



VANCOUVER  
RECITAL  
SOCIETY

2024<sup>YEARS</sup>  
2025  
SEASON



## FALL CONCERTS

Israeli Chamber Project  
Hila Baggio soprano  
Sunday December 1 2024

# From the Artistic Director

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Dear Friends:

We are delighted to present the Israeli Chamber Project in this performance which they have titled 'TWO CLOWNS... PIERROT MEETS PETRUSHKA'.

For this tour, they have joined forces with the celebrated Israeli soprano Hila Baggio (who previously appeared for the VRS with the Jerusalem Quartet in 2022) and the stage director Shirit Lee Weiss.

We have been working on the arrangements to bring this project to Vancouver for the past two years, and we have made it happen by presenting it in collaboration with Salle Bourgie in Montreal and Le Club Musical de Québec in Québec City.

I would like to thank our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, and the sponsors for today's performance: Birgit Westergaard and Norman Gladstone, Arlene Gladstone and Hamish Cameron, Judi Korbin, Risa and Bill Levine, and Joanne and Stanis Smith.

We are grateful for the support from the City of Vancouver and we welcome you to enjoy a remarkable afternoon of entertainment.

Sincerely,



Leila Getz.



## CELLPHONES

The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，感谢您的合作。

# Program

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## Israeli Chamber Project

**Hila Baggio**, soprano

**Daniel Bard**, violin & viola

**Tibi Cziger**, clarinet

**Guy Eshed**, flute

**Michal Korman**, cello

**Sivan Magen**, harp

**Assaff Weisman**, piano

**Shirit Lee Weiss**, director

Sunday, December 1, at 3:00 pm  
Vancouver Playhouse

Season Sponsor



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Concert sponsors

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Additional Support



MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

**La Valse** (arr. Yuval Shapiro)

(approx. 14 minutes)

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

**Petrushka** (arr. Yuval Shapiro)

Shrovetide Fair

Scene and Danse Russe

Petrushka's Room

The Black Moor

Shrovetide Fair

(approx. 25 minutes)

INTERMISSION

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG (1874–1951)

**Pierrot Lunaire**

PART 1

1. Mondestrunken
2. Columbine
3. Der Dandy
4. Eine blasse Wäscherin
5. Valse de Chopin
6. Madonna
7. Der kranke Mond

PART 2

8. Nacht (Passacaglia)
9. Gebet an Pierrot
10. Raub
11. Rote Messe
12. Galgenlied
13. Enthauptung
14. Die Kreuze

PART 3

15. Heimweh
16. Gemeinschaft
17. Parodie
18. Der Mondfleck
19. Serenade
20. Heimfahrt (Barcarole)
21. O alter Duft

(approx. 40 minutes)

# Israeli Chamber Project

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The Israeli Chamber Project (ICP) is an exceptional ensemble that has established itself as a vital force in both the classical music community and educational outreach. Now entering its second decade, the ensemble comprises a dynamic mix of string players, winds, harp and piano, showcasing some of the most accomplished musicians of today. Their mission revolves around promoting Israeli culture through music while also engaging with global audiences, both in Israel and abroad.



Photo credit: Yael Ilan

Founded with the dual purpose of giving back to the community where its members began their musical journeys and offering a platform to present Israeli culture through performances and outreach, the ICP's members include renowned prize-winners from prestigious competitions like the International Tchaikovsky Competition, the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and the Avery Fisher Career Grant. These accomplished musicians come together to present diverse chamber music concerts that engage audiences with the richness of Israeli talent.

A cornerstone of the ICP's programming is its commitment to expanding the chamber music repertoire. By commissioning new works and creating innovative arrangements of existing compositions, the ensemble has fostered creativity in the classical music world. Works by composers such as Lowell Liebermann, Matan Porat, Jonathan Keren and Gilad Cohen, as well as arrangements of iconic pieces by Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky, are integral to the ensemble's performances.

The ICP has performed at world-renowned venues such as London's Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Morgan Library & Museum and Merkin Concert Hall, alongside international tours to places like China, Hong Kong and Canada. Additionally, the ensemble has received recognition on prestigious radio programs such as NPR's *Performance Today* and WQXR's *Young Artist Showcase*.

