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A Variable Approach to Interpreting the *Sprechstimme* of *Pierrot lunaire*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

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2015

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University of California, San Diego

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Variable Approach to Interpreting the *Sprechstimme* of *Pierrot lunaire*

by

Tiffany Anne DuMouchelle

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Professor Susan Narucki, Chair

Pierrot lunaire by Arnold Schoenberg is one of the most influential chamber works of the twentieth century. Despite its frequency of performance and multitude of recordings, many questions still arise about performing and interpretive aspects of the composition, most frequently regarding the part of the Reciter. Using the complex technique of *Sprechstimme*, Schoenberg asks the Reciter to neither sing nor speak. Many Reciters have searched for a mid-point

between these two extremes from which to perform this difficult work. Considering Schoenberg's instructions from the score along with other influences relating to the composition and vocal expression of the era, we develop a new concept of *Sprechstimme* through a variable approach, a mutating technique of sonic expressivity.

Introduction

When a composer develops new techniques for his compositions, certain aspects of interpretation may be unclear at first to the performer. In many cases, a performance practice develops through the lineage of musicians who have performed the work, passing down their solutions through performances, recordings, and teachings. One of the most influential and frequently performed twentieth century compositions for voice and ensemble is Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, composed in 1912. One could imagine with a composition performed and recorded as many times as *Pierrot lunaire*, that a consensus regarding performance practice would have been reached. However, over one hundred years after its premiere, there is no conclusive agreement regarding many aspects of *Pierrot lunaire*, especially the performance practice of the Reciter.

What is it about the vocal part of *Pierrot lunaire* that confuses us so? Schoenberg asks the Reciter to use, almost exclusively, what was at the time a newly evolving technique of declamation, *Sprechstimme*. This technique lies somewhere between speaking and singing and is now considered a standard extended vocal technique. While Schoenberg supplies the interpreter with many clues to the vocal production of this type of declamation, his instructions leave much room for interpretation. Many performers have attempted to codify *Sprechstimme* into a single form of declamation lying centrally between speaking and singing, and this is where much of the confusion begins. How do we define singing and speaking in order to realize a technique which is related to both, but

which is in fact neither? Should we seek to find some mid-point between speaking and singing? Are we looking for one singular technique or for something more variable? Here, I will explore the nature of *Sprechstimme* and discuss why I believe that a variable approach in interpretation allows for greater expression and more closely aligns with Schoenberg's compositional intent in *Pierrot lunaire*.

From *Tonsprache* to *Sprechstimme*

Schoenberg composed *Pierrot lunaire* for Albertine Zehme, an actress who had a great affinity for the character of Pierrot. Zehme and Schoenberg agreed that for the commission, he would compose twenty-one movements, based upon twenty-one poems drawn from Otto Erich Hartleben's German translations of Albert Giraud's *Pierrot lunaire*. Giraud's *Pierrot lunaire*, published in 1884, was a collection of fifty-two poems that allies the central character of Pierrot, from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition of the Italian Renaissance, with intuition, elemental forces (such as the moon), emotion, desire, and the nature of artist and artistry (or more specifically, the poet and poetry).

Zehme, well known for her interpretation of melodrama,[1] had been developing her own method of combining poetic recitation and music. Zehme commissioned Schoenberg for a composition that would expand upon her own

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[1] "A melodrama, as the term was then understood, was a genre that consisted of a musical accompaniment for a text that was declaimed in a dramatic style. Unlike a song, in which each syllable of the text is fixed in musical notation with a definite duration and pitch, the declamation of a melodrama was fairly free: the text was simply written above the music…" Bryn-Julson, Phyllis, and Paul Matthews. *Inside Pierrot lunaire: Performing the Sprechstimme in Schoenberg's Masterpiece*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009, p. x.

ideas, which she labeled *Tonsprache*, but that would more closely align text with music, "music to spoken words or spoken songs."[2] Her aspiration was not only to express the literal meaning of the words, but also to "express the 'desire' of the words".[3] This *desire* can be understood sonically through the dramatic rendering of the pronunciation of the text. According to Friedrich Cerha, the declamation style of the early twentieth century exhibited a great expansion of articulation:

> a much greater tessitura; a pronounced speech-melody organization; glissandi at different speeds, in part connected with ritardandi or accelerandi; in addition, the occasional lingering on the pitches of the individual syllables and an ornamentation of details from the character of speech (tremolo, rolls, etc.).[4]

One intention of Zehme's commission and collaboration with Schoenberg for *Pierrot* lunaire was to elevate the relationship between text and music. Exploring a great wealth of expressive articulation, Schoenberg composed the music to support Zehme's principles of expression.

Schoenberg's relationship to text and text setting offered the perfect vehicle for Zehme's *Tonsprache*. His student Dika Newilin recalls, "[H]e says that his usual procedure has always been to repeat the poem over and over again until he gets a definite sensation of the rises and falls of the speech melody, which he then applies to the vocal melody."[5] In fact, in his essay, "Verhältnis zum Text" found in *Der Blaue Reiter*, 1912, he elaborates on his process:

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[2] ibid., p.xii.
[3] ibid., pp. 34-35.
[4] ibid., p. 15. Reprinted from Cerha, Friedrich. "Zur Interpretation der Sprechstimme in Schönberg's Pierrot lunaire." In Bericht über den 1. Kongress der Internationalen Schönberg-Gesellschaft, Wein: 4-9 *Juni*, 1974, edited by Rudolph Stephan, 25-33. Vienna: Verlag Elisabeth Lafite, 1978, p. 27.
[5] ibid., p. 37.

> ...inspired by the sound of the first words of the text, I had composed many of my songs straight through to the end without troubling myself in the slightest about the continuation of the poetic events, without even grasping them in the ecstasy of composing, and that only days later I thought of looking back to see just what was the real poetic content of my song. It then turned out, to my greatest astonishment, that I had never done greater justice to the poet than when, guided by my first direct contact with the sound of the beginning, I divined everything that obviously had to follow this first sound with inevitability.[6]

To reiterate, Schoenberg's text setting directly related to the way that he heard the natural "speech melody" within the line.

