaneously, whether the accompaniment be for orchestra or for piano.⁵

³ For the reasoning behind this statement see, in this article, fn. 11.

⁴ What is being referred to here is the perceived ‘messiness’ of Romantic performance practice when viewed through the lens of our current standards of musical execution. The late-Romantic performer’s use of microtonal slides and tempo fluctuations was considered fundamental to musical expression. The priority of ‘linear rather than vertical organization’ here refers to an independence and agency of individual voices (in terms of timing and musical coordination) that stands in sharp contrast to our current prioritization of ‘togetherness’.

⁵ E.F. Kravitt, ‘The Joining of Words and Music in Late Romantic Melodrama’, *The Musical Quarterly* 62:4 (1976) 571-590: 573.

The fact that music and words almost continuously coincided in this new type of melodrama had enormous consequences for the performance of the text: not only did it necessitate a more powerful speaking voice in order to be heard above the music, but the reciter also had to pitch the voice in relationship to the music and to fit the rhythm and accentuation of the text (particularly in reciting verse) to its meter. The necessity for carefully crafting this speech-music relationship may not appear self-evident to us today, accustomed as we are to naturalistic styles of public speaking. However, when discussing melodrama as a musical-declamatory form, it is important to bear in mind that before the 20th century – from (at least) Quintilian onwards – the art of public speaking in the West, was closely linked to music. This means that long before the invention of the melodrama, speakers consciously brought their speech into proximity with song. Significant changes in the performance style of both political and theatrical speech occurred in the 20th century, changes that moved speech away from such overtly musical parameters as pitch, rhythm and tempo towards modern ideals of the ‘real’ and the ‘natural’, that is to say towards everyday speech patterns.⁶ It was, however, the older, more musical approach to public speaking that had been embedded from the beginning into the melodrama, necessitating that the orator coordinate the vocal ‘music’ with that provided by the composer. Some composers used rhythmic notation to indicate how specific passages of text could be accommodated to the score, but mostly the text was simply printed above or in between the measures of music and the actual coordination was left to the speaker. More exceptional are cases in which the rhythm was through-notated, as is the case in Hubert Cuyper’s *Das klagende Lied* (1912) [see illustration 1], and, of course, *Pierrot lunaire*.

⁶ One locus for examining this shift can be found in the production of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare that took place in London in 1935, starring Sir John Gielgud and Sir Laurence Olivier. The actors can be seen discussing this production here: ‘Laurence Olivier on Modern Ways of Delivering Shakespearean Blank Verse’. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9XWTtxlYgE>, accessed 19 May 2022.



Ill. 1: Opening bars of Hubert Cuyper's *Das Klagende Lied* (first performed January 3rd, 1912). Author's collection.

My engagement with declamation and melodrama (2010-2021)

It has already been noted that this research will be carried out through acts of performance: practice-based research in the musical arts takes the body – and thus the researcher's own, individual, subjective, experiential perspective – as its starting point. I therefore here make use, boldly and consciously, of the first person. Artistic researchers in general prefer to be honest about the subjective nature of their work, and to make clear distinctions between the preparations (which can contain more traditionally academic modes of inquiry) and the subjective, imaginative moment of performance itself (i.e. artistic creation).

Since I have proposed that a well-trained body is fundamental to my methodology, I here detail the previous engagement and training, which has prepared me for the project. I have, since 2010, explored a musical manner

of public speaking in various academic and artistic research projects, first as pure speech and later in relation to the melodrama. For instance, research into historical sources related to Jesuit preaching resulted in an article published in 2013 in *The Cambridge Opera Journal*.⁷ This in turn formed the basis for a practice-based work in which I explored the application of principles of oratorical pitch and affect to monologues taken from the works of Jean Racine, most particularly Burrhus' speech from Act IV, scene 3 of *Britannicus*, which was demonstrated before a live audience at the 'Transformations of the Audible' conference in Den Haag in 2019.⁸ By experiencing in my own body the demands made by the passage beginning with line 1344 ('*Il vous faudra, Seigneur, courir de crime en crime*') and the difficulty of managing the pitches of my voice in the 'the whirlwind of passion' (*pace*, Hamlet), I was spurred on to undertake the even more demanding vocal technique of the melodramatic genre. In doing so, didactic works written ca. 1900 by performer-composers such as Frederick Corder and Stanley Hawley were consulted.⁹ This research was applied to a CD recording in 2020.¹⁰ By thus documenting, through performance, the cumulative results of ten years of research, I created an object that could serve as a performative reference point in future, while facilitating dissemination of my work.¹¹ However, soon