One of the ensemble's most recent achievements is its collaboration with renowned violist Tabea Zimmermann and the world premiere of a new commission by composer Gity Razaz, written specifically for the ensemble and tenor Karim Sulayman. The ICP also places great emphasis on music education, offering lessons and masterclasses to students of all backgrounds and helping to inspire the next generation of musicians through its partnerships with conservatories and educational institutions.

The Israeli Chamber Project's dedication to both performance excellence and cultural engagement continues to make it a significant and influential presence in the classical music world.



# Hila Baggio, soprano

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**Early Life & Education:** Hila was born and raised in Jerusalem, and musical talent came early. By the time she was 10 years old, she had joined the Ankor Children's Choir of the Jerusalem Rubin Conservatory of Music and Dance. Hila studied at the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. After the Academy, in 2002, Hila joined the Israeli Opera Studio.

Hila shares her experience and knowledge of singing technique and performing with young singers. She is teaching privately and has been invited to give masterclasses for institutions such as the Conservatoire Ville de Luxembourg, the "Program for Outstanding Singers" at the Jerusalem Music Center and at the Jerusalem Academy of Music.

**This Season:** Recent engagements include the role of Das Ungeborene in *Alma*, a new opera by Ella Miller Sheriff at the Volksoper Vienna; Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* on a tour of the US and Canada; concerts with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Manfred Honeck; a concert of music by Maria Herz at the Shalom Music Festival Cologne; a cabaret concert with the Israel Sinfonietta Beer Sheva; an open-air concert gala in Ingolstadt; and more.



Photo credit: Liran Levy

**Performances:** Hila has performed Betty Olivero's *Many Waters* with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra at the Berlin Philharmonie and Konzerthaus Dortmund; Mozart's *Requiem* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Wiener Symphoniker on a tour of Taiwan; Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* with Israel Camerata Orchestra and Festival Liturgical in Nazareth; a concert with the Jerusalem Quartet at Theater St. Gallen; and Ligeti's *Mysteries of the Macabre* and Schönberg's *Brettli-Lieder* with Orchestre de Chambre du Luxembourg.

Her concert performances include Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Berlin with Daniel Barenboim as well as with the Israeli Chamber Project on a tour of Israel and the US; Ayal Adler's *Alone, I return from the night* with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and Omer Meir Wellber; Mahler's Symphony No. 8 at Dresdner Musikfestspiele and Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 "Kaddish" with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra; Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with ONPL and Pascal Rophé and the Rishon LeZion Orchestra with Dan Ettinger; Brahms' *Requiem* with the Valencia Orchestra in Palau de les Arts and Omer Meir Wellber; a gala concert with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Zubin Mehta; Mozart's *Mass in C minor* with the Mexico Philharmonic Orchestra; and Haydn's *Die Schöpfung*, Mahler's Symphony No. 4, Mozart's *Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Bach's *Matthäus Passion* with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra.

**Awards and Prizes:** Hila was a member of the Israeli Opera Studio. Her extensive career has earned her many prizes, including second prize in the operetta category at the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition in Vienna; the Israeli Minister of Culture Award; the Rosenblum Prize for the Performing Arts; the Silverman Prize; the Grabov Award; the Basser Award; and awards from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Israel Vocal Arts Institute Foundation.

# Program Notes

## Maurice Ravel La Valse

Ravel had been planning to write a celebration of the Viennese waltz since 1906, when he began to sketch out a piece he called simply *Wien* (Vienna), a tribute to the city's so-called "waltz king". Johann Strauss II. But it was only under a commission from Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the famous Ballets Russes dance company, that he was prompted to finish it in 1920. Diaghilev hated the work after hearing it played in Ravel's two-piano version, but undeterred, the composer published it anyway in an orchestral version, and it premiered in 1926.