This method of relating to the sounds of words rather than their literal meaning is a technique referred to as *cratylism*. *Cratylism* derives from the philosophy of Cratylus, a character found in the dialogue of Plato of the same name.[7] Cratylus represented "absolute mimologism"[8], wherein the sounds of words imitate physical elements, such as movement. Later in the nineteenth century, poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé explored mimology through their poetry and literature.[9] Cratylists believe that "words and their sounds are *naturally* mimetic"[10] and that through the exaggeration and distortion of the elements that compose a word, we can better understand the true nature of that word. For example, as inferred by cratylists, the difference between [r] and [l] in the German language:

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[6] Stein, Leonard, editor. <u>Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg.</u> London: Faber & Faber, 1975, pp. 144, 518.

[7] Genette, Gérard. *Mimologiques: Voyage en Cratylie*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1995. p. xxi.

[8] ibid., p. xxv.

[9] ibid., p. xxx.

[10] Kurth, Richard. "Pierrot's Cave: Representation, Reverberation, Radiance", Schoenberg and Words: The Modernist Years, Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman, ed. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000, p. 223.

the letter *r* expresses violent movment, as in *rinnen* [to flow], *ruhren* [to move], *rauschen* [to roar], and the river names *Rhin, Rhône,* and *Ruhr*; the letter *l* (the other "liquid") requires less articulory force and expresses more gentle movement, as in *leben* [to live], *lieben* [to love], and *lauffen* [to glide]; when *r* is followed closely by *k,* the *k* acts as an obstacle to movement, as in *Ruck* [shake]...[11]

Although it is impossible to know if she was familiar with *cratylism*, Zehme's request for a new composition seems rooted in these ideals. She searched for something that would grow beyond normal declamatory forms of speech or singing and that would align the mimetic *desire* of the text with the expressive possibilities of music. For this purpose, Schoenberg devised a new method of declamation, *Sprechstimme*.

Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme*

Sprechstimme allows for many more variables in expression than either speaking or singing do individually. Schoenberg's instructions for the *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot lunaire* leave room for interpretation:

> The melody given in the vocal part (with a few specially indicated exceptions) is *not* intended to be sung. The performer has the task of transforming it into a *speech melody* [*Sprechmelodie*], taking the prescribed pitches well into account. He accomplishes this by:
> I. adhering to the rhythm as precisely as if he were singing; that is, with no more freedom than he would allow himself if it were a sung melody;
> II. being precisely aware of the difference between a *sung tone* and *spoken tone*; the sung tone maintains the pitch unaltered; the spoken tone does indicate it, but immediately abandons it again by falling or rising. But the performer must take great care not to lapse into a singsong speech pattern. That is absolutely not intended. The goal is certainly not at all a

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[11] ibid., p. 217.

realistic, natural speech. On the contrary, the difference between ordinary speech and speech that collaborates in a musical form must be made plain. But it should not call singing to mind, either.

Furthermore, the following should be said about the performance:
The performers' 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. To the extent that the tonepainterly representation [*tonmalerische Darstellung*] of the events and feelings in the text were of importance to the composer, it will be found in the music anyway. Wherever the performer fails to find it, he must resist adding something that the composer did not intend. If he did so, he would not be adding, but subtracting.
-Arnold Schoenberg
[English translation by Stanley Appelbaum][12]

Schoenberg's instructions require diligence in adhering to the compositional

materials, but allow flexibility in expressing the qualities of the text, which directly

relates to successful articulation of Zehme's *Tonsprache*. We know that this

technique is a mixture of *spoken tone* and *sung tone*, but the proportion of

spoken-to-sung tone is not specified. While it is clear that the Reciter is to arrive

at the given pitch and immediately leave that pitch, there is no guidance as to

how she must leave that pitch: she may leave by rising or falling from the pitch,

but in what manner? How far should she go from the pitch? If she leaves by one

direction, does she need to maintain that direction? Considering the rhythmic

precision necessary for performing this piece, different note values might

encourage different responses. From a *cratylistic* point of view, different phonetic

sounds might suggest different responses as well, and the Reciter should deeply

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[12] Schoenberg, Arnold. *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994, p. 54.

consider the articulation of these sounds. As we will see, the sound properties of the text are a key determinate in Schoenberg's text setting in *Pierrot lunaire*. An interpreter who recognizes this will be able to color their *Sprechstimme* appropriately to highlight the qualities of those sounds.

Lunar Pierrot: the Poet and the Muse

The story of *Pierrot lunaire* is one of a poet and his muse. Pierrot, a character "born" in the *commedia dell'arte* tradition of the Italian Renaissance, evolved into an "archetypal symbol of the artist in nineteenth and early-twentieth century literature, music, and art."[13] Giraud's poems bring Pierrot, along with other counterparts from *commedia dell'arte* into a modern world, through commentary about contemporary society and artistry. His *Pierrot lunaire* is based upon "the reveries of the cycle's poet-narrator",[14] an autobiographical reference to Giraud. In Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, the Reciter portrays this same poet-narrator, now representative of herself as an artist, Schoenberg as composer, Giraud as poet, Hartleben as translator, and Pierrot as muse. Pierrot does not "speak": the music represents his actions:

> If Pierrot now has a voice, so to speak, it is not his own but rather one that represents him. And it is also accompanied by a polyphony of instrumental "voices"; although they are wordless like Pierrot, their speechlessness now operates through sound, in contrast with Pierrot's silent gestures.[15]

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[13] Richter, Gregory C., trans. *Albert Giraud's Pierrot Lunaire*. Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2001, p. xviii.

[14] Vilain, Robert. "Pierrot Lunaire: Cyclic Coherence in Giraud and Schoenberg." *Pierrot lunaire: Albert Giraud, Oto Erich Hartleben, Arnold Schoenberg: a collection of musicological and literary studies.* Delaere, Mark, Jan Herman editors. Leuven, Belgium: Éditions Peeters, 2004, p. 132.

[15] Kurth, pp. 210-211.

The poet/narrator at times identifies with Pierrot and at times is a separate entity. Schoenberg's setting of the text helps to identify these connections between narrator and his muse. Kurth suggests that Schoenberg's use of *Sprechstimme* "disorients the listener's customary response to words' sounds and meanings", a "*representation* of speech and a *substitute* for both speech and song."[16] Through timbre, articulation, tempo, and dynamics, Schoenberg depicts shifts in character: twenty-one unique miniature worlds of love, violence, irony, parody, and the absurd.

