To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Clara S. Schauman entitled "Premiering *Pierrot lunaire*, from Berlin to New York: Reception, Criticism, and Modernism." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Nasser Al-Taee, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Rachel Golden Carlson

Mark Zelmanovich

Accepted for the Council:

Anne Mayhew

Vice Chancellor and
Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

PREMIERING *PIERROT LUNAIRE*, FROM BERLIN TO NEW YORK:

Reception, Criticism, and Modernism

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Music Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Clara S. Schauman
August 2006

ABSTRACT

The relationship between a composer, his critics, and the public, presents a series of interactions through which to study the historical and artistic culture of a given society and its citizens. This study examines the Berlin (1912) and the New York (1923) premieres of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* in order to demonstrate the importance of cultural context in forming critical reaction. I find that the cultural modernism and the relevance of the *commedia dell'arte* in Berlin led to an overall positive audience reaction despite Schoenberg's unfamiliar compositional idiom. In contrast, the different cultural emphases in New York and the influence of the romantic tradition on New York audiences' and critics' perceptions of musical beauty made it much harder for them to accept *Pierrot*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	1
I.	ARNOLD SCHOENBERG in EUROPE	14
II.	EUROPEAN MODERNISM	30
III.	NEW YORK MODERNISM	44
IV.	THE CRITICS	61
V.	EXPLANATIONS and INTERPRETATIONS	81
VI.	THE CANONIZING of *PIERROT*?	90
	CONCLUSION	99
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	104
	VITA	114

INTRODUCTION

"…Whether I am really so unacceptable to the public as the expert judges always assert, and whether it is really so scared of my music—that often seems to me highly doubtful."

-- Arnold Schoenberg[1]

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) maintained that the critical reception of his music was not a valid indicator of his position in the eye of the public who attended his concerts. Critical reaction to and assessment of Schoenberg has been instrumental, however, in positioning the composer as an incomprehensible modernist in the minds of those mid- and late-twentieth century concertgoers who may never have heard his works.

In order to understand how Schoenberg's current reputation formed in America, this thesis examines the New York premiere of one of Schoenberg's most controversial works, *Pierrot lunaire*.[2] This analysis contrasts the New York premiere with the Berlin premiere of 1912 and the cultural scene of New York with that of Berlin during the same period. Through examinations of the early critical opinions published in New York newspapers immediately following the premiere in 1923, and by a survey of several critical and musical opinions on the direction of modern music since that date, I analyze the relationship between a composer and his critics, and the role that that early relationship played in influencing later critical opinions. Throughout, I find that the cultural context in which Schoenberg's *Pierrot* was performed influenced the ability (or inability) of the audience (both public and critical) to accept *Pierrot* as a representation of its culture and a continuation of the Western classical tradition.

Scope of This Study

For the purposes of this study, I consider three cities and their cultural/ critical appraisals of Schoenberg. The first is Vienna, where Schoenberg spent the early years of his life, and where he met the artists and musicians whose ideas influenced his own compositions. Despite a few successful performances early in his career, Schoenberg's explorations of atonality and the limits

[1] Arnold Schoenberg, "My Public," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 97.

[2] Hereafter, references to *Pierrot lunaire* are shortened to *Pierrot* (italics indicate the composition, as opposed to general reference to the Pierrot figure in other contexts).

of the romantic idiom met with a hostile reception in Vienna and led to his increasing isolation. In the years immediately preceding Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, Viennese audiences, both critical and public, turned away from Schoenberg and disapproved of his challenges to their classical tradition.

In response, Schoenberg left Vienna, moving to the second city, Berlin. Although the music critics in Berlin also disapproved of Schoenberg's work, the public reaction to some of Schoenberg's works, including *Pierrot*, was positive, as audiences recognized Schoenberg's ability to depict the cultural mood of their society in the years before World War I.

The third city included in this study, New York, presents a contrast to Schoenberg's European reception. The New York premiere of *Pierrot* occurred eleven years after the Berlin premiere. Between the two, the Western countries experienced the First World War, and the shift of global influence and power from Europe to America. The New York reception of *Pierrot* presents a situation in which to understand the impact of Schoenberg's compositional style without the benefits of immediate cultural relevance such as that found in Berlin.

In addition to questions of geographical and cultural distinction between Europe and America, each society contained internal divisions, particularly the generational divide between the older and the younger critics and artists, each of whom experienced *Pierrot* differently. The harshest judgments against Schoenberg came from those critics of the older generation, whose ideas of musical beauty and harmony Schoenberg challenged. The younger generation of critics, especially in New York, accepted *Pierrot* as an important step in musical development, although they also found some of Schoenberg's techniques confusing.

The last problem addressed in this study is the relationship between critics and the public. Although the critical reaction is well-documented, the public reaction is not. I choose, therefore, to focus on the critical reactions, both in Berlin and in New York, and on a few documented examples of public response. In both Berlin and New York, critical appraisals at the premiere were harsher and more dismissive than the public response. In Berlin, the public response was so positive that the performers immediately repeated the concert. In New York, critics chastised the public for complacently applauding. Even though *Pierrot's* musical idiom was strange to New Yorkers, the popular success of the premiere caused the group presenting *Pierrot* to split over questions of an unprecedented second performance.[3]

---

[3] See Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971) and David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 669-699.

Additionally, I examine authors in successive decades of the twentieth century and their evaluations of the relationship between contemporary composers and their public. Throughout, I find that a shift in acceptance of Schoenberg (and *Pierrot*) has occurred.

Twenty-first century assessment of Schoenberg (in the general public) relies at least partially on opinions articulated first by music critics of the early twentieth century. In modern evaluations of Schoenberg and his work, the positions of the critics and the public have been reversed. Although critical opinions and reviews strongly criticized Schoenberg in the early twentieth century, reviews of contemporary performances of Schoenberg's works now treat Schoenberg as a representative of the past rather than a challenge to the future. In the public mind, however, Schoenberg's music presents a greater challenge to contemporary audiences than it did to those of the 1920s.