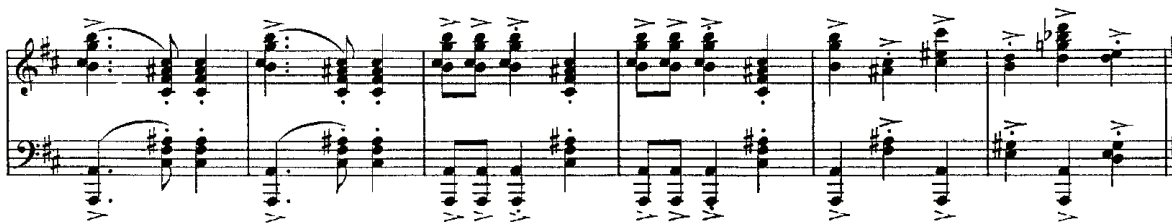
The work begins with a mysterious rumble deep in the bass register to prepare our ears for the great sonic feast that Ravel has created for us. As he summons up the spirits of Viennese ballrooms past, tantalizing tidbits of waltz rhythm float up like champagne bubbles to the mid-range of the texture



until finally the misty veil of memory is lifted to reveal a glittering dance floor of swirling figures deliriously enthralled by the downbeat hesitation and second-beat uplift of a full-on waltz tune.



The work is structured in a series of waltzes, some coyly coquettish with seductive chromatic lines creeping upwards in the inner voices, others boldly uninhibited and carefree, all leading by the end to a final triumphant explosion of joyous exultation and unbridled elation.



Ravel describes what he called his *poème chorégraphique* as follows:

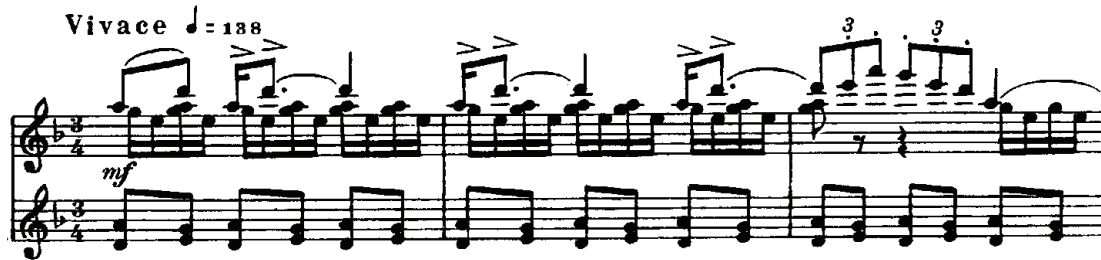
*Swirling clouds afford glimpses, through rifts, of waltzing couples. The clouds scatter little by little; one can distinguish an immense hall with a whirling crowd. The scene grows progressively brighter. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo. An imperial court, about 1855.*

## Igor Stravinsky

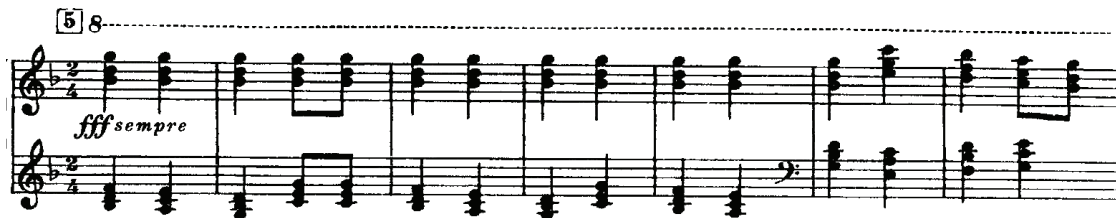
### Petrushka

Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka* was written for Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* and premiered in Paris in 1911. It tells the story of a love triangle between three puppets – Petrushka, the Ballerina, and the Blackamoor<sup>1</sup> – who come alive during the Shrovetide (i.e., Mardi Gras) festivities in St. Petersburg in 1830.

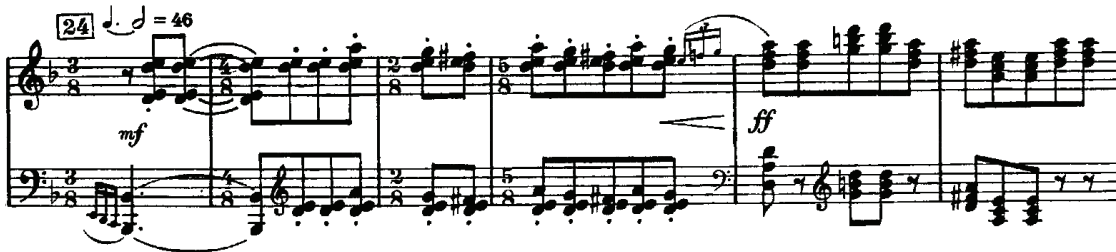
The ballet is structured in four *tableaux*, the first of which, **Shrovetide Fair**, establishes the setting as a fairground packed with revellers. In the sprightly fanfares of the flute, we hear the bustle of the crowds and the cries of hawkers offering their wares.