⁷ See: J. Wentz, 'An Annotated *Livret* of Lully's *Roland* as a Source for Seventeenth-Century Declamation', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 25 (2013) 1-36.

⁸ See: J. Wentz, 'Burrhus, My Mentor'. https://www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/19_05_Transformations_of_the_Audible/more2, accessed 26 May 2022. The performance of the text by Racine begins at 19:40.

⁹ See F. Corder, 'Recitation with Music' in: R.D. Blackman ed., *Voice, Speech, and Gesture. A Practical Handbook to the Elocutionary Art* (London 1912) 193-215; S. Hawley, 'Recitation-Music', in: R.D. Blackman ed., *Voice, Speech, and Gesture. A Practical Handbook to the Elocutionary Art* (London 1912) 1105-1132. Two didactic works for beginning pianists by Harry Farjeon also proved useful: though not directly concerned with recitation, they link musical rhythm and speech in explicit ways: H. Farjeon, *Every Day. An Album of Little Pieces Founded in the Rhythm of the Sayings of Every Day* (York n.d.); H. Farjeon, *The Art of Piano Phrasing* (London n.d.).

¹⁰ J. Wentz and A. Belogurov, 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin and Other Melodramas' (Brilliant Classics 5028421962450, this is the official reference to the CD mentioned in the text). See link: J. Wentz, 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin and Other Melodramas'. <https://jedwentz.com/melodrama-texts/>, accessed 05 June 2022.

¹¹ The object to which I refer here is both the performance I created as well as the recording (i.e. the 'fixing' or the preservation) of it. I here follow the reasoning of

after the final editing of the recording was finished, I had already begun the next phase of this work: dissatisfied by certain aspects of my vocal technique and my control over it, I embarked on a research project – using George Vandenhoff's *The Art of Elocution* (1842/1862) as a guide – as a member of the Interdisciplinary Research Group sponsored by the joint Research Platform of Leiden University, The Royal Academy of Art of The Hague (KABK) and the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague (KC).¹²

Thus, my trajectory since 2010 has oscillated between 'traditional' scholarship (based on the analysis and comparison of written sources) and research through performance. Both have contributed to the creation of specifically crafted projects, the results of which have been disseminated either through academic channels (presentations at conferences, articles in journals) or in acts of execution (live performances and recordings). What I have learned is not only documented in print, but exists in my body as a tacit knowing. Both of these forms of knowledge will be taken into the *Pierrot lunaire* project. There, what I bring with me will find itself challenged anew: my 'knowledge' (tacit and verbal) will thus both discipline *Pierrot lunaire*, and be disciplined by it.

dancer and dance historian Moira Goff, who has noted, in referring to present-day reconstructions of historical dances: 'The reconstruction of dances recorded in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation involves many subjective choices, blurring the distinction between reconstruction and re-creation. I contend that this does not invalidate reconstruction as a research tool, provided that it is undertaken alongside the more objective scrutiny of academic research methods. On the contrary, reconstruction not only generates a wider range of possible interpretations but also contributes to a valuable iterative process whereby theories about dancing in the early eighteenth century developed through a study of the written sources can be tested by practical reconstruction of the dances surviving in notation, and the resulting reconstructions can then be themselves revised in the light of further academic study of the sources, and so on.' M. Goff, 'Imitating the Passions: Reconstructing the Meanings within the *Passagalia of Venus & Adonis*' in: S. Jordan, ed., *Preservation Politics: Dance Revived, Reconstructed, Remade* (London: Dance Books Ltd., 2000), 163.