Despite his seeming canonization in contemporary critical writings, Schoenberg still occupies a liminal position in the modern arena of classical performance. During the concert season starting in September 2005, the New York Philharmonic offered just one chamber concert of Schoenberg's music.[4] The Boston Symphony scheduled three programs (two orchestral and one chamber), including one performance of *Pierrot*.[5] The Chicago Symphony scheduled two concerts of Schoenberg's works.[6] Ironically, in Los Angeles, where Schoenberg spent the latter part of his life, the Los Angeles Philharmonic had no performances of his compositions scheduled.[7] In Europe, the Berlin Philharmonic listed four concerts during which Schoenberg's music would be performed.[8] Vienna offered one.[9] The London Symphony scheduled only a chamber performance (of *Pierrot*).[10] At a time when American orchestras habitually offer premieres of newly commissioned works and schedule regular performances of Elliott Carter, Béla Bartók, Alban Berg, Richard Strauss, Alfred Schnittke, et al, performances of Schoenberg's

---

[4] See season calendar for the New York Philharmonic at www.nyphilharmonic.com.

[5] See season calendar for the Boston Symphony Orchestra at www.bso.org.

[6] See season calendar for the Chicago Symphony at www.cso.org.

[7] See season calendar for the Los Angeles Philharmonic at www.laphil.org.

[8] See season calendar for the Berlin Philharmonic at www.berliner-philharmoniker.de.

[9] See season calendar for the Vienna Philharmonic at www.wienerphilharmoniker.at.

[10] See season calendar for the London Symphony Orchestra at www.lso.co.uk.

music are either rare or nonexistent.[11] While modern criticism has canonized *Pierrot*, public reaction to Schoenberg's music is more hesitant today than it was in the 1920s.

Definitions of Terminology

In the following paragraphs, I discuss the central terms of this thesis: criticism, expressionism, atonality, the *commedia dell'arte*, and modernism. Many are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. They are mentioned here to provide background knowledge with which to approach the later discussion.

Any definition of music criticism is necessarily broad. Fred Everett Maus describes the type of journalistic criticism examined in this study as "a specialized, if highly visible, instance of a more widespread phenomenon."[12] According to Maus, criticism includes any type of discussion about music, whether between professionals or amateurs, and whether printed publicly or not. In Germany before the First World War, music criticism encompassed an argument greater than simple disagreements over particular musical styles or composers. Particularly in Vienna and Berlin

> critics engaged in intra-city polemics with political dimensions: those writing for liberal and leftist newspapers (many of them Jews) generally sympathized with new styles (although the atonal and 12-note music of the Schoenberg group presented problems for such writers as Guido Adler, [Paul] Bekker and Alfred Einstein), while critics of right-leaning newspapers opposed the musical avant garde and not infrequently supported their attacks with nationalistic arguments and anti-Semitic invective.…[13]

Any modern interpretation of criticism of Arnold Schoenberg in Vienna and Berlin must take this political situation and the prejudices of the particular critics into consideration. Even Bekker, whose numerous articles and books on his contemporary musical scene led him to

---

[11] The same searches that returned the numbers of performances of Schoenberg's works in the 2005-2006 concert season indicated the proliferation of the works of the above-mentioned composers and their prominence in modern orchestral repertoire relative to Schoenberg.

[12] Fred Everett Maus, "Criticism, §I: General issues," *Grove Music Online* ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 3, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

[13] Glenn Stanley, "Criticism, §II, 1: History to 1945: Germany and Austria," *Grove Music Online* ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 3, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

consider Schoenberg's music many times, wrote from a politically and culturally determined position.[14]

The diverse critical and public evaluations of *Pierrot* in Germany indicate the varied reactions of Berliners to their society before World War I. Critical opinions, focusing on the perceived decline in musical standards and lamenting the abandonment of the romantic idiom, reflected a sense of dismay at the current political and social condition of Europe and the perceived decadence in the arts. Public opinion focused instead on the ability of works including *Pierrot* to represent the feeling of life during those early years of the twentieth century.[15]

In New York, music critics were divided more by generational experience than by intra-city politics. Critics of the older generation, who occupied positions of influence, publishing their opinions in the city's major newspapers, disapproved of the new compositional idiom used by composers of Schoenberg's circle. Their reluctance to accept what Schoenberg believed was an inevitable course of musical change was based in their own experience of classical music and belief that only harmonically traditional music could be truly expressive and beautiful. The elder generation maintained this position despite trips to the European capitals and exposure to the European avant-garde.

Critics of the younger generation, exposed to the directions of thought and artistic activity in Europe, embraced the idea of necessary change. Thus, the American critic Paul Rosenfeld, whose opinions of Schoenberg are discussed more in chapter IV, became convinced of the necessity of a specifically American music and of an American attitude toward the arts after he traveled to Europe and became aware of the degree to which national identity formed the artistic ideals of the European musicians and artists. Returning to America, Rosenfeld supported the young generation of American composers even as he strove to explain their European contemporaries to the public.

For this study, I focus on the criticism of published New York critics whose newspaper articles circulated among the population of the city. Most important to this study are the critical opinions published directly following the New York premiere of *Pierrot* and the degree to which

---

[14] Bekker's critical opinions are discussed more fully in Chapter V.

[15] Public opinion is necessarily hard to gauge, and even harder to document at a distance of nearly 100 years. Comments on the nature of public opinion presented here should be seen as an attempt to assess a particular historical period through extant comments and descriptions. Of course the particular reactions of audience members at any premiere or performance would have been as diverse and as numerous as the number of people in the audience. My generalizations are based on the few documented instances of public reaction I have found, and should be read with awareness of their limitations.

the early critical reception influenced (if measurable) public opinions of Schoenberg and his music. I define early critical reception as the opinions expressed in the major newspapers of New York by the leading music critics from 1900 to 1930. These critics attended the premiere of *Pierrot* in 1923. Their opinions of *Pierrot* were based both on the familiar historical and musical context of New York, about which they had written during the decades preceding the premiere, and on personal appraisals of Schoenberg's work. An analysis of the critical opinions of the premiere of *Pierrot*, therefore, offers the means to understand the reaction to a specific composer, to one of his compositions, and the context in which those opinions arose.