Unique features of Stravinsky's compositional style soon become obvious, such as his use of parallel chords in his harmonic structures.



His motivic building blocks tend to be repetitive and confined within a small melodic range, with frequently changing time signatures that keep one's ear ever alert, listening for where the downbeat is.



Which is not to say that clear, tuneful and predictable melodies never occur.

Traditional folksongs, music hall tunes and popular songs are also heard, depicting the “common folk” milling about at the fair and singing little ditties like this:



<sup>1</sup>“Blackamoor” is an archaic term used to describe a dark-skinned person from Africa, or any swarthy-toned individual.

In the following *Scene and Dance russe* a Magician puppet master appears and draws a curtain back to reveal his puppet theatre to the crowd.

Then by improvising a sinuous melody on the flute, he brings the three puppet protagonists of this ballet miraculously to life.

The Magician plays the flute.

**31**

*mp Cadenza ad lib. ma non accel.*

And feeling new strength in their limbs, the first thing they do to express their newfound freedom, of course, is to launch into a joyous and vigorous Russian Dance.

**33** Allegro giusto  $\text{♩} = 116$

*f*

But unfortunately for our poor Petrushka, no matter how many toothy grins, sly winks and fervent gestures of eyebrow theatre he directs at the Ballerina, she still seems to prefer the Blackamoor.

\* \* \*

The second tableau takes us to *Petrushka's Room* where we hear for the first time the celebrated “Petrushka chord” for which this ballet is famous.

**49** Molto meno mosso  $\text{♩} = 50$

*p* *mf lamentoso*

This bitonal chord is formed from a combination of C major and F# major broken chords played together to generate a composite arpeggio of colourful dissonances. And this will be Petrushka’s “sonic signature” representing him throughout the ballet.

In this tableau we hear Petrushka’s side of the story, his anger towards the Magician, his frantic attempts to impress the Ballerina when she wanders into the room and his despair at his own inability to impress her.

\* \* \*



The third tableau takes us to the *Blackamoor's Room*, where an entirely different scene is unfolding. The Blackamoor is luxuriating in his own contours on a chaise-longue, amusing himself attempting to apply his razor-sharp scimitar to a recently-acquired coconut.

The Blackamoor's music up to this point is mysterious and more than a little threatening, due in large part to the scimitar that he brandishes with gusto. The Ballerina then arrives, obviously fresh from band practice, because she just can't restrain herself from playing a merry little tune on her cornet.

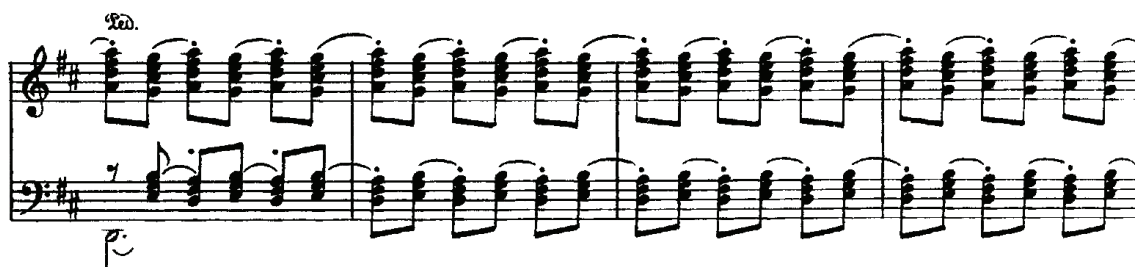


But the Blackamoor has other things on his mind, and a seductive waltz, full of whimsy, soon ensues between the two of them.