¹² This research project culminated in me making a recording of Vandenhoff's annotated version of William Collin's poem *The Passions*, which can be found here: J. Wentz, 'A Reading of *The Passions* by William Collins'. [Http://parc.jgdev.xyz/projects/interdisciplinary-research-group/a-reading-of-the-passions-by-william-collins/](http://parc.jgdev.xyz/projects/interdisciplinary-research-group/a-reading-of-the-passions-by-william-collins/), accessed 05 June 2022.

The *Pierrot* Project

In this proposed *Pierrot* project, which searches for a form of musical 'authenticity' in the performance of Schoenberg's melodrama masterpiece, I intend to take on the role of the speaker. This may seem contrary to my stated aim, for, as has been noted, the speaker's part in *Driemal sieben Gedichte aus Albert Girauds Pierrot Lunaire* is traditionally performed by a woman. However, the sex of the speaker is not specified in the score. Schoenberg did, however, take it upon himself to indicate how the rhythms and pitches of the *Sprechstimme* correspond to those of the instruments: that is to say, he integrated the recitation fully into the musical score, notating the speaker's part throughout.¹³ Thus, the precise octave of the speaking voice (and hence the sex of the speaker) is implied by the use of a G clef in the notation. One of the research questions, then, is how should the notated pitches of the score be realized when recited by a male, rather than a female voice?

An impressive amount of secondary literature has sprung up around the question of how to realize Schoenberg's notation for the speaking voice, especially as far as the accuracy of the pitches is concerned. In order to determine just how the reciter is meant to execute the lines, musicologists and performers alike have interrogated the testimonies of the composer himself (drawn from different periods of his life) and consulted various historical recordings of *Pierrot lunaire* (including one from 1940 made under Schoenberg's own direction); yet controversy remains. Although the title page of *Pierrot lunaire* displays the word *Melodramen*, there is resistance to simply reciting these pieces with the basic techniques of the *fin de siècle* melodrama as a starting point (my avowed approach). It is not possible, within the scope of this essay, to adequately engage with all of the reasons that have been

¹³ He also indicated specific moments in which the words were to be *sung* rather than spoken, which is unusual in melodrama. In order to do so, he appears to have used a modified version of the notational system that Engelbrecht Humperdinck had devised for his *Königskinder* (1897). For more on this notation, see: Kravitt, 'The Joining of Words and Music in Late Romantic Melodrama'. For an overview of the problems surrounding the realization of the notation see: A. Krüger, 'Nicht zum singen bestimmt. Ansätze zur vokalen Aufführungspraxis von Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) und P. M. Davies, 'Eight Songs for a Mad King (1969)', in: C. Philipsen and U. Omonsky eds., *Das Melodram in Geschichte und Aufführungspraxis* (Augsburg 2020) 307-319; J. Merrill, 'Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* Revisited. Acceptance of Vocal Expression', *Acta Musicologica*, 89:1 (2017) 95-117.

proposed for *not doing so*: I here emphasize why I think performing *Pierrot lunaire* as a set of late-Romantic melodramas is a valid and worthwhile approach. I will only be able to offer a fuller rebuttal to some of the secondary literature once the project has taken place.

Execution

It is worth stating that I am not looking for the ideal or ultimate performance practice of *Pierrot lunaire*: rather, I am curious how the ambient musical culture at the time of the premiere might have influenced its execution and expression. There is a rich literature around the melodrama ca. 1900 on which I can draw, for instance an article published in *The Musical Times* on February 1st, 1901, entitled ‘Professor Niecks on Melodrama’, which informs us as to the

principle defects of the *genre* – namely, that the speaking voice and the music do not blend, and that the melodramatic music is a thing of formally underdeveloped and unconnected patches and snatches.¹⁴

It is something of a commonplace in literature discussing the melodrama that the voice and music do not blend. In 1912 (the year *Pierrot lunaire* premiered), Stanley Hawley, himself a composer of melodramas, described a speaking style that he believed would overcome this difficulty:

Any colloquial quality of voice is undesirable, and is to be strongly condemned; in fact, reciters [...] must always bear in mind that something more than mere speaking is required for success. The natural conversational tones of the voice do not blend with the pianoforte, for a thin speaking voice has not sufficient body of its own to afford support to a musical accompaniment, and, moreover, cannot impart strength of rhythm to the poem. There is a halting staccato manner about the combination, and when such conditions are brought into play, they cannot be too strongly deprecated. The quality of voice required is that golden mean between speaking and singing, which does not possess the monotony of chant nor the affectation of what

¹⁴ Anonymous, ‘Professor Niecks on Melodrama’, *The Musical Times* (February 1, 1901) 96-97: 97.

is best described as “sing-song,” but that sympathetic tone that can be coloured by the soul; for tone expresses feeling, words define it.¹⁵

It is worth noting here that Hawley's own melodramas were not composed in ‘snatches and patches’ (as Professor Niecks puts it), but – like *Pierrot lunaire* – were largely through-composed, making the question of vocal-musical blending all the more crucial. Hawley castigates a *staccato* manner of recitation, promoting a quality of voice described as ‘that golden mean between speaking and singing’. A similar idea is implied by a successful performer and proponent of melodramas in the early 20th century, David Bispham, who noted of the speaking voice that ‘both power and clearness of utterance beyond the average are demanded, yet the vocal tone must have distinct reserve, never trespassing upon the region of song.’¹⁶

In this context, Schoenberg's own preface to the score of *Pierrot lunaire*, published in 1914, is of particular interest. It begins by addressing the manner of reciting and its relationship to the notation:

The melody which is indicated by the notes in the speaker's part is (except for a few special indicated cases) not intended to be sung. The performer has the task, taking the notated pitches well into consideration, to transform them into a speech-melody. That takes place when he

I. adheres precisely to the rhythm, as if he were singing, that is to say with no more freedom than he would allow himself with the melody of a song;

II. becomes clearly aware of the difference between sung tone [*Gesangston*] and spoken tone [*Sprechton*]: the sung tone holds the pitch unchangingly, the spoken tone does indicate [*gibt sie zwar an*] the pitch, but leaves it again immediately by falling or rising. The performer must, however, be very much on his guard against falling into a ‘singing’ manner of speaking. That is not intended at all. Yet, in no way is a realistic-naturalistic speaking to be aspired to. On the contrary, the difference between ordinary [speaking] and a [manner of] speaking

¹⁵ S. Hawley, ‘Recitation-Music’, 1105-1132: 1112-1113.

¹⁶ D. Bispham, *A Quaker Singer's Recollections*, Second Edition (New York, NY 1921) 282.

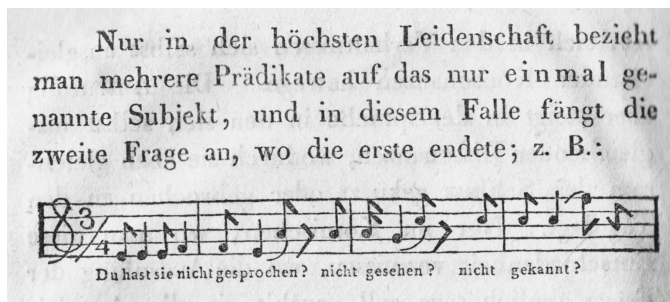
that participates within a musical form, must become clear. But it also may never be reminiscent of singing.¹⁷

Here Schoenberg describes a style in between speaking and singing. However, the idea of a melody to be realized in speech was nothing new in oratorical literature: the actor-elocutionist John Walker had published a didactic work entitled *The Melody of Speaking Delineated* in 1787. Moreover, though much has been made, in the secondary literature, of the emphasis that Schoenberg places on sliding pitches, the English and French discourse on slides in speech goes back at least to the 17th century, and English and American elocution manuals of the 19th century are full of exercises to help orators train their use both of slides and monotone in speaking.¹⁸ In Germany, G. Freyherrn von Seckendorff, in his *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (1816) devoted many pages to the melody of speech and included examples using musical notes and ascending and descending lines to indicate changes of pitch [see