> I discovered how to construct larger forms by following a text or a poem. The differences in size and shape of its parts and the change in character and mood were mirrored in the shape and size of the composition, in its dynamics and tempo, figuration and accentuation, instrumentation and orchestration. Thus the parts were differentiated as clearly as they had formerly been by the tonal and structural functions of harmony.
>
> -Arnold Schoenberg, *Composition with Twelve Tones* (1941)[17]

The Colors of Sound

Some interpreters read Schoenberg's forward, "The performers' 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", and interpret these instructions as though "expression and illustration were out, and that there should

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[16] ibid., p. 211.

[17] Weytjens, Stephen. "Text as a Crutch in Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire?". *Pierrot lunaire: Albert Giraud, Oto Erich Hartleben, Arnold Schoenberg: a collection of musicological and literary studies.* Delaere, Mark, Jan Herman editors. Leuven, Belgium: Éditions Peeters, 2004, p. 109.

be no relation whatsoever to the text."[18] In "This is My Fault"[19], Schoenberg responds to this interpretation as "nonsense":

> What is the purpose of adding music to a text? […] songs, operas and oratorios would not exist if music were not added to heighten the expression of their text. Besides, how do you make sure that your music does not express something – or more: that it does not express something provoked by the text?[20]

Schoenberg's intention is not an interpretation void of expression, but one that evokes how "the events and feelings in the text were of importance to the composer"[21], as represented in the musical score. Schoenberg set his texts in response to his own reading of the words.[22] In addition, each of the twenty-one movements of *Pierrot lunaire* is set with a unique combination of instruments, which helps emphasize and dramatize the articulation of the text. The original commission was for voice and piano, however immediately as Schoenberg began to write, he knew that a larger ensemble and variety of instrumental timbres would enable him more expressive possibilities to support the text and vocal line. The first movement composed, "Gebet an Pierrot"[23], called for the addition of a clarinet and was quickly followed by requests for cello, flute, and violin/viola. In the end Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* calls for five instrumentalists playing nine instruments: piano; A-flat, B-flat and bass clarinets; flute and piccolo; a violinist who also plays viola; cello. With the instrumentalists performing on

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[18] Stein, Leonard, editor. Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg. London: Faber & Faber, 1975*,* p. 145.
[19] "Original English Manuscript dates from 1949. Published in *Style and Idea*, 1950." ibid., p. 518.
[20] (from "This is My Fault", 1949), ibid.*,* p. 145.
[21] Schoenberg, Arnold. *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994, p. 54.
[22] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 54.
[23] Stuckenschmidt, H.H. Humphrey Searle, trans. *Arnold Schoenberg: his life, world and work.* John Calder: London, 1977, p. 201.

multiple instruments, he was able to create the widest possible range of timbre and articulation possible within a small chamber ensemble. This is incredibly important when considering the relationship of Reciter and ensemble along with the development and articulation of the Reciter's *Sprechstimme* line.

Schoenberg is exact in his delineation of articulation, dynamic, phrasing, and orchestration. His notation gives the ensemble clear parameters to facilitate shifts in mood and characterization throughout *Pierrot lunaire*. An intuitive Reciter preparing her role may begin to understand the relationship between their vocal line and ensemble through these parameters. Exploration of this relationship through pitch, rhythm, articulation, and timbre enables the Reciter to develop a unique expression in each movement and, in some cases, individual phrases. [24]

Balancing Between Sung and Spoken

Schoenberg was quite adamant that the *Sprechstimme* was *"not intended to be sung",*[25] but what exactly does that mean? Coming from a tradition of Western Art Music, Schoenberg would most likely consider *singing* in terms of Western Art Music, specifically the style of singing found in opera and art song traditions. This style of singing usually has a focused, vibrated tone and a consistent timbre between registers. *Speaking* on the other hand usually has no vibrato and varies in timbre by inflexion and articulation. A *singing* line moves

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[24] "I worked with many people on it too. It seems to me one has to find the expression of each sentence that will cover an entire line. And the emphasis must not be on singing. It seems to me many people sing the *Sprechstimme* too much." Schuller, Gunther and Eduard Steuermann. "A Conversation with Steuermann", *Perspectives of New Music, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn – Winter, 1964)*, p. 25.

[25] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 54.

from pitch to pitch, holding each pitch as consistently as possible for a length of time determined by rhythmical notation in the composition. Elongation of vowels often aids to facilitate this clarity in pitch, and voiced consonants (such as m, n, v, etc.) share the same pitch as the primary vowel. In *speech*, this consistency of pitch and evenness in tone is rarely emphasized.[26] Pitch in *speaking* often lacks distinction, wavering and contouring based upon expression of the meaning of individual words and phrases. In addition, consonants play an equally important role, emphasizing the *meaning of the words* through mimetic sonic relationships, often through exaggeration or elongation.

With these factors in mind, *Sprechstimme* should avoid the extremes that make *speaking* and *singing* identifiably separate entities. Effective *Sprechstimme* will almost entirely avoid vibrato, as this is one of the most identifiable traits of *singing*. It is also important to clearly indicate the pitch, but not to over-emphasize it. As Schoenberg describes in his preface, the Reciter should "indicate it, but immediately abandons it again by falling or rising".

Many Reciters use glissandi as their primary means to abandon the pitch, however Schoenberg notates glissandi as a special effect used only in specific moments in the score, such as "zerreißt".[27] A codification of the use of glissandi not only lessens the effect of such moments, but often results in a "singsong speech pattern", to which Schoenberg is adamant must be avoided at all costs.[28]

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[26] One exception to this rule is found in tone-based languages.
[27] Mvt. 11, "Rote Messe", m. 11-12.
[28] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 54.

One might infer that Schoenberg responded to specific sounds that emphasized his interpretation of the *desire* of each poem through rhythm, timbre, contour, and other articulations. In the following section we will explore how an analysis of the pronunciation of the text combined with observance to the articulations found in both the vocal and ensemble lines can support the creation of a variable interpretation of the *Sprechstimme* line.