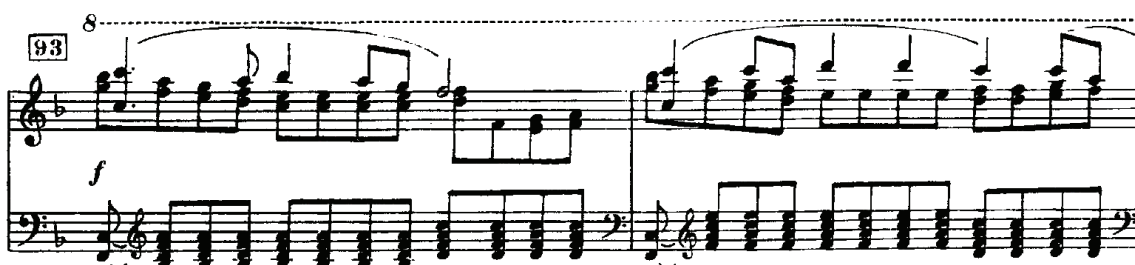
\* \* \*

The fourth tableau sees the arrival of evening back at the *Shrovetide Fair* with Stravinsky's sugary texture of parallel chords



setting the tone once again for a bustling scene of dancers, musicians and other entertainers performing before an audience of the common folk.

First, up are the Wet-Nurses, dancing to a gloriously hummable tune, a paraphrase of the well-known folk song Down the Petersky Road (Вдоль по Питерской):



After a bit of commotion, the gypsy women take to the stage to do their merry dance.



Then comes the confident striding pace of the Coachmen and Grooms, high-stepping it across the stage, soon joined by the Wet Nurses.



Not to be outdone, a group of Mummers<sup>1</sup> take their turn and enjoy the crowd to join them.

The rest of the crowd joins in the Mummers' dance.



And with this, the Israeli Chamber Project ends their rendition of excerpts from Stravinsky's ballet on a merry note of dancing and general revelry.

\* \* \*

But what happens to the puppet Petrushka in the end? Does he win the girl? Or does the Blackamoor give him a good drubbing and win her himself?

You'll have to go see the full ballet to find out.

But here's a hint: Admiralty Square in St. Petersburg, where the ballet is set, is an "open carry" jurisdiction, so I would watch out for that scimitar...

<sup>2</sup> Mummers were masked mimes that traditionally performed in country villages on holidays and religious feast days.

## Arnold Schoenberg

### Pierrot Lunaire

Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) is a *melodrama*, a performance genre especially popular in the late nineteenth century featuring a narrator dramatically reciting poetic verses to a musical accompaniment. The 21 poems that make up this work are by the Belgian symbolist poet Albert Giraud (1860-1929), translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905).

They take as their protagonist the character of Pierrot, the white-faced “sad clown” from *commedia dell'arte* whose hapless innocence and fruitless longings made him the perfect Chaplinesque figure of an Everyman. In the aesthetically charged *fin de siècle* reading of this figure by Giraud, Pierrot becomes a stand-in for the self-dramatizing poet-as-loner, cursed to live on the margins of his society, beset by ennui, cynicism and even madness.

Each poem is a stark vignette depicting in vivid, highly-charged language the madness of Pierrot – a “lunar” madness, inspired by the Moon. The ruminating character of this madness is reinforced by the double refrain structure of the poetic form chosen by Giraud (and preserved by Hartleben) for each of his poems: the *rondel*. In this poetic form the opening lines act as a kind of refrain, being repeated both in the middle and at the end, evoking the obsessive nature of the thoughts that pass through Pierrot's mind over and over again.

Schoenberg's boldly expressionist treatment of this character is brilliantly dark, combining elements of cabaret, song cycle and chamber music. The score is atonal and so, being in no particular key, it has no tonal centre that feels like “home”. Thus its dissonances, and the emotions they evoke, have no natural way of finding resolution. Instead, they float emotionally unhinged and rudderless in musical space.

But most revolutionary of all, Schoenberg has his singer perform in what he calls *Sprechstimme* or “speech voice”. a type of hollowed-out vocalization like that used in the satirical cabarets of Berlin where Schoenberg had previously worked. Glenn Gould describes the concept as requiring the singer “to move **across** pitches rather than to locate **within** them, like a string player doing a non-stop glissando.”

This eerie and (let's be frank) more-than-a-little-creepy vocal style is indicated in the score with a little “X” on the stem of each note “sung” in this way.



The effect is unsettling, like someone whispering conspiratorially in your ear one moment and then raving at the sky the next. At every dynamic level it bespeaks raw unfiltered emotion –and madness.

The work is divided into three sections of seven poems each. The first section depicts the elation and rapturous intoxication produced by love and religious devotion. The second deals with the darker impulses of the human heart. The third sees Pierrot travelling home to Bergamo, reflecting on his past.