Two concepts central to understanding *Pierrot* are expressionism and atonality. According to David Fanning, "In a narrow sense Expressionism in music embraces most of Schoenberg's post-tonal, pre-12-note output—that of his 'free atonal' period, roughly from 1908 to 1921."[16] However, the term is also used to denote music of other composers from the same period which shares the atonal aesthetic including "Mahler, Skryabin, Hauer, Stravinsky, Szymanowski, Bartók, Hindemith, Ives, Krenek and others."[17] The ideals of expressionism emphasized the purely expressive nature of music, and its ability to transcend convention and tradition in portraying "the outer manifestation of inner suffering."[18] The suffering of the artist and the pure expression of his deepest feelings were ideals also present in the traditions of late romanticism. Expressionism differs from romanticism in the degree to which composers broke previous boundaries and cast aside the previously accepted limits of tonality and harmony as irrelevant to the expression of inner truth.

Atonality proved central to the realization of expressionist aims at the turn of the century. Paul Lansky describes atonality as the middle ground between tonality and serialism, and finds it, "a term that may be used in three senses: first, to describe all music which is not tonal; second, to describe all music which is neither tonal nor serial; and third, to describe specifically the post-tonal and pre-12-note music of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg."[19] Various authors, including Schoenberg himself, have debated the usefulness of the term as a descriptor of a single style.

---

[16] David Fanning, "Expressionism," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.09141.1>

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Paul Lansky, George Perle, and Dave Headlam, "Atonality," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.47354#music.47354>

However, atonality remains in use in contemporary scholarship to denote a particular style of musical composition without strict tonal harmonies prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century.

The *commedia dell'arte* or *commedia* originally provided a contrast to the *commedia erudita*, or literary comedy. The *commedia dell'arte* was part of the popular tradition, and could be performed by improvising amateurs.[20] After 1890, the *commedia* became more than popular entertainment. According to Martin Green and John Swan, "Pierrot and Harlequin suddenly leaped to life in everyone's minds, colors glowing, limbs moving, not as history but as archetypes: forms both personal and impersonal that transcend psychology and history and all the categories of realism—the archetypes of art."[21]

The story of Pierrot and Harleqin is that of two clowns, each of whom loves another, Columbine. To Jonathan Dunsby, the clowns represent the Western archetype of the eternal triangle. Additionally, the "commedia characters are themselves individual representations of central human caricatures."[22] To the European public in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the *commedia* clowns represented the essential mood of the age. Composers and artists adopted the *commedia* characters to represent both their own society in general, and the disconnected state of the artist in particular.[23]

According to Martin Green and John Swan, the *commedia dell'arte* occupied a prominent position in European cultural circles in the decades from 1890 to 1930. Their study traces the spread of the *commedia* westward from France, where it flourished before the turn of the century. The *commedia* reached Germany (around 1900), Austria (around 1906), England (in the years after the First World War), and in America (in the late-1920s).[24] During this period

> the commedia turned up everywhere, fertilizing the minds of composers, painters, novelists, poets, in all the countries of the West. And this is all the more striking because so much in the modernist movement was highbrow, revolutionary, spiritually ambitious, while the commedia has always been lowbrow popular entertainment.[25]

---

[20] Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 4.

[21] Ibid., 7.

[22] Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 7.

[23] Ibid., 8.

[24] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot,* 25-53.

[25] Ibid., 1.

Unlike the traditional, lowbrow Pierrot character of the *commedia*, Schoenberg's use of the *commedia* imagery in *Pierrot* represented the high tradition of art music as well as part of the counterculture trend "sworn to take seriously whatever society did not."[26] In order to accommodate the low art forms to the high expression, artists used "parody, irony, and fragmentation."[27]

Green and Swan trace the beginning of the modern expression of the *commedia dell'arte* to France and Germany in the decades before World War I. The *commedia dell'arte* characters as a common artistic motif arrived in New York only after the War, and were not widely prevalent until the mid-1920s.[28] Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, representative of a common theme in Western Europe in the decades before the War, helped to introduce American audiences to the *commedia dell'arte*.

The *commedia dell'arte* was just one element of European modernism, a movement embraced and furthered by the artists, musicians, architects, and writers of the years between 1890 and 1930. Modernism renounced nineteenth-century romanticism, emphasizing the need for a new approach to questions of industrialization and progress. Mechanization and industrialization, the impulses that had brought the Western countries into the modern era, were changing the world so quickly that it seemed necessary to create an entirely new way of looking at that world. This need was expressed in the psychological writings of Sigmund Freud, in reactions to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the paintings of Vasily Kandinsky, and the music of Schoenberg (to name only a few).[29]

In artistic areas, European modernism rejected nineteenth-century certainty and assurance in an attempt to explain their "modern experience (experience felt to be unlike that of the past) … which rebelled against social norms and norm-subordinated art."[30] In this search, artists created works that, although their authors considered them extensions of existing trends in art, abandoned

---

[26] Ibid., 14.

[27] Ibid., 16.

[28] Ibid., 25-53.

[29] See Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 7 and William Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997).