Score Meets Intuition

An informed performance of *Pierrot lunaire* is a unique challenge for the Reciter. Schoenberg's score is very daunting. Pitch and rhythmical content is complex and his explanation of *Sprechstimme* implies that he imagined a specific type of declamation. An informed performance not only relies on the specificity of the details held within the score, but with the development of an intuitive connection between the vocal line, the sonic world of the text itself, and the articulations and timbres of the ensemble. These are clues to understanding the how and why of Schoenberg's text-setting.

I believe that *Sprechstimme* is something we fear because it is alive, and constantly changing. It is highly variable, because of the broad boundaries set by the words, music and possibilities of vocal expression. It works best when one surrenders to the sonic world in which it exists. Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* offers twenty-one such worlds to discover: each movement presents new relationships of timbre and articulation. An effective performance of the *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot lunaire* must mutate and change with the sonic shifts of

the ensemble from movement to movement. Each performer is drawn by her own intuition into a unique rendering of the *Sprechstimme*.   Most often, an interpretation will change over time as certain aspects of the composition become clearer to them. Through considering the variable qualities of *Sprechstimme,* in connection with the notated rhythms and articulations of the vocal line and the ensemble, along with investigating the broad spectrum of possibilities for such notation, a Reciter can begin to develop her own interpretation. Below is a list of some of the variable qualities of *Sprechstimme* that an interpreter might consider:

A Sampling of the Variable Qualities of Sprechstimme

Vowel to Consonant Ratio: influenced by natural speech rhythms and emphasized by notated rhythms and articulations

Pitch Saturation Ratio[29]: influenced by structural importance of pitch in vocal line, articulations, vowel length, frequency of voiced consonants, density of ensemble and dynamic intensity (as required for projection); influenced by relation to articulation and timbre of ensemble

Articulation Ratio of Crispness: influenced by rhythms and articulation in addition to voiced/voiceless consonants ratio, frequency of plosives, fricatives, and other sounds; in relationship to articulations within ensemble

Timbre: general color of sound influenced by all of the above: light/dark, shrill, round, lilting, dry, etc.

Contour of the "abandoning" pitch: distance from primary pitch, speed of "abandonment", initial movement rising or falling,

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[29] **Pitch Saturation Ratio** refers to the ratio of air versus pitch in the perceived vocal tone, by both the vocalist and the observing audience. A perceived airy tone is less saturated than a tone produced with more focused pitch, such as in bel canto classical singing tradition. A very forward, intense pitched tone is highly saturated, more so than the tone found in bel canto classical singing tradition.

movement continuous in a single direction or movement in multiple
directions, such as in a wavy line

Having discussed some of the challenges and opportunities regarding *Sprechstimme*, we will now explore how to integrate these variable qualities into specific movements of *Pierrot lunaire*.

Mondestrunken

In the first movement, "Mondestrunken"*,* we are introduced to the poet-narrator who allies himself with Pierrot.[30] We also encounter, although less directly, the creative presence of the composer, who identifies himself with the poet (the primary creator): in measure 29, Schoenberg introduces the cello, his primary instrument, on the word "Dichter" ("poet").[31] This aligns the composer and poet as one creative entity, and identifies a personal component for Schoenberg in the composition. The poet/composer and Pierrot are children of the moon, and together become intoxicated by waves of moonlight, lost in a world of "fantasy". A *cratylistic* approach to text setting emphasizes these waves of moonlight, by exploiting the sounds of the text:

> Its rhythms and contours are appropriately wavelike (and drunken),
> and they generally descend overall, like the moonlight's pouring
> waves (line 2). Rhythmic resemblances and smaller wave-like
> contours reverberate the sonic similarities of the words *Augen* and
> *Wogen* - which are also positioned on downbeats and placed at
> wave-crests - and also lay considerable agogic emphasis on the first

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[30] Vilain, Robert. "Pierrot Lunaire: Cyclic Coherence in Giraud and Schoenberg." *Pierrot lunaire: Albert Giraud, Oto Erich Hartleben, Arnold Schoenberg: a collection of musicological and literary studies.* Delaere, Mark, Jan Herman editors. Leuven, Belgium: Éditions Peeters, 2004, p. 132.
[31] Sterne, Colin C. "Pythagoras and Pierrot", *Perspectives of New Music, vol. 21, No. 1/2, Autumn 1982-Summer 1983,* p. 518.

syllable of *Wogen* [waves], underscoring the undulating qualities of the music, and the small wave-like surge of the word *Wogen* itself.[32] (Fig. 1, b and Fig. 1,c)

The interpreter can highlight these events primarily through their diction and articulation, but also through timbre and their choice of contour as they move away from the notated pitch in the *Sprechstimme* part (as directed by Schoenberg in his forward). For example, the Reciter may choose to elongate the long vowels and watery consonants in the first two lines of the text:

Den Wei[aI]n den man mit Au[aU]gen trinkt,
Gei[i]ss[s]t Nach[x]ts[s] der Mo[o]nd in Wo[o]gen nie[i]der[3334]

Fig. 1: "Mondestrunken", Mvt. 1, m. 2-6

"Den Wein den man mit Augen trinkt, gießt nachts der Mond in Wogen nieder"
a. Piano and Violin pattern of seven against three
b. Agogic accents on "Augen" and "Wogen"
c. Descending line suggests the "moonlight's pouring waves"

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[32] Kurth, pp. 222-223.
[33] In this example, the long vowels are underlines, in accordance with Lyric German Diction. The "watery consonants" are likewise underlines for this example. From here on forward, I will refer to sounds using the International Phonetic Alphabet, represented in brackets; examples of vowels and consonants as notated in the words will be shown in quotations. Ex: Springflut – "spr" "ng" becomes [ʃpr][ŋ].
[34] "The wine that one drinks with one's eyes is poured down in waves by the moon at night," Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 56.