## PART ONE

In *Moondrunk* we are introduced to Pierrot as he “drinks in” the “wine” of a moonlit evening, musing over the intoxicating power of the Moon to fuel poetic inspiration.

Bewegt (♩ ca 66 – 70) *p*

Bewegt (♩ ca 66 – 70) Den Weinden man mit Au-gen trinkt, gießt

*pp*

We are also introduced to a textural characteristic of Schoenberg's score that accounts for much of its “strangeness”. We hear an eerie disconnect between the unpredictably wandering vocal line and the finely wrought, meticulously ordered patterning of the instrumental accompaniment, as represented in this first piece by the seven-note tumbling arabesque figure in the piano.

This ordered patterning features intricate points of imitation between the instruments and displays of learned counterpoint that only get more dazzlingly complex as the work proceeds, leading the listener to wonder: who is crazier, the raving singer or the obsessive-compulsive accompaniment?

\* \* \*

In the second piece, Pierrot's thoughts turn to his love for *Columbine* as he fantasizes giving her “roses” of pale moonbeams.

Fließende ♩ = 42 – 48 *pp subito*

Des Mond - lichts blei - che Blü - ten, die wei - ßen Wun -

Fließende ♩ = 42 – 48

*pp cantabile stacc. legato ppp*

Columbine is the mistress of his arch-rival Harlequin, and Pierrot's love is unrequited. The cadenza-like acrobatics of the violin convey the fanciful nature of his love aspirations.

\* \* \*

In the nineteenth century, Pierrot became a pantomime figure in a white, flouncy costume and a white-painted face. In *The Dandy* we encounter him at his make-up table whimsically musing over his choice of colours as a shrieking bright beam of moonlight strikes the flasks of his face-paint.

Rasch (♩ = 70) *f* *fp*

Mit ei - nem phan - ta - stischen

Rasch (♩ = 70) *ff* *pp* *pp*

Which colour will he choose? White, of course, the pale colour of moonbeams.

\* \* \*

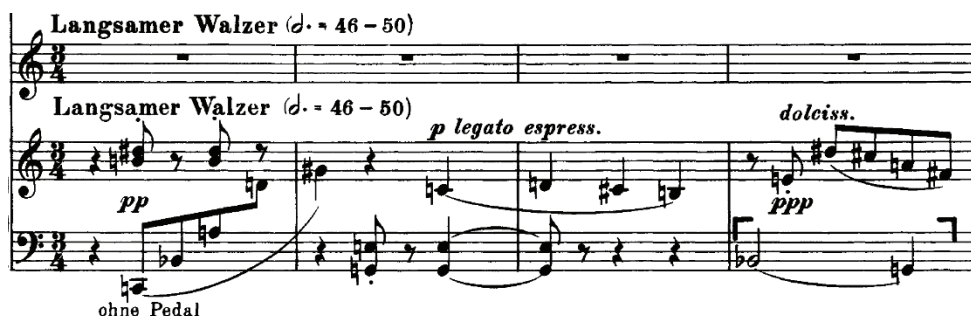
In the fourth piece Pierrot imagines the Moon as *A Pallid Laundrymaid*, a ghostly presence in the sky, washing “faded linen” with her “silver-white arms”.



The instrumental accompaniment is as pale and expressionless as the face of the Moon.

\* \* \*

A rather grotesque image is summoned up in *Valse de Chopin*. Pierrot is moved by a drop of blood on his white costume to think of the waltzes of Chopin – who died, after all, spitting blood from tuberculosis.



*Madonna* is a kind of musical Pietà, featuring Mary, the “mother of all sorrows”. imagined by Pierrot as holding her crucified son in her arms.



To complete the blasphemous overtones of this piece, it features a pizzicato walking bass line, as if it were from a Bach cantata.

\* \* \*

*The Sick Moon* reveals how Pierrot has gone from manic elation to isolation and despair in his “lunar madness”. The Moon, like his soul, is now “sick”.



Pierrot’s loneliness is conveyed by the instrumental accompaniment of a lone flute, playing in its lowest register, as if heaving its last breaths.



## PART TWO

By the end of the nineteenth century Pierrot had also become associated in art with the dark side of the Moon, as a figure capable of embodying the worst moral excesses of *fin de siècle* European society. This dark side of his personality pervades the second part of *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Thus darkness pervades **Night**, with its images of “dark black butterflies” blocking out the sun.