[30] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 7.

the traditional artistic position as the interpreters and representatives of bourgeois culture and ideas. The tragic clown, Pierrot, traditionally a lowbrow figure, was adopted by modernists and became central to the expression of modernism's struggle to redefine the boundaries of art. The juxtaposition of laughter and tears in the *commedia* are emblematic of the conflicts within modernism in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Methodology

In order to analyze the impact of musical modernism as it appears in Schoenberg's *Pierrot* on audiences and critics in Berlin and New York, I have drawn primarily on the writings of music critics in those two cities whose work appeared in the major newspapers in circulation in the decades surrounding the Berlin and New York premieres. Although the opinions of some of the New York critics have been addressed,[31] to my knowledge, they have not been compared to the German critical opinions. Additionally, neither the German nor the American critical opinions have been thoroughly explored in the context of musical modernism. This study combines cultural history and musical opinion in order to analyze the context in which *Pierrot* was heard and evaluated.

In analyzing the critical reception of *Pierrot* in Berlin, I examined cultural and historical studies which provided insight into the relationship between critics and their ideological associations.[32] Additionally, I examined German authors' retrospective evaluations of *Pierrot* and of Schoenberg's impact on the German musical tradition.[33]

I determined the influence of the American critics and their dominance of New York's classical musical life in the 1920s based on the number of articles each published as compared to other musical commentators in a similar period (1900-1925). Additionally, sources such as David Metzer's "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire'"[34] and Oscar Thompson's "An

[31] See David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 669-699.

[32] See, for example, Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971).

[33] See, for example, Paul Bekker, *Kritische Zeitbilder* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921).

[34] David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 669-699.

American School of Criticism"[35] emphasized the importance of these critics' opinions in shaping New York's musical life in the decades surrounding World War I.

In order to explain the differences in reception both between cultures and between generations within each culture, I draw on Èmile Durkheim's sociological theory of functionalism (adopted for musical examinations by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown).[36] Functionalism maintains that certain functions of society, including music, contribute to the maintenance of the social structure. Music composed in a particular culture represents that culture to those both inside and outside the cultural boundaries. Yet for those inside the culture, that music affirms their experience and contributes to the structure of the society. For those outside the music's original culture, the same music will seem less immediate, and harder to understand, because the cultural relevance is lacking.[37] Functionalism, therefore, presents a culturally and socially determined explanation for the differences in *Pierrot's* reception in Berlin and New York.

A similar theory, cultural delay, is offered as a contrast to functionalism. Cultural delay maintains that the transfer of ideas from Europe to America was necessarily halted during the years of the First World War. Because of the lack of communication, German and American cultural ideals developed along different paths in the years between the two premieres of *Pierrot.* American audiences' experience of musical modernism, which was imported in large part from Europe after the War, lagged behind the German explorations of atonality and expressionism. Inevitably, the American response to *Pierrot* reflected the Americans' lack of familiarity with the *commedia* and with the idiom of musical modernism already outdated in Germany by the end of the War.[38]

---

[35] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428-439.

[36] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On the Concept of Function in Social Science," *American Anthropologist* 37 (1935): 394-402.

[37] For a further discussion of functionalism, see Chapter V.

[38] Again, please see Chapter V for further explanations.

Literature Review

Comparatively few studies of Schoenberg's reception in the early decades of the twentieth century exist. Jonathan Dunsby describes Schoenberg's *Pierrot* as part of a European tradition of the 'commedia cult' readily understood by the Germanic audiences who first heard the work. Accordingly, the positive European reaction indicated cultural understanding rather than purely musical appreciation.[39] In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive German reception of *Pierrot*, American audiences and critics expressed widely varied opinions. The different cultural and societal experiences of the years surrounding World War I in Europe and America might explain this difference.

Instead of exploring Germanic ideas of musical modernism, American society of the early twentieth century shared the cultural habits of Edwardian England. David Metzer's analysis[40] of the New York premiere describes New York in the 1920s as an Edwardian society with social and cultural ideas still strongly tied to the influence of England. He believes that *Pierrot*, as an expression of modernism, challenged New Yorkers' "conception of inviolable truths"[41] and presented them with a frightening moral ambivalence. According to Metzer, 'polite' New York society was not equipped for the advent of the *commedia dell'arte* and related European modernism.

American modernism flourished in the decade after the First World War, and was most prevalent in literature rather than in music or art. Historical studies of New York in the first decades of the twentieth century by Christine Stansell, Ann Douglas, and others describe New York's artistic communities as embracing the modern in literature, painting, and photography.[42] The ideal of free exploration in all areas of life formed the center of the Greenwich Village artists' works. Harlem, the center of the Jazz Age, was the strongest influence on New York musical life. Musical modernism, common in Schoenberg's Vienna of 1910, was not a part of the native New York experience. Importation of musical modernism and performances of modernist

---

[39] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 6-9.

[40] David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 669-699.

[41] Ibid., 675.

[42] See Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000) and Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996).

compositions lagged behind the exploration in other artistic areas. Neither Stansell nor Douglas discusses classical music specifically, or the European influence on American musical culture.

Bridging this gap, Oscar Thompson describes the "American School of Critics" active in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Thompson's study focuses on the essentially American nature of these critics, and their detachment from the European culture they observed. He does not discuss a specific work or a specific set of critical responses to any one work.[43] While both Metzer and Thompson discuss the positions of the American critics as mentors of their society, neither examines the critics' opinions of *Pierrot* in light of the more extensive writings of those critics on questions of musical beauty and ideals.

Additional studies by Lawrence H. Levine and Joseph Horowitz describe aspects of American musical culture, primarily in the nineteenth century.[44] These studies are broad and mainly present reactions to multiple situations rather than to a single performance of a specific work. William Everdell discusses the emergence of modernism in Europe and America as a broad phenomenon, encompassing many artists and composers.[45]

Finally, numerous biographies and studies of Schoenberg's life and his specific compositions describe the details of his conception and composition of *Pierrot* and the use of atonality and expressionism to depict the mood of the *commedia*. Willi Reich describes *Pierrot's* reception in Berlin and the subsequent tour of European cities, but does not mention New York.[46]

Because none of the works mentioned above combines all of the elements of this study, a synthesis of extant research and of published critical opinions such as that offered here facilitates the understanding of the reception of one of Schoenberg's most important compositions on two continents.