Elongation of these sounds while contouring the *Sprechstimme* in arcing shapes emphasizes the downward moving line and "wave-like" motion, cresting and falling. The general timbre of the voice might be dreamy, with a clear sense of pitch, but also with a slightly translucent sound. This wave-like motion is interrupted by "Springflut" ("spring tide", Fig. 2, a) in the third line; by accenting the "sp" [ʃpr] quickly moving to the "ng" [ŋ], the Reciter in effect "mimes" the action of "Spring" ("springen" meaning "to jump"). An elongation of [u] in "flut" returns us to the watery element (the "waves of moonlight") that is "overflowing" from the moon. The direction of *gesungen* in m. 10 ("sung", Fig. 2, b) on "*stillen*" may have multiple meanings: Sterne's numerological analysis identifies the pitches of *stillen* with thirteen, Schoenberg's "death number",[35] while Kurth suggests that "Schoenberg places ironic emphasis on the pantomime's characteristic muteness" through changing the already established method of declamation *Sprechstimme* to gesungen.[36] This may be an indication of the death that awaits Pierrot in Part Two, as he is overcome by his intoxication on the wine.

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[35] Sterne, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Numerologist*, pp. 105-106.
[36] Kurth, p. 223.

Fig. 2: "Mondestrunken", Mvt. 1, m. 7-11

"und eine Springflut überschwemmt den stillen Horizont"
a. "Springflut" interrupts the wave-like contour
b. *gesungen* ironically emphasizes Pierrot's "muteness"

The second stanza's "s", "st", "sh", "ch", and "z" sounds ([s], [st], [ʃ], [ç], [ts] and [z]) animate the line with an emotional instability. Here we can aurally perceive that a sensual intoxication is taking over Pierrot's senses:

Gelüst[st]e, sch[ʃ]auerlich[ç], und s[z]üß[s]
Durch[ç]sch[ʃ]wimmen ohne Z[ts]ahl die Fluten![37]

Fig. 3: "Mondestrunken", Mvt. 1, m. 19-22

"Gelüste, schauerlich und süß, durchschwimmen ohne Zahl die Fluten!"
a. "süß"
b. "Fluten"

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[37] "Lusts, thrilling and sweet, Float numberless through the waters!" Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 56.

The text, driven with voiceless consonants, begins to lose its connection to pitch. The Reciter may chose to stay closer to the primary pitch to give more time to these voiceless consonants. A greater arc to the abandoning pitch contour emphasizes the long closed vowels in "süß" ("sweet", Fig. 3, a) and "Fluten" ("waters", Fig. 3, b). Finally, a sense of urgency and desperation: as the poet is introduced, Schoenberg sets the text in larger "crests" of pitch contour, as the words become infused with more violent, tension-filled consonants. We notice, specifically the difference in final consonants between the verses. In the first verse, soft-gliding consonants are the most prevelant ([n], [s], [m], [ʃ]), with the exception being the "bouncy" [ʃpr][ŋ] in "Springflut", as discussed before. The second verse incorporates "lustful" sounds, ([st], [ʃ], [s]). Schoenberg sets the first two verses with plenty of time and space to open the sounds and to maintain the "watery" quality of the moonlight. However, things change dramatically in the third verse. Schoenberg sets the text so that the accents fall onto "short" vowels (Fig. 4, a) while giving less time for consonant clusters to sound (further shortening the vowels). If the Reciter maintains the same "arcing" quality of the abandoning pitches, it helps intensify the line, and sonically depicts Pierrot over-imbibing. This combined with the shortening of the vowels gives the effect of the line moving quicker and quicker, until "Haupt", where time seems to stand still (there is also a molto. rit. on "Haupt"). (Fig. 4, b)

Fig. 4: "Mondestrunken", Mvt. 1, m. 33-34

"gen Himmel wendet er verzückt das Haupt"
a. agogic accents on short vowels in "Tranke", "Himmel" and "verzückt"
highlight consonants and help move the line forward
b.   molto rit. on Haupt makes time seem to stand still

This is a very important moment. The moon and its "waves of moonlight", a source of inspiration for the artist and link to artistic intuition, has been abused. The artist has consumed too much of the "sacred beverage" and the "head" (the center of reason and reality) has become overcome by the "intoxication".[38]

Eine blasse Wäscherin

Throughout *Pierrot lunaire* the relationship between Reciter and Ensemble shifts continuously.   In the fourth movement, "Eine blasse Wäscherin", Schoenberg gives very clear instructions regarding this relationship:

The three instruments play in in exactly the same dynamic, all without expression." (Fig. 5, a)

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[38] Youens, Susan. "Excavating An Allegory: The Texts of *Pierrot Lunaire*", *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, *Vol. VIII, No. 2, Nov. 1984*. ed. Leonard Stein. Los Angeles: Arnold Schoenberg Institute, 1985, pp. 111-112.

> The recitation should sound much as an accompaniment to the instruments; the voice is a Nebenstimme, the instruments have the Hauptstimme.[39][40] (Fig. 5, b)

Schoenberg asks the ensemble to play as one unit, in a shared dynamic, and without expression. The dynamic range of the ensemble is extremely quiet, always *ppp*. The instruments share the same phrasing and usually move together as one unit.[41] As the instruments shift between registers, the *Hauptstimme* moves between their shared lines.

Fig. 5: "Eine blasse Wäscherin", Mvt. 4, m. 1-4

Opening measures of "Eine blasse Wäscherin"
a. "The three instruments play in in exactly the same dynamic, all without expression."
b. "The recitation should sound much as an accompaniment to the instruments; the voice is a Nebenstimme, the instruments have the Hauptstimme."

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[39] *Hauptstimme* refers to the primary voice, while *Nebenstimme* refers to a secondary voice.
[40] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 74.
[41] The only times the ensemble has independent material comes at m. 9-11.

Most chamber ensembles noticing this relationship between the three instrumental voices will work towards finding a common timbre that can be shared between their instruments, aiding in the overall blending quality of the voices. The timbre of the ensemble develops in response to the overall markings of articulation and phrasing, most of which are shared between the members of this ensemble. However, with a mixed ensemble of winds and strings, Schoenberg includes specific articulation for the violin found in neither the flute or the clarinet line. Throughout the movement, the violin plays with a mute, and sometimes uses pizzicato, plays harmonics, plays near the bridge (*am Steg*),[42] and plays with the wood of the bow (*col legno*).[43] These techniques for the violin generally bring about a more transparent and airy timbre, qualities that are also emphasized in the text: "pallid", "pale", "bare", "silvery".