**Gehende** ♩ (ca. 80) *rr*

**Gehende** ♩ (ca. 80) *p*

Finstre, schwarze Riesenfallter tötetender

The tone colour is sombre as the instruments intone a plodding *passacaglia*, with bass clarinet, cello and piano murmuring darkly in canonic imitation.

It would be hard not to suspect irony, or even sarcastic scorn, in either the title or the text of **Prayer to Pierrot**, with its references to laughter “unlearned” and Pierrot as a “horse doctor of souls” (Roßarzt der Seele).

**Mäßige** ♩ (ca. 60) *pp*

**Mäßige** ♩ (ca. 60) *p*

Pi-er-rot! mein La-chen hab ich ver-lernt! Das Bild des

\*\*\*

Buffing up his “laddish” credentials, Pierrot and his drunken friends break into a tomb to steal jewels in **Theft**.

**Mäßige** ♩ (ca. 84) *pp*

**Mäßige** ♩ (ca. 84) *p*

immer col legno gestrichen

immer col legno gestrichen

But the rubies they find in a coffin look too much like eyes staring at them out of the darkness, so they flee in terror. The strings playing *col legno* add a ghoulish tone colour to the proceedings.

\*\*\*

Moving from strength to strength in the sacrilege department, Pierrot poses as both priest and sacrificial offering in *Red Mass*.

Mäßig rasch (♩ = ca 60)

Mäßig rasch (♩ = ca 60) Zu grausem A. bendmahle beim Blendeglanz des

*sp* *f*

The “grisly Eucharist” he offers up is his own heart, ripped from his breast!

The last three songs of Part Two describe the death of Pierrot in three different types of execution: hanging, beheading and crucifixion.

First he is hanged in *Gallows Song*, the shortest of the pieces in this work. The executioner is his “last mistress”. a prostitute who ties the noose around his neck.

Sehr rasch (♩ = ca 120)

Die düre Dirne mit langem Hal-se wird seine letzte Ge...

*pp*

The whiplash phrase of the piccolo at the end is him dropping to his death.

\*\*\*

Next it is the turn of the Moon itself, which he previously worshipped, to come down on his neck like a shining scimitar in *Beheading*.

Ziemlich bewegte ♩ (ca 128)

C-Saite hervortretend

*ff* *legato* *gestoßen*

Brusque chopping motions in the instruments as the piece opens foretell the kind of execution being described.

\*\*\*

Finally, in **The Crosses**, Pierrot identifies self-pityingly with all the poets whose verses are the agents of their own crucifixion, while the clamouring mob stands by and gawks.

**Langsame**  $\text{♩}$  (ca 50)  
(ernst) *f*

Heil - ge Kreu - ze sind die Ver - se, dran die Dichter stumm ver -

**Langsame**  $\text{♩}$  (ca 50)  
*ff* *legato*

*r. H.* *ff* *f*

*l. H.* *ff*

### PART THREE

With his symbolic death enacted in these ways, Pierrot is overwhelmed with a sense of homesickness and a longing for home.

In **Nostalgia** we hear the call of his homeland in Italy, beckoning him to return, in the lyrical outpouring of the violin and mischievous scamper of the clarinet.

**In abwechslungsreicher Bewegung** ( $\text{♩}$  = 56 – 70)  
etwas rasch  
frei *stacc.* *p* *zögernd*

*pizz.* *f* *arco* *p* *pp*

He hears the call of the “old Italian comedy” (i.e., *commedia dell'arte*) in which he was born.

\* \* \*

Returning to the rough humour of early *commedia dell'arte*, in **Mean Trick** Pierrot drills through the head of Cassander, a critic who has presumably tortured him in a similar fashion.

**Ziemlich rasch** ( $\text{♩}$  ca 120)

In den blanken Kopf Cas - san - ders, dessen Schrein die Luft durchze - tert,

**Ziemlich rasch** ( $\text{♩}$  ca 120)  
*ff*

Putting tobacco in the cavity, he smokes his nemesis' head like a pipe.

\* \* \*

Schoenberg waxes cleverer and cleverer in his use of musical materials in the pieces that follow. *Parody* tells the tale of a grey-haired old Duenna (a type of chaperone in Spanish society) who sits waiting with her knitting needles for the arrival of Pierrot, her much younger lover.