¹⁷ ‘Die in der Sprechstimme durch Noten angegebene Melodie ist (bis auf einzelne besonders bezeichnete Ausnahmen) nicht zum Singen bestimmt. Der Ausführende hat die Aufgabe, sie unter guter Berücksichtigung der vorgezeichneten Tonhöhen in eine Sprechmelodie umzuwandeln. Das geschieht, indem er I. den Rhythmus haarscharf so einhält, als ob er sänge, d. h. mit nicht mehr Freiheit, als er sich bei einer Gesangsmelodie gestatten dürfte; II. sich des Unterschiedes zwischen Gesangston und Sprechton genau bewußt wird: der Gesangston hält die Tonhöhe unabänderlich fest, der Sprechton gibt sie zwar an, verläßt sie aber durch Fallen oder Steigen sofort nieder. Der Ausführende muß sich aber sehr davor hüten, in eine “singende” Sprechweise zu verfallen. Das ist absolut nicht gemeint. Es wird zwar keineswegs ein realistisch-natürliches Sprechen angestrebt. Im Gegenteil, der Unterschied zwischen gewöhnlichem und einem Sprechen, das in einer musikalischen Form mitwirkt, soll deutlich werden. Aber es darf auch nie an Gesang erinnern’. A. Schönberg, ‘Vorwort’, in: *Driemal sieben Gedichte aus Albert Girauds Pierrot Lunaire* (Wien/Leipzig 1914) n.p. The translation is my own (with thanks to Anne Smith for her suggestions and corrections).

¹⁸ See: J. Wentz, ‘An Annotated *Livret* of Lully’s *Roland* as a Source for Seventeenth-Century Declamation’, fn. 5. See also: J. Wentz and P. Iliopoulos, ‘Steele’s *Hamlet Soliloquy*’.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZorrU24kGPc&list=PLb90bkNX9Z2kLfoN1byrL2rCIYA1MJ5>, accessed 31 May 2022; A. Comstock, *A System of Elocution* (Philadelphia, PA 1841).



Ill. 2: Musical notation of the speech, G. von Seckendorff, *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (1816). Author's collection.



Ill. 3: A graphic representation of pitch levels in speech, G. von Seckendorff, *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (1816). Author's collection.

illustrations 2-3].¹⁹ I will not trace this declamatory history any further here, but suffice it to note that Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus firmly placed the recitation

¹⁹ See: G. F. von Seckendorff, 'Von der Melodie' and 'Wandel und Sprung in der Melodie', in: Erster Band ed., *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (Braunnscheig 1816) 154-

of *Pierrot lunaire* in the tradition of *fin de siècle* German recitation practices, which, like the traditions of other European actor-reciters, were more musical than we are accustomed to today:²⁰

the musical potentials of speaking were released around 1900 by actors and reciters, for example by the actor Alexander Moissi and the reciter Ludwig Wüllner [...] while at the same time Arnold Schönberg was experimenting with speech-song [*Sprechgesang*] in music, in cooperation with the Leipzig reciter Albertine Zehme.²¹

Objections, of course, can be raised that for this project I ought to train my voice using German sources exclusively; I would however propose that there was a European style of declamation which, though by no means absolutely standardized, did share the fundamental techniques which have been discussed so far. Historical recordings of actors from Germany, France, The Netherlands and England made early in the 20th-century display remarkably similar uses of monotone and slides.²² Therefore, I plan to use my previous

192. See also: 'Vom Portament und Pizzikato', in: E. Band ed., *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (Braunnscheig 1816) 264-270.

²⁰ For a performance by Alexander Moissi recorded in 1912, in monotone and with many slides, see: 'Moissi Novemberwind'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqPSav7OQRE>, accessed 31 May 2022. For a performance of melodrama by Ludwig Wüllner: 'Das Hexenlied'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PspovQu22vY>, accessed 31 March 2022.

²¹ 'um 1900 die sprechmusikalischen Potenziale der Rede [wurden] von Schaspielern und Rezitatoren freigesetzt, etwa durch den Schauspieler Alexander Moissi und der Rezitator Ludwig Wüllner [...] während zur selben Zeit Arnold Schönberg mit dem Sprechgesang in der Musik experimentierte, in Kooperation mit der Leipziger Rezitatorin Albertine Zehme.' R. Meyer-Kalkus, *Geschichte der literarischen Vortragskunst* (Springer-Verlag 2020) 193.

