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Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21 – "O alter Duft" (song #21, mm.1-3)



A Survivor from Warsaw, Op. 46 – mm. 35-36





Origins of Sprechstimme

Early Melodrama

- *Pygmalion* (Coignet 1770; Benda 1779)
- *− Ariadne* (Benda *−* 1775)

"Modern" Melodrama

- Königskinder Engelbert Humperdinck (1897)
- *Enoch Arden* Richard Strauss (1897)
- *Das Hexenlied* Max von Schilling (1902)



Humperdinck's Königskinder – Act I



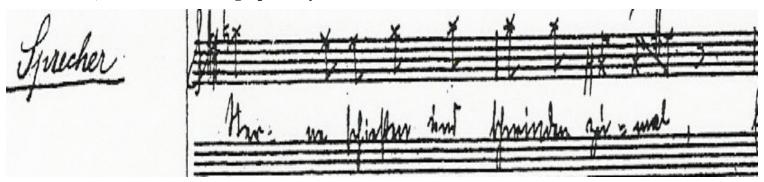


"It originated in Schoenberg's mind. It was – if you will – an inspiration."

"I don't think he did. Since Schoenberg lived, so to speak, in a completely different world, it is very unlikely that he heard any Humperdinck except perhaps *Hänsel und Gretel*... The idea of the "melodrama," as it was called, was generally known . . . but the way Schoenberg used it was certainly quite new . . ."



Gurre-Lieder, Part III. 1912 autograph study score



Gurre-Lieder, Part III. 1913 Piano/Vocal Score, transcribed by Alban Berg





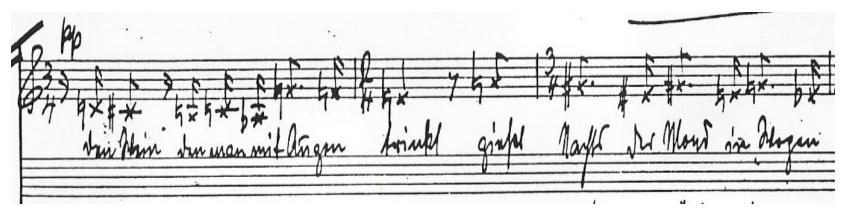
"Regarding the melodramas in the *Gurre-Lieder*: the pitch notation is certainly not to be taken as seriously as in the *Pierrot* melodramas. The result here should by no

means be such a songlike *Sprechmelodie* as in the latter ... [There is] no [need to keep the] ... interval proportions!"

Berg – Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters (New York: Norton, 1987), 143.



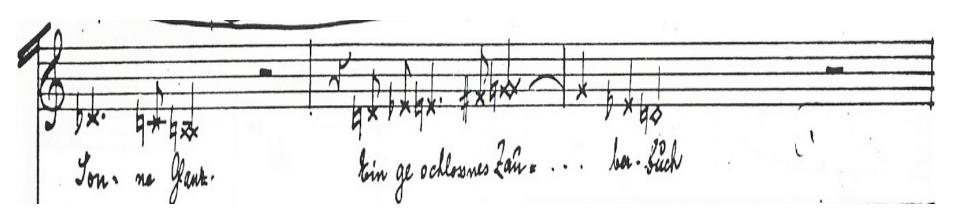
Pierrot lunaire, "Mondestrunken," mm. 23-25. Fair Copy. Used by permission, The Robert Owen Lehman Collection, on deposit at The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



Pierrot lunaire, "Mondestrunken," mm. 23-25. Published score



Pierrot lunaire, "Nacht," m. 6-8. Used by permission, The Robert Owen Lehman Collection, on deposit at The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



What did Schoenberg want?

- Preface to Pierrot lunaire
- Score and Recordings (over 36 recordings, including two conducted by Schoenberg)
- Letters, essays and interviews
- "Expert" assessment (Reinhold Brinkmann, Erwin Stein, Joan Allen Smith, Jonathan Dunsby)



Pierrot lunaire Preface:

The melody given in the *Sprechstimme* by means of notes is not intended for singing (except for specially marked isolated exceptions). The task of the performer is to transform it into a speech-melody, taking into account the given pitch. This is achieved by:

- I. Maintaining the rhythm as accurately as if one were singing, i.e. with no more freedom than would be allowed with a singing melody;
- II. Becoming acutely aware of the difference between singing tone and speaking tone . . . it must never be reminiscent of singing . . .



Sentence 1:

The melody given in the *Sprechstimme* by means of notes is not intended for singing (except for specially marked isolated exceptions).

Sentence 2:

The task of the performer is to transform it into a speech-melody, taking into account the given pitch.

There was ...

"a conflict, from the very beginning, in Schoenberg's mind between a desire for speech character and another, seemingly incompatible desire for an exact rendering of the notes."



Pierrot lunaire, "Rote Messe," mm. 24-25



Recordings

- •Ilona Steingruber-Wildgans, Reciter; Vladimir Golschmann, Conductor (1961) very little vibrato, but also no rising/falling from pitch
- •Mary Thomas, Reciter; David Atherton, Conductor (1973) lots of rising and falling, but also lots of vibrato

Most "Sung"

•Yvonne Minton, Reciter; Pierre Boulez, Conductor (1977) – lots of vibrato on *Sprech* passages; straight tone on "gesungen" passages; most classically sung recording in discography

Most "Spoken"

•Helga Pilarczyk, Reciter; Pierre Boulez, Conductor (1961) – very narrow range; little dramatic or dynamic contrast

Most "Authentic/Original"

•Erika Stiedry-Wagner, Reciter; Arnold Schoenberg, Conductor (1940) – very speech-like; not as accurate in regard to pitch or "interval integrity"; not as wide-ranging as other recordings

Most "Bizarre and Crazy"

•Barbara Sukowa, Reciter; Reinbert de Leeuw, Conductor (1988) – outrageous and "over-the-top"; incredibly "inaccurate"; affected; *very* exciting!

Most "Textbook"

•Christine Schäfer, Reciter; Pierre Boulez, Conductor (1997) – very well-performed; pitch and/or interval-accurate; sliding between pitches; vibrato on *gesungen* pitches – "straight" tone on *Sprechstimme* pitches; effective; dramatic but not melodramatic