> A pallid washerwoman
> Washes pale cloths in the nighttime,
> She stretches bare, silvery white arms
> Down into the flowing water.[44]

As an accompaniment to the ensemble, the voice should seek to blend and support the unified timbre of the instruments. The emphasis of pale, hissing sounds in the text encourages this transparency. Elongating the voiceless

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[42] *am Steg:* "at the bridge; i.e., playing a bowed string instrument near its bridge, which produces a heavier, stronger tone". *ponticello*: "producing a characteristic glassy sound, which emphasizes the higher harmonics at the expense of the fundamental" "Glossary of Musical Terminology." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 05 Mar. 2015

[43] *col legno:* "with the wood; i.e., the strings (for example, of a violin) are to be struck with the wood of the bow, making a percussive sound; also **battuta col legno**: beaten with the wood...." ibid.

[44] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 57.

consonants and shortening the already short vowels allows this to be achieved rather simply:

Eine bla[ss]e Wä[ʃʃ]erin
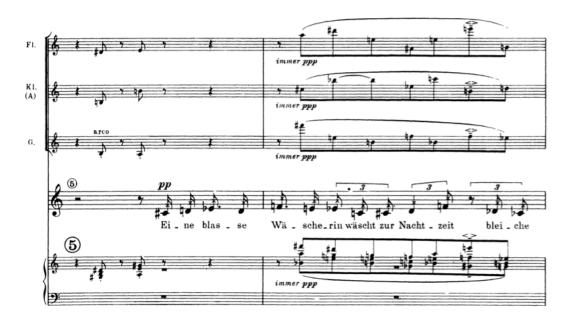Wä[ʃt] [ts]ur Na[xts]eit blei[ç]e Tü[ç]er

Fig. 6: "Eine blasse Wäscherin", Mvt. 4, m. 5-6

"Eine blasse Wäscherin wäscht zur Nachtzeit bleiche"
Pitches of *Sprechstimme* lie within normal range of speech.

In addition, it is important not to over-emphasize the pitch content. Here the vocal line stays within the normal range of speech (Fig. 6), meaning that it is not too vocally demanding for the *Sprechstimme* to phonate on the notated pitches. It is important to maintain an "elevated" speech, still intoned, but also to find a balance where the pitch content does not become too noticeable. Because of the increased proportion of voicelessness, due primarily to the proximity of voiceless consonants and notated rhythms, there is naturally less opportunity for pitch

emphasis. In addition, keeping close to the line with minimal movement in the "abandonment" of the pitch, will help maintain the overall timbre and blend with the ensemble.

Rote Messe

Towards the end of Part One, Pierrot's intoxication leads him to overly decadent pursuits, such as the tuberculosis that will overpower the moon at the end of Part One. [45] The moon, "the gentle maid of heaven" and an image of purity in *Eine blasse Wäscherin* (Mvt. 4) transforms into the bleeding Madonna in *Madonna* (Mvt. 6).[46] The "sword" (words of the poet and actions of Pierrot) has wounded creative purity, represented by the moon.[47] The moon has become "sick to death", dying of "an inconsolable sorrow of love". Pierrot, searching for a way to escape from his identity with his past, in hopes of winning the fairy-tale love of *Colombine* moves towards his own death (symbolized by the illness of the moon), which will haunt him throughout Part Two. Thrust into a world of darkness and desperation, Pierrot forgets his traditional role as a commedic character and laughter disappears. In *Gebet an Pierrot* (Mvt. 9), the speaker implores Pierrot to return to his role, to restore the laughter that has vanished. *Raub* (Mvt. 10) returns to the issues of the past as Pierrot unsuccessfully attempts to steal "red, princely rubies, bloody drops of antique glory".[48] These bloody drops have transformed from the Moon-Madonna's wounds of *Madonna*

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[45] Vilain, Robert. "Pierrot Lunaire: Cyclic Coherence in Giraud and Schoenberg." p. 134.
[46] *ibid.*, p. 142.
[47] *ibid.,* p. 142.
[48] Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht: and Pierrot Lunaire*, p. 58.

(Mvt. 6). It is this relationship with a deformed spirituality that leads us to the gruesome Eucharist in *Rote Messe* (Mvt. 11), where Pierrot, drunk on the sacrificial wine transforms into a priest, rips out his heart, and offers it as a Communion offering. [49]

At the beginning of *Rote Messe*, what we hear is disorienting. There is a directness and intensity to the declamation. A rhythmic motive of five sixteenth notes (Fig. 7, a) gives the Reciter little time to color the text. The exceptions are on "Goldes" and "Kerzen" ("Golden" "Candles") (Fig. 7, b), which expand almost like a flame intensified momentarily by a waft of air.

This material lies primarily within a normal speaking range and the orchestration is dense. Increased pitch saturation will assist the Reciter in projecting over the ensemble. It is not necessary to do much with the abandonment of the pitch, however "Goldes" and "Kerzen" can swell a bit, since their rhythms allot time for more contour. The quick decrescendo from pianissimo in the strings at the end of measure four into five on "naht dem Altar Pierrot!" offers the Reciter space to explore a timbral shift to something more mysterious and perhaps a bit translucent.

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[49] Vilain, Robert. "Pierrot Lunaire: Cyclic Coherence in Giraud and Schoenberg." p. 142.
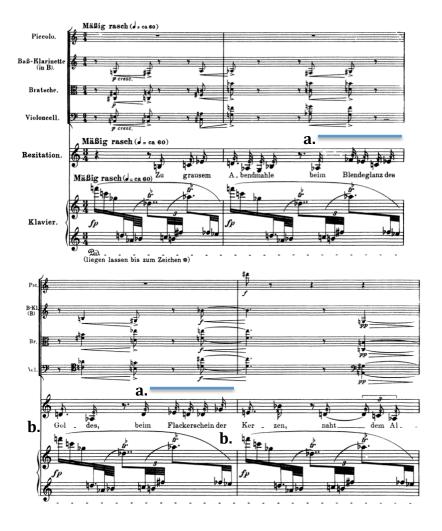
Fig. 7: "Rote Messe", Mvt. 11, m. 1-4

"Zu grausem Abendmahle beim Blendeglanz des Goldes, beim Flackerschein
der Kerzen"
a. motive of five sixteenth notes
b. expansion of time on "Goldes" and "Kerzen" ("Golden" "Candles")