²² Admittedly, individual European languages had idiomatic modes of expression. However, basic oratorical techniques – such as the use of the monotone and slides, the application of affective pitch levels, and the varied and emphatic rhythmic declamation of verse – were shared by actors across the continent. See, for instance, for France: 'Mounet-Sully - Oedipe Roi de Sophocle adapté par Jules Lacroix - O vous qui supplies - '. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkcFWN9fgRY&t=2s>, accessed 27 June 2022; for England: Herbert Beerbohm Tree - Hamlet Soliloquy recorded 1906'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCG2KY8jpdg>, accessed 27 June 2022; for the Netherlands: 'Louis Bouwmeester - De arme grootvader (HMV / 1919 / 78 rpm)'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiNWtf1TG2o>, accessed 27 June 2022.

Anglo- and Francophone work on melodramatic declamation as a starting point for the execution of the reciter's part in *Pierrot lunaire*.

Expression

However, it must immediately be noted that, although I approach *Pierrot lunaire* through the melodramatic tradition which preceded it, Schoenberg's detailed notation and complex atonal score make demands upon the reciter that were hitherto unknown.²³ The question, however, arises as to just how precisely the notation must be realized. Schoenberg remarks that the notated intervals – he does not mention the exact *pitches* – should be transformed into a speech melody and that the rhythm should not be more altered than it would be if one were singing a song. Given our current Modernist musical climate, in which rigorous faithfulness to the score is prized, this could be read as indicating that the composer intended a very strict adherence to the notation. Taken in this Modernist light, Schoenberg's further remarks on the expression required for *Pierrot lunaire* seem only to confirm the hierarchical precedence of the score above the performer, allowing the latter little room for co-creation:

The performers never have the task here of moulding the atmosphere and character of the individual pieces from the meaning of the words, but always only from the music. In so far as the musical representation of events and feelings was important to the composer, it is found in the music anyway. Where the performer misses it, he should refrain from adding something that the composer did not want. He would not be giving here, but taking away.²⁴

²³ Frederick Corder, a popular and experienced performer of melodramas, felt that the tonal works Stanley Hawley presented 'a far harder task' than other melodramas. Using Hawley's setting of Poe as an example: 'Under the fingers of the composer the accompaniment of "The Bells" is simply exquisite, but I confess I cannot do anything with it myself.' Corder, 'Recitation with Music', 211. One can only imagine what Corder would have thought of performing the atonal *Pierrot Lunaire*! Schoenberg had, of course, used recitation in earlier scores, but in *Pierrot lunaire* he notated pitches, suggesting a heightened level of difficulty in performance.

²⁴ 'Niemals haben die Ausführenden hier die Aufgabe, aus dem Sinn der Worte die Stimmung und den Charakter der einzelnen Stücke zu gestalten, sondern stets lediglich aus der Musik. Soweit dem

Jennifer Goltz sees in this text a ‘desire for control’, a ‘struggle for control of the performance’, and a ‘struggle to impress upon the performer his [Schoenberg’s] sole interpretive authority’. Indeed, Goltz goes so far as to write:

Schoenberg’s insistence that his music be the only interpreter of the text is made clear by his assertion that the music has all the expression he wants – that the performer must turn only to the music for indication of performance, not to the text.²⁵

This seems to me, however, to be overstated. Goltz, elsewhere in her article, translates Schoenberg’s sentence ‘Niemals haben die Ausführenden hier die Aufgabe, aus dem Sinn der Worte die Stimmung und den Charakter der einzelnen Stücke *zu gestalten*, sondern stets lediglich aus der Musik’ as ‘The performer’s task here is at no time *to derive* the mood and character of the individual pieces from the meaning of the words, but always solely from the music’ [italics editorial].²⁶ To translate *gestalten* with ‘derive’, however, is to equate it with an act of conceptualization, whereas it has a meaning of ‘to fashion’, ‘to shape’, ‘to form’, ‘to mould’. There is a sense of plasticity in the word, a suggestion of co-creation between the shaper and the shaped, between the emerging form and the elemental stuff. Schoenberg asks the performers (plural!) to shape the ‘mood and character’ from the musical material, but he does not categorically forbid any and all text expression. Using the lens of my previous engagements with late Romantic musical and declamatory practices, I read Schoenberg’s preface as a warning against deprioritizing the musical setting that still allows for a far greater freedom of interpretation than is currently common in performances of *Pierrot lunaire*. Today’s professional musicians, trained in the Modernist tradition, are simply much more restricted in their realization of musical scores than performers were in 1912, and the ‘sole interpretive authority’ of the composer as represented by the notation of the score has become ingrained in the