---

[43] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428-439.

[44] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/ Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, M.A.: 1988) and Joseph Horowitz, "Finding a 'Real Self': American Women and the Wagner Cult of the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Summer, 1994), 189-205.

[45] William Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997).

[46] Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971).

Overview of Contents and Organization

The following chapters explore European and American modernism in greater detail, using Schoenberg's *Pierrot* as an example of cultural experience shaping public perception and reaction. Central questions of importance to this study include: What was Schoenberg's background before *Pierrot*? How were his earlier works received? What compositional innovations did *Pierrot* present that were formerly unknown or would have been confusing to an audience regardless of critical reaction? What importance did Schoenberg give to *Pierrot*, and what reaction did he anticipate? Did the European reception at the Berlin premiere in 1912 meet his expectations, and how did the critics at that performance react?

The retired American critic James Huneker, formerly of the *New York Times*, attended the Berlin premiere of *Pierrot*, and wrote an article for the *Times* filled with dismay and dislike of Schoenberg's innovations.[47] Might this review have prejudiced New York audiences (or at least Huneker's fellow critics) toward the work in some way? What were the circumstances surrounding the New York premiere of *Pierrot*? What was the critical reaction? What was the public reaction? How can we explain the differences in reception in Berlin and New York?

Finally, can we explain the common perception of Schoenberg as a "difficult" composer based on his early reception in New York? Can our modern experience be linked to the early critics whose reviews dismissed *Pierrot* as incomprehensible? What is the relationship between composer, critic, and public?

In order to answer the above questions, this study places Schoenberg in his historical and musical context during the first years of the twentieth century. It examines the European premiere of his *Pierrot* in 1912, focusing on the critical reaction and subsequent performances and discusses New York society in the decade surrounding the American premiere of *Pierrot*. Based on the above, it analyzes the critical reaction in New York in 1923, eleven years after the European premiere and compares the different reactions based on cultural differences between Europe and the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century. Consequently, this study demonstrates the importance of cultural context in forming critical reaction, the importance of critical reaction in forming public opinion of Schoenberg's music in Europe and in America, and the lasting impression of those early opinions.

---

[47] James Huneker, "Schoenberg, Musical Anarchist Who Has Upset Europe," *New York Times*, January 1, 1913, www.proquest.com.

I. ARNOLD SCHOENBERG in EUROPE

"…*Pierrot* did not spring unexpectedly from or into a cultural vacuum. Nothing ever does…"

--Jonathan Dunsby[1]

Introduction

The cultural and musical differences between Western Europe and America in the first decades of the twentieth century determined the reception of Schoenberg's *Pierrot*. Placing the compositional direction chosen by Schoenberg within the larger movement of European modernism explains why German audiences accepted Schoenberg's *Pierrot* as a relevant representation of their cultural experience even though it presented significant compositional innovations. Contrary to many of Schoenberg's earlier works, which met with public hostility and incomprehension in both Vienna and Berlin, *Pierrot* received a favorable public reception at the Berlin premiere. Schoenberg's choice of culturally relevant poems representing a popular trend in artistic expression led to public acceptance of *Pierrot* despite Schoenberg's controversial compositional idiom. *Pierrot* therefore represents a shift in German public opinion of Schoenberg's works, made possible through Schoenberg's own acceptance of (and use of) the *commedia dell'arte* story, a familiar cultural symbol.

Cultural relevance and comprehensibility, while increasing public approval, do not guarantee critical endorsement. In the case of composers such as Schoenberg, whose music included significant changes to and extensions of the familiar tonal system, critics' disdain for atonality and other compositional devices colored critical appraisals. The Berlin premiere of *Pierrot* demonstrates the differences in public and critical reception. Although the pubic accepted *Pierrot* despite its compositional idiom, the critics' analyses focused on the atonality of *Pierrot* and deemed the work incomprehensible.

This chapter focuses on Schoenberg's early musical history including his compositional innovations and the particular style of *Pierrot*, which has been defined variously as "atonality" and "expressionism," neither of which was favored by Schoenberg as a descriptor. Schoenberg's *Pierrot* is also considered in terms of cultural relevance to European audiences at the Berlin premiere in 1912. Representative of the European experience during the early twentieth century, Schoenberg's *Pierrot* was praised by the public even though the older critics dismissed Schoenberg's compositional techniques.

---

[1] Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 2.

Early Years and Compositions before *Pierrot lunaire*

Schoenberg was primarily a self-taught composer and musician.[2] Although he showed an early interest in and talent for music, any course of conservatory study was impossible after the death of his father, when financial circumstances compelled him to take a job working as a clerk in a private bank in order to support the family. While working in the bank, Schoenberg continued his involvement in amateur ensembles and formed a circle of musical acquaintances in Vienna including David Josef Bach (1874-1947), Oskar Adler (1875-1955), and Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871-1942). In an essay written near the end of his life, in 1949, Schoenberg described his early compositions as having been:

> …no more than imitations of such music as I had been able to become acquainted with—violin duets and duet-arrangements of operas and the repertory of military bands that played in public parks. One must not forget that at this time printed music was extremely expensive, that there were not yet records or radios, and that Vienna had only one opera theatre and one yearly cycle of eight Philharmonic concerts.[3]

By his own admission, Schoenberg began his musical education through conversations with his contemporaries rather than through formal instruction. With the assistance and encouragement of his friends, Schoenberg began to play the classical chamber music repertory and to compose his own string quartets. According to Oliver Neighbor, "Adler helped him to educate his ear through playing, and taught him some elementary harmony. For the musical forms he turned to articles in a popular encyclopedia."[4] Schoenberg's exposure to concerts and to the most influential musicians in Vienna near the turn of the century was limited. His distrust of the professional critics and musicians, expressed in numerous articles and reminiscences on the public response to his music, may be partly accounted for by the circles in which he spent these early years.