A sudden change with intense accents, a wider pitch range, and broader
tempo encourages the Reciter to increase her pitch saturation in order to cut
through the ensemble's texture. The slower tempo, *breiter (langsamer)* (Fig. 8,
a), introduces pitches of longer duration, which are often located within an

awkward position near the passaggio[50] for many singers. A very forward position accompanied by an intense, siren-like timbre will aid the Reciter in managing this passage without switching registers or reverting to vibrato. The Reciter cannot use too much glissando while abandoning the pitch, because of the important notated glissando on "zerreißt" (Fig. 8, b). A minimal rising in pitch on "Hand" and "gott" (of "gottgeweite") will increase the tension of the line and help connect the movement from e-natural on "Hand" to f-sharp on "gott" ("gottgeweite") and finally to the g-sharp on "zer" ("zerreißt").
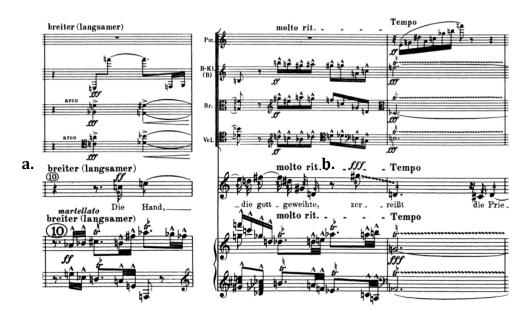

Fig. 8: "Rote Messe", Mvt. 11, m. 10-12

"Die Hand die gottgeweihte, zerreißt"
a. slower tempo exposes longer held pitches near the passaggio
b. notated glissando on "zerreißt" needs to be differentiated from abandoned pitches

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[50] The *passaggio* is a beak between voice registers. Here, it marks a break between a mixed voice and head voice, making it difficult for the Reciter to manage this section without switching between registers.

Another shift occurs as the ensemble becomes hushed, moving in rhythmic unison (m. 18). Here, the Reciter's line directly corresponds with the bass clarinet, viola, and cello for a moment on "Mit segnender Geberde" ("With a sign of blessing"). The connection continues in an almost reversed mirroring relationship, a long-short rhythmic motive for the Reciter responding to a short-long motive in the ensemble. As the ensemble swells in dynamic in each repetition of this motive, the Reciter can mirror their movement through a swelling of the pitch abandonment contour in addition to dynamic mirroring on "zeigt", "bangen", and "triefend" (Fig. 9, a). A slight increase of pitch saturation could help emphasize these swells, however it's important not to become too saturated throughout this section in order to help contrast the sung pitches on "sein Herz" (Fig. 9, b).
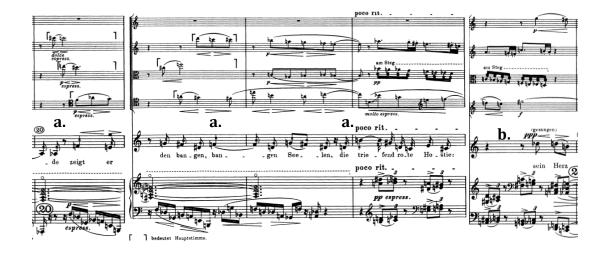

Fig. 9: "Rote Messe", Mvt. 11, m. 20-24

"zeigt er den bangen, bangen Seelen, die triefend rote Hostie: sein Herz"
a. swelling of pitch contour mimics dynamic swells on "zeigt", "bangen", and "triefend"
b. "gesungen" (sung pitches) on "sein Herz"

Following the *gesungen,* a return to a simpler and more spoken quality of declamation on "in blutgen Fingern" (Fig. 10, a) will help to further contrast the sung pitches of the previous measure. The movement ends with a tremolo, *am Steg (at the bridge)* in the strings (Fig. 10, b). Translucency in the pitch will give a greater effect of mystery to this ominous ending.

Fig. 10: "Rote Messe", Mvt. 11, m. 25-28

"in blutgen Fingern zu grausem Abendmahle"
a. a more spoken quality on "in blutgen Fingern" contrasts sung pitches of previous measure
b. translucency of pitch in vocal line matches tremolo and *am Steg* in strings

Der Mondfleck

Part Three marks the return of Pierrot to his roots in commedia and reconnects him to the moon. In *Der Mondfleck*, Pierrot goes out for an evening stroll, wearing a black jacket. Suddenly a white fleck of moonlight distracts him from his plans and quickly becomes an object of obsession: no matter how hard he tries to rub off the fleck, it will not disappear. Written as a "extended palindrome"[51], Pierrot's irritation and vigorous rubbing are imitated by the ensemble while Pierrot's anxiety is exemplified by the constant expansion of pitch range within the Reciter's line. This movement is very complex, and the Reciter can easily drift away from the ensemble. One thing that can offer considerable assistance in both maintaining unity as an ensemble and exemplifying the irritation of Pierrot is for the Reciter to explore the percussive nature of the vocal line, in notated rhythms and through diction.

A rhythmic delegation of consonants in the opening line aids the rhythmic intensity of the line through longer durations. For example, "Fleck", divided into a dotted eighth for [flE] and sixteenth note placement for [k] (Fig. 11, a), helps align the voice more intensely with the clarinet entrance. A slight lift on the third sixteenth of "Rükken" and "Rokkes" emphasize the double [k:k] and also offer space to clearly hear the eighth note in the piccolo of each measure (Fig. 11, b).

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[51] Haimo, Ethan. *Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire: A Cycle?* Pierrot lunaire: Albert Giraud, Otto Erich Hartleben, Arnold Schoenberg: a collection of musicological and literary studies. Delaere, Mark, Jan Herman editors. Leuven, Belgium: Éditions Peeters, 2004, p. 154.
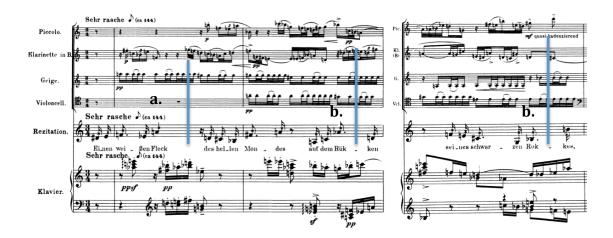
Fig. 11: "Mondfleck", Mvt. 18, m. 1-3