Autor die tonmalerische Darstellung der im Text gegebenen Vorgänge und Gefühle wichtig war, findet sie sich obnedies in der Musik. Wo der Ausführende sie vermisst, verzichte er darauf etwas zu geben, was der Autor nicht gewollt hat. Er würde hier nicht geben, sondern nehmen. Schönberg, *Driemal sieben Gedichte aus Albert Girauds Pierrot Lunaire*, n.p.

²⁵ J. Goltz, ‘Pierrot le diseur’, *The Musical Times*, 147, 1894 (2006) 59-72: 71.

²⁶ Ibidem.

imagination of the performer as an inviolable starting point.²⁷ For instance, the rhythmical freedom a *fin de siècle* singer might have taken was of a different order than that of a singer of today.²⁸ This knowledge will influence my interpretation of Schoenberg's comment that one should adhere 'precisely to the rhythm, [...] with no more freedom that he would allow himself with the melody of a song'.²⁹

As styles changed around him, so too Schoenberg's aesthetic changed. In August of 1940, the year of his own recording of *Pierrot lunaire*, he wrote to Fritz Stiedry:

We must...refresh the *Sprechstimme* thoroughly—at least, because this time I intend to try [to] capture the light, ironical, satirical tone...in which this composition was originally conceived. Furthermore, times and aesthetic concepts are changing, so what at the time seemed to us Wagnerian, or in the worst case Tchaikovskian, today is, for example, Puccini, Lehar and so on.³⁰

Thus, Schoenberg's own recording of *Pierrot lunaire* will not be my guide in trying to understand what a 1912 performance might have sounded like. Rather, historical recordings, including Schoenberg's incomplete 1928 recording of *Verklärte Nacht* (1899), will serve as a guide to my project.³¹ The

²⁷ The reader is again referred to Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act*.

²⁸ A striking example can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NjEWK7YFWs>, last accessed 27 June 2022.

²⁹ It has been well established that musical practice since 1912 has become increasingly tied to exact realization of the score; that Modernism and objectivity have transformed our understanding of what constitutes acceptable musical performance. See, for instance: A. Smith 'The Development of the *Jugendmusikbewegung*, its Musical Aesthetic and its Influence on the Performance Practice of Early Music', *Basler Beiträge zur Historischen Musikpraxis* 39 (2020) 465-508.

³⁰ As cited in Merrill, 'Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* Revisited. Acceptance of Vocal Expression', 98.

³¹ Admittedly, *Verklärte Nacht* is written in a much more Romantic style than is *Pierrot Lunaire*. However, it is still striking to hear how Romantic Schoenberg's 1928 recording of the former sounds to us today. The difference between this and the recording from 1951 by the Hollywood Quartet (which Schoenberg much admired) suggests that his own aesthetic had greatly evolved in the intervening years. For Schoenberg's performance: 'Schoenberg conducts *Verklärte Nacht* (fragment) 1928'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOzM8C3ffnY>, accessed 31 May 2022. For

freedom of tempo, use of portamento and a primacy of linear over vertical organization apparent in such recordings will be the starting point for my engagement with *Pierrot lunaire*, a journey I will undertake together with the musicians of Postscript, an ensemble performing on period appropriate instruments. I further propose, in order to escape preconceptions of how *Pierrot lunaire* ‘should’ sound – all my memories of performances I have heard and loved up until now – that I perform it in Dutch, allowing myself access to the *meaning* of the words while avoiding their actual *sounds* [see illustration 4].³²

3. De Dandy

Rasch (♩ = 76) *f* *fp* *ff* *p*

Rezitation Met vreem-de fan - ta - - sti-schen licht - straal ver -

4 *p* *f* *poco rit.* *etwas langsamer* *p* (gesungen) *p* (gesprochen)

-hel - dert de maan de kri - stal - len fla - cons op de zwar - te, hoog

7 (tonlos geflüstert) *pp* (mit ton gesprochen) *pp* *langsam* *pp*

— hei - li - ge ta - fel van de zwijg - sa - me Dan - dy van Ber - ga-mo.