Only after Schoenberg met Bach, Adler, and Zemlinsky when he was seventeen "did

---

[2] The information in this paragraph is taken primarily from Oliver Neighbor, Paul Griffiths, and George Perle, *The New Grove Second Viennese School: Schoenberg, Webern, Berg* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983).

[3] Arnold Schoenberg, "My Evolution," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 79.

[4] Oliver Neighbor, "Schoenberg, Arnold," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.25024.1>

[his] musical and literary education start."[5] Once started, however, Schoenberg was quick to develop his own style, based primarily on the styles of Brahms and Wagner, and his understanding of counterpoint and compositional techniques. In 1898, Schoenberg experienced his first success, when his String Quartet in D major was performed at the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein (Vienna Composers' Association). Despite the success, Schoenberg's subsequent compositions were turned down by the Verein, including his *Verklärte Nacht* (op. 4) in 1899. In December 1900

> there were protests when songs from opp. 1-3 were sung in public…. From that time on… the scandal never stopped. In these early works he had already taken the first steps in the development of chromaticism that was to lead him to abandon triadic harmony and tonality itself by 1908, and each stage in his progress aroused fresh hostility.[6]

During the early years in Vienna, Schoenberg's compositional style and his reliance on late romantic models demonstrated Zemlinsky's influence. Willi Reich describes the style of *Verklärte Nacht*, the first performance of which was given in 1903, as "reminiscent of late Wagner… but in its internal structure the influence of Brahms is stronger than any other."[7] In his 1949 essay, "My Evolution," Schoenberg cited Brahms as his inspiration for the

> technique of developing variation [used in *Verklärte Nacht*]…[and its] imparity of measures…. But the treatment of the instruments, the manner of composition, and much of the sonority were strictly Wagnerian. I think there were also some Schoenbergian elements to be found in the length of some of the melodies, in the sonority, in contrapuntal and motival combinations, and in the semicontrapuntal movement of the harmony and its basses against the melody. Finally, there were some passages of unfixed tonality which may be considered premonitions of the future.[8]

Written decades after the compositional innovations it describes, Schoenberg's appraisal is not necessarily representative of his intentions in 1899, but it does show his own awareness of his compositional influences and his reference to the German tradition.

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 3-5.

[7] Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971), 7.

[8] Schoenberg, "My Evolution," in *Style and Idea*, 80-81.

Throughout his career, Schoenberg maintained that his music was a natural outcome of the German tradition of the nineteenth century. In 1931, he described his teachers as "primarily Bach and Mozart, and secondarily Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner."[9] Schoenberg's subsequent departures from the models of the past, while seeming complex and irrational to many members of the public and the critical audience, were based in his understanding of and appreciation for the Germanic tradition. Jim Samson attributes Schoenberg's "rejection of tonality"[10] to "a desire to build upon and extend [the achievements of his nineteenth-century predecessors] without falling into facile imitation of them."[11] Schoenberg's exploration of atonality was, as he himself might have said, "an attempt to forge a twentieth-century link in an evolutionary chain stretching back to the early German masters."[12]

Intentions aside, Schoenberg's early work was not well received in Vienna at the turn of the century. Hoping to find steady employment and greater acceptance for his work, Schoenberg moved to Berlin in December 1901. He worked for a time at the newly-opened Überbrettl cabaret, whose owner, Ernst von Wolzogen (1855-1934), strove to "use the popular mode to serious ends,"[13] in projects involving writers including Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), and others. The poet Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865-1910) described the Überbrettl activities as centered on the concept of "applied lyricism":

> I must admit that in placing our art at the service of the music-hall our intentions are entirely serious. We are firmly convinced the time has come for the whole of life to be permeated by art…. [W]e want to write poems that will not just be read amidst the bliss of solitude, but that can bear singing to a crowd hungry for entertainment.[14]

---

[9] Schoenberg, "National Music (2)," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 173.

[10] Jim Samson, *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality, 1900-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 94.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid. While contemporary scholarship rejects the idea of compositional "development" or "evolution," Schoenberg and his contemporaries used such terms frequently. I believe that such terms accurately represent the attitude prevalent at the turn of the century and in Schoenberg's own retrospective writings about his compositional direction. To Schoenberg, his use of atonality and eventually of twelve-tone composition was an inevitable development ("evolution") in the history of classical composition.

[13]Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 5.

[14] Otto Julius Bierbaum, "Introduction," in *Deutsche Chansons (Brettl-Lieder)*, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 11.

Schoenberg contributed to the effort, and one of his songs "Nachtwandler," was performed at the Überbrettl. However, neither the environment nor the work suited Schoenberg. By the summer, Schoenberg left von Wolzogen's cabaret, and turned to scoring operettas for a living. An encounter with Richard Strauss led to better circumstances and a position as a composition teacher at the Stern Conservatory. Despite this success, Schoenberg returned to Vienna in 1903.[15]

Over the course of the next decade, the Viennese cultural establishment consistently rejected Schoenberg's music. In response, Schoenberg and Zemlinsky formed the Vereinigung Schaffender Tonkünstler or Society of Creative Musicians to give performances of new compositions. According to Willi Reich, Schoenberg probably authored the circular announcing the Society's founding. The circular harshly criticized Vienna's musical life: "In Vienna's musical life, very little attention is given to the works of contemporary composers, especially Viennese ones. As a rule, new works are heard in Vienna only after doing the rounds of Germany's many musically active towns, great and small—and even then they usually meet with little interest, indeed with hostility."[16] This criticism is especially pertinent in light of the historical reception of *Pierrot lunaire*, which reached Vienna only after its premiere in Berlin and performances in several other German and Austrian cities.