"Einen weißen Fleck des hellen Mondes auf dem Rükken seines schwarzen Rokkes"

a. "Fleck" divided into ♪♪ ([flEk] + [k])helps align the voice with the clarinet entrance

b. a slight lift on the third sixteenth of "Rükken" and "Rokkes" emphasizes the [k:k] and aids in clearly hearing the piccolo on the second eighth note of each word

The fast tempo leaves little room for too many expressive qualities in the vocal line. A more spoken quality of pitch with little or no sense of lilt or abandonment will help maintain rhythmic precision. As Pierrot's irritation and the musical intensity increases, the vocal line begins to explore a wider range of pitch. Here, to further support the growing sense of Pierrot's losing control, the voice can explore a wider release to each pitch. For example, a larger arcing pattern on "Wischt und wischt, doch" (Fig. 12, a) imitates Pierrot's fierce attempt to rub out the fleck. A quick switch to straighter and more percussive declamation on "bringt ihn nicht herunter" perfectly articulates the exasperation called for by "ärgerlich" ("annoyed", Fig. 12, b).
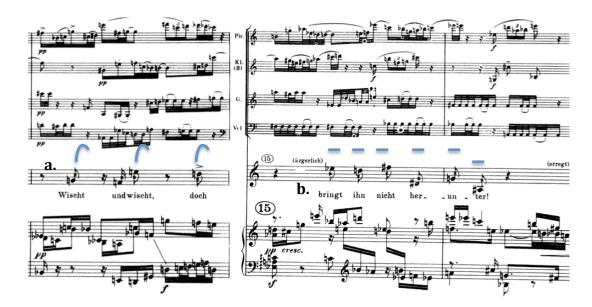
Fig. 12: "Mondfleck", Mvt. 18, m. 14-16

"Wischt und wischt, doch bringt ihn nicht herunter!"
a. arcing release pattern on "Wischt und wischt" resembles Pierrot's rubbing
b. a straighter style of declamation here helps articulate Pierrot's exasperation

The Reciter can return to a wider arcing pattern on "reibt und reibt" ("rubs and "rubs", Fig. 13, a) and then something a bit sarcastic, perhaps relating to the "rubbing" arc for "einen weißen Fleck" (Fig. 13, a). A return to strict rhythmic precision on "des hellen Mondes" (Fig. 13, b) ends the movement.
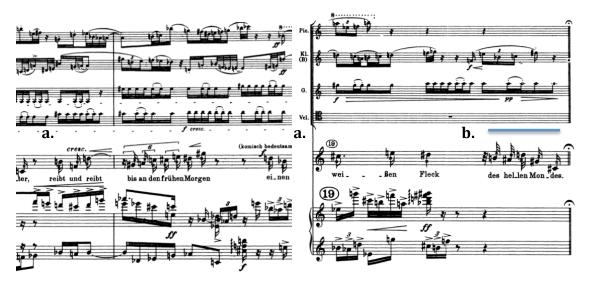
Fig. 13: "Mondfleck", Mvt. 18, m. 17-19

"reibt und reibt bis an den frühen Morgen einen weißen Fleck des hellen
Mondes"
a. arcing release pattern on "reibt und reibt" and "einen weißen Fleck"
once again relates to Pierrot's furious rubbing
b. return to strict rhythmic precision and little arc

Conclusion

My first performance of *Pierrot lunaire* was during my undergraduate studies at Mannes College in 2004. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to perform the work, but was terrified because I had no idea where to begin. My interpretation of *Pierrot lunaire* began through a foundation developed as a singer trained in Western Classical Music singing tradition. Later on, opening up to my own intuition through experimenting with a wider variety of vocal expression influenced my interpretation, especially regarding timbre and articulation.

Singers of the Western Classical Music tradition use a specific approach to singing that demands an even tone throughout registers, good breath control, vocal flexibility, dynamic range, and projection that allow the singer to be heard, unamplified, over large instrumental forces. Depending on the genre that the singer is performing, certain elements within that vocal production become more or less flexible. For example, singers performing art song may take liberties that singers performing opera may not be able to take, especially with regard to timbre. This is due in part to the requirement of an opera singer to project over an orchestra, while the art song singer has only a piano with which to contend.[52] The Reciter in *Pierrot lunaire* is at times like a singer of art song, able to explore a wider range of timbre when the orchestration is thin and there is no concern of being covered by the ensemble. At other times, their role is much more operatic, because the density of the orchestration demands more projection. As an interpreter, I had to follow the instructions that Schoenberg left in the score, but fill in the gaps that he had not defined regarding *Sprechstimme*. I had to carefully balance between a conscious exploration of timbre, diction, and other expressive possibilities, meanwhile navigating a treacherous road of extreme registers, detailed articulations, a multitude of declamatory techniques, and balancing with an ever changing orchestration.

I was very lucky to work closely with multiple coaches who encouraged my exploration of this work in different ways. I was encouraged to speak the text

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[52] Due to the body serving as the singer's resonating cavity, small adjustments to timbre, resulting from subtle shifts of the body, can effect the over all resonance and projection of the singer. Opera singers, for this reason, tend to rely on a more consistent timbre to aid with projection.

repeatedly, until the sounds of the words had meaning of their own. As I developed my own connection with these sounds, I began to connect also to a natural fluctuation of pitch, which helped to influence my *Sprechstimme* contour. Following the rules of singer's lyric diction, I emphasized and exaggerated the sound properties of each word. The experience of pronouncing the text became a visceral experience for me. Connecting the diction to rhythm, articulation and pitch encouraged me to emphasize specific sounds. I was encouraged to explore the contour of the line and the extremes of rising or falling from the initial pitch, in varying ranges and speeds. Intuitively, I began to settle into unique relationships based upon intervallic content, texture, intensity, and other elements. I also began to respond in a variety of timbral colors, brought out by the expression already present in the articulation, rhythm, and diction.

Although, I have now performed *Pierrot lunaire* multiple times, and have spent years studying the score, I believe that my interpretation will always be evolving. One of the most beautiful aspects of this piece to me is the way in which the vocal line allows itself to change with each interpreter. This mutability allows for much individuality, but also requires great responsibility. The most convincing performances, to me, are delivered by performers who not only adhere to the score, but also to their own intuition about the expressive possibilities that lie within this ever changing and immensely powerful form of declamation.

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