(♩ = ca 132)

Klarinette imitiert genau den Vortrag der Bratsche.

grazioso

mit Dämpfer

grazioso p f p stacc. spice. springender Bogen

The instrumental texture is rife with canons and other points of imitation, but the way the following voice is inverted (as in the opening) mocks the old woman's claim to have a young paramour at her beck and call.

At the height of his powers, Schoenberg creates canons, inversions of canons and an outright fugue in the instrumental accompaniment to *The Moon Fleck*.

Sehr rasche ♩ (ca 144)

pp

pp

pp

Sehr rasche ♩ (ca 144)

Einem wei - ßen Fleck des hel - len Mon - des auf dem Rük - ken

The premise is that Pierrot finds a small fleck (i.e., beam) of moonlight on the back of his costume, and it drives him crazy trying to get rid of it. The virtuoso display of contrapuntal skill in the instrumental texture symbolizes the futility of his efforts.

\* \* \*

The *Serenade* is stuffed with musical in-jokes.

The scene is Pierrot playing a waltzing serenade on the viola, but Schoenberg scores it for cello.

cel.

rit.

rit.

rit.

20 knipster trüb ein Piz - zi - ca - to.

immer p

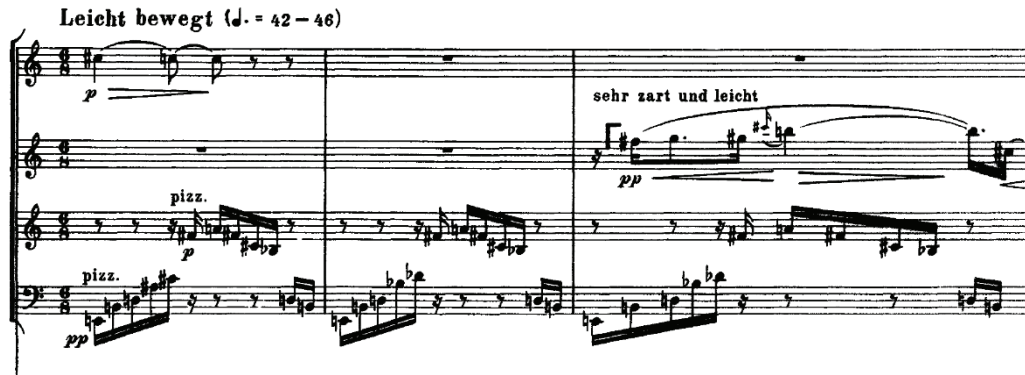
And when the text says that Pierrot plays *pizzicato* the cello blithely goes on playing *arco*.

Pierrot, with his "giant bow". gets to engage in another Punch-and-Judy whack at the critic Cassander, who comes to complain about the noise but ends up getting "played" like an instrument by Pierrot.

\* \* \*

In the last two pieces Pierrot's thoughts are fully back in his Italian homeland, daydreaming of the sensations and even the smells of home.

*Journey Homeward* is a barcarolle, its rocking rhythm conveyed by up-and-down phrases from the cello and violin while the clarinet sings out a wave-inspired melody.



Returning to previous kinds of imagery, “The moonbeam is the rudder, the white lily is the boat.”

\* \* \*

In the last piece Pierrot is back where he belongs, in Bergamo, comforted and restored to health by the very smells of his hometown.



In celebration of this homecoming, Schoenberg almost – almost! – gives us hints of good old-fashioned tonality, with the piano accompanying the voice more reverently and with the sound of the entire ensemble more traditionally orchestral and less aurally complicated.

\* \* \*

But what is Schoenberg's achievement in this work? Its emotional tenor is confoundingly elusive, often sitting on a knife-edge between sarcasm and pathos. Irony is certainly omni-present, starting with the “Marlene Dietrich” cabaret gesture of having a male character acted out by a female performer.

Are the nightmarish elements to be taken seriously, or as grotesque satire? Should we pity Pierrot, or just laugh at his mawkish sentimentality? Just how much are we to remain detached from the words and the text?

It is questions like this – questions that continue to be asked – that have branded this work a masterpiece of early twentieth-century artistic expression.

Program notes by  
Donald G. Gislason, 2024



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