In order to combat that hostility, Schoenberg continued:

> … the most pressing need, if the musical public is to establish any kind of relationship with presentday [*sic*] music, is the need for familiarity with this music's special qualities… But this will remain impossible, so long as the programmes [*sic*] of established concert-promoters continue to include the occasional new work merely as a kind of curiosity or monstrosity. These new works need an artistic setting that would deal *exclusively* with presentday [*sic*] works; *a permanent home where the new would be fostered*.[17]

During 1904-1905, its first (and only) season, the Society presented three chamber concerts and two orchestral concerts, one that included Schoenberg's symphonic poem, *Pelléas and Mélisande* (op. 5). After the Society closed, modern Viennese composers were left without

---

[15] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 5.

[16] Attributed to Schoenberg in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 16.

[17] Ibid., 17-18. Schoenberg's emphasis.

a platform for regular performances of their music and Schoenberg's new compositions "met with almost universal incomprehension."[18] By the fall of 1911, Schoenberg's position in Vienna had deteriorated despite a respectable number of students, a steady compositional output, and a temporary position at the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. He returned to Berlin.

The news of Schoenberg's return to Berlin was greeted with critical dismay. Walter Dahms, a German music critic, wrote a letter to Schoenberg that was published in the *Kleine Journal*. Dahms wrote:

> While you were still leading your existence in Vienna, and we merely saw newspaper reports about your violations of art, you could be a matter of indifference to us…. Not until certain artists, lusting after sensations, tried to emerge from their obscurity by introducing your lunatic 'art' (excuse the expression!) into Berlin too, did matters become more serious.…[19]

Dahms' letter was written out of the distress that people in Berlin "are taking your presence here as their cue to keep performing your 'compositions'…"[20] Because the concerts of new music were upsetting the status quo of reliance on Beethoven and Brahms, critical reactions like Dahms' may have been directed as much toward the performers (who used the opportunity offered by new music to draw attention to themselves) as toward Schoenberg and the style of his compositions.

As Reich demonstrates,[21] the negative critical reception notwithstanding, Schoenberg's earliest compositions were gaining broader popular acceptance in Berlin, and audiences for his new works were larger. The success of the Berlin premiere of Schoenberg's *Pierrot* in 1912 demonstrated the public's growing interest in his work. *Pierrot* was subsequently performed in 11 cities throughout Austria and Germany.[22] With the success of *Pierrot* in Germany, Schoenberg's position in German musical circles improved.

---

[18] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 7.

[19] Walter Dahms, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 63.

[20] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 7.

[21] Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 62-64.

[22] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 9.

Compositional Style: Atonality and Expressionism

Schoenberg believed that he was extending the classical tradition, not rejecting it. His music presented the future to audiences and fellow artists and if they did not give him the adulation he felt he deserved, he was sure that later generations would. Just as Wagner's use of the *leitmotiv* had once been a striking innovation (and one which Schoenberg had adopted), Schoenberg believed that inventions such as *Sprechstimme*, atonality, and (later) the twelve-tone system, while new and unfamiliar in the early 1900s, would eventually be accepted by the public as the inevitable consequences of the music of previous generations. Considering his developments an evolution rather than a revolution, Schoenberg noted that "most critics of this new style failed to investigate how far the ancient 'eternal' laws of musical aesthetics were observed, spurned, or merely adjusted to changed circumstances….This music was distinctly a product of evolution, and no more revolutionary than any other development in the history of music."[23]

In many of his retrospective writings included in *Style and Idea*, Schoenberg described himself as a disciple of Mozart and Brahms, listing the characteristic traits he had learned from each. Schoenberg believed that his own compositional originality came from his ability to "[imitate] everything I saw that was good"[24] and to extend that material until "it led me to something new." Convinced that his work would eventually be recognized as linking the past to his own innovations, Schoenberg "venture[d] to credit [himself] with having written truly new music which, being based on tradition, is destined to become tradition."

As with any form of artistic expression, atonality derived its relevance from its ability to reflect the historical situation in which it arose. Retrospectively, Schoenberg claimed that his compositional innovations in the first years of the twentieth century had been a form of musical evolution[25] and an expansion of nineteenth century traditions.[26] Bryan Simms agrees that, "the birth of atonality resulted from a deeply rooted evolution in musical structure and means of

---

[23] Schoenberg, "My Evolution," in *Style and Idea*, 86.

[24] This quotation as well as the following two in this paragraph are taken from Schoenberg, "National Music (2)," in *Style and Idea*, 174.

[25] For an explanation of this term, please see footnote 12 in this chapter.

[26] See Schoenberg, "My Evolution," in *Style and Idea*.

expression."[27]

In contrast to Schoenberg's professions of continuity, Ethan Haimo believes that "atonality was not the ineluctable consequence of the development of musical style, not an inescapable historical necessity….[I]t is by no means certain that, without Arnold Schoenberg, we would have seen the emergence of music that we would define as atonal."[28] The philosopher Theodor Adorno described atonality as a consequence of the European experience of modernism, calling it the first true "new music," which "breaks from the continuity of musical development. It is shockingly alienated from [normal] musical speech, and it declares war upon the dispassionate, hedonistic popular taste."[29]

Schoenberg's explorations of atonality began around 1908. Bryan Simms describes Schoenberg's atonal style as "an outgrowth of the post-Brahmsian and post-Wagnerian musical languages that Schoenberg had cultivated earlier, although its differences from those idioms were so pronounced that they would soon isolate him from the leading German composers—Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Max Reger, and even his teacher, Alexander Zemlinsky."[30] Schoenberg believed that 'atonality' was an incorrect description of his new style. Instead, he said that he had "renounced a tonal centre."[31] In the following lines, often quoted, he explained this renunciation:

> [T]he key is presented distinctly at all the main dividing-points of formal organization. Yet the overwhelming multitude of dissonances cannot be counterbalanced any longer by occasional returns to such tonal triads as represent a key. It seemed inadequate to force a movement into the Procrustean bed of a tonality without supporting it by harmonic progressions that pertain to it. This dilemma was my concern, and it should have occupied the minds of all my contemporaries also. That I was the first to venture the decisive step will not be considered universally a merit—a fact I regret but have to ignore.[32]

---

[27] Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 7.