Ill. 4: Dutch translation by J. Wentz of the third melodrama from A. Schoenberg's *Driemaal sieben Gedichte aus Albert Girauds Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21

that of The Hollywood String Quartet, see: 'Schoenberg Verklaarte Nacht The Hollywood String Quartet'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P66E2V4RYUM>, accessed 31 May 2022.

³² *Pierrot lunaire* has been executed in translation before: by Marya Freund in French, and by Clio Lane in English. Although I am Anglophone, I have chosen Dutch because it fits Schoenberg's rhythmic notation better than English would. My hypothesis is that performing in Dutch will allow me, while painting the scene in my imagination, to mould the character of the individual pieces from both the musical *and* the textual materials. I have made preliminary translations of the first seven poems and am happy with the results thus far.

Conclusion: The Interpreter's Imagination

In my dissertation, I devoted a chapter to the potential influence of unexamined Modernism on contemporary artistic research, using Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet *Le sacre du printemps* (1913) as my case study.³³ I argued there that Hodson – despite carrying out meticulous research and having the best of intentions – failed to recognize her own Modernist bias in evaluating her sources, and thus created a Modernist ballet 'after Nijinsky', one from which the Romantic style was entirely banished, despite all contemporaneous evidence to the contrary. I further argued that this in no way negated the importance of her work, as her meticulous documentation made it possible to engage fully with the reconstruction process and learn from it: thanks to her many publications – and two films of the ballet in performance – I could evaluate not only the resulting work of art, but the scholarly process that led to it.³⁴ I further remarked that Hodson's work, though perhaps naïve, was not 'contaminated' by her personal vision, but rather *animated* by it.³⁵ Hodson's artistic imagination was fired during her long quest to recover the lost choreography, and a primed and fired imagination is essential to creating artistic work. Having learned from my earlier study of Hodson, I have here described a methodology for the *Pierrot lunaire* project that situates it within an historical framework, while challenging *current* Modernist performance practice through acts of imagination. This methodology runs parallel to the course of the contemporary phenomenon known as 'experimental archaeology'; but, flowing into the realm of musical performance, explores the sounds produced when the creative imagination is fired within an academically primed, experience-trained and musically disciplined body. Thus, I seek an execution

³³ See: J. Wentz, 'The Relationship between Gesture, Affect and Rhythmic Freedom in the Performance of French Tragic Opera from Lully to Rameau', diss., Leiden University (2010) 30-43: 35-43.

³⁴ See, for example: M. Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace. Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre du Printemps* (Stuyvesant NY 1996). See also: 'The Joffrey Ballet's Debut of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, 1987': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsEkPdK8FVw>, accessed 05 June 2022). For comparison see: 'Le Sacre du printemps/The Rite of Spring – Ballets Russes': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOZmlYgYzG4&t=59s>, accessed 05 June 2022).

³⁵ Ibidem, 42.

of *Pierrot lunaire* that – having been gestated within my conception of the performance practice *au courant* in 1912 – is ‘authentic’, even though the sex of the performer and the language in which it is performed are different from those of the premiere.³⁶ In this I seek not only to renew my relationship to Schoenberg’s masterpiece, a work I have loved for more than 40 years, but also to rethink methodologies related to historicized musical performance, crafting them to prioritize a carefully primed imagination and a well-trained performing body above the composer’s score.

³⁶ There are precedents for performing *Pierrot lunaire* in translation; see, most famously, Clio Lane’s recording: ‘Schoenberg, Pierrot Lunaire. Cleo Laine w/Nash Ensemble (1974 lp)’. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJDM4e7YNQc&t=302s>, accessed 27 June 2022.