[28] Ethain Haimo, "Schoenberg and the Origins of Atonality," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), 71.

[29] Theodor Adorno, "Neue Musik," quoted in Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908-1923*, 4.

[30] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 3.

[31] Schoenberg, "My Evolution," in *Style and Idea*, 86.

[32] Ibid.

The seeming artificiality of "forcing" a movement into patterns of tonality convinced Schoenberg that his new direction was right. However, he realized that it required explanation for an audience accustomed to classical tonality. To explain, he listed the other structural features of music that created coherence in classical compositions—"rhythms, motifs, phrases, and the constant reference of all melodic and harmonic features to the centre of gravitation—the tonic. Renouncement of the unifying power of the tonic still leaves all the other factors in operation."[33] Therefore, Schoenberg believed that his atonal works should be as comprehensible as the works of Mozart and Brahms, with a slightly different emphasis.

The combination of atonality and expressionism offered composers an outlet for unrestrained communication of those emotions restrained by the rational, classic framework. David Fanning describes Schoenberg's "free atonal" music in the years between 1908 and 1921 as "'pure' Expressionism [that] communicates as a kind of psychogram; its musical language takes Wagner's chromatic melos and harmony as its starting-point … but largely avoids cadence, repetition, sequence, balanced phrases and reference to formal or procedural models."[34] To Fanning, expressionism represents, "the outer manifestation of inner suffering…. Essential to the artistic projection of such experience was the shunning of inherited conventions as false comforters."[35]

Even in the late Romantic music of the nineteenth century, composers approached the emotional state of expressionism. According to Fanning, the border between the nineteenth century "extensions of tradition and [the twentieth century] destruction [of that tradition] can never be defined."[36] Expressionist compositions including *Pierrot* extended the nineteenth century tradition in which emotion in music portrayed the inner experience of the composer. Expressionist compositions used techniques including atonality, increased chromaticism, and, after Schoenberg, *Sprechstimme* to intensify the portrayal of their inner worlds.[37]

---

[33] Ibid., 87.

[34] David Fanning, "Expressionism," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] The expressionist movement encompassed more than just music. Artists, poets, writers, architects, and others embraced expressionism as they explored beyond the emotional boundaries of their societies. For more on expressionism in the other arts, see, for example William Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997).

Fanning believes that *Pierrot* pointed towards the 12-tone system that Schoenberg would develop out of his expressionist works. Having realized the need for a new overarching system

> Schoenberg's quest was increasingly for a musical language that would re-establish elements of comprehensibility to replace the abandoned props of tonality. *Pierrot* had already combined examples of classically expressionist eruptive anarchy (no.14) with pieces whose expressionist gestures concealed tightly controlled motivic proliferation (nos. 8, 17 and 18), and thereby pointed forward to 12-note technique.[38]

In composing *Pierrot*, Schoenberg used the expressionist idiom in combination with atonality, structuring both around the text of the poems. The texts provided the framework for Schoenberg's musical explorations. *Pierrot* both enabled Schoenberg to explore the limits of unstructured atonality and demonstrated the necessity of some organizing principle. In Schoenberg's later compositions, the 12-tone system would provide the structure that the poems provided in *Pierrot*.

Pierrot lunaire

Pierrot lunaire comprises a cycle of twenty-one compositions using the texts of poems originally by the French author Albert Giraud (1860-1929). Giraud's original cycle of fifty poems, written in 1884, were, as Jonathan Dunsby writes, "translated into German, and considerably improved, by Otto Erich Hartleben."[39] Schoenberg used the 1911 edition of Hartleben's translation, choosing those for *Pierrot* partly in consultation with Albertine Zehme, who had commissioned the work.

Schoenberg's decision to use what he called "Three times Seven Poems" came partly from his belief in the power of numbers and in three and seven as "numbers of mystical significance."[40] The three sets of seven poems also present a single narrative structure, "from lightness, to darkness, to death."[41] This structure was originally chosen by Zehme for her own

---

[38] Fanning, "Expressionism," *Grove Music Online*.

[39] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 21. Dunsby also gives the full text of each poem in Hartleben's German and in English translation.

[40] Ibid., 22.

[41] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 125.

cycle of recitations (although her choice of poems was slightly different).[42] Schoenberg found Zehme's progression relevant to the nature of the poems themselves and pertinent as a metaphorical description of his own position. Simms describes Schoenberg's *Pierrot* as "a personalized narrative of the plight of the artist in society."[43]

The *commedia* clown Pierrot and his companions, Columbine and Harlequin, captured the imagination of many artists and musicians between 1890 and 1930. According to Dunsby, "the litany of creative minds who rekindled images of the centuries-old *commedia dell'arte* figures is long and impressive."[44]

> In music, the range of composers who contributed to the cult is astonishingly long… covering the continent by longitude and latitude (Busoni, Debussy, Puccini; de Falla, Walton, Bartok). Any list of the music at issue is, admittedly, likely to be as long as the definition of commedia is broad. The commedia figures distilled by the cult—moonstruck Pierrot, his idol the feckless Columbine, who degrades herself by giving in to the brutal Harlequin, who closes the vicious circle by his mocking camaraderie with Pierrot—these are themselves somewhat gruesome representations of that Western archetype, the eternal triangle.[45]

Each of the composers who used the *commedia* figures in their work expressed the story with different emphases. To Stravinsky, the story seemed comedic (or tragicomedic). For Schoenberg, it was a dark satire.

Schoenberg's *Pierrot* is a chamber work. Each of the poems is scored for a combination of eight instruments and voice (*Sprechstimme*). The exact instrumentation of the poems is given on the following page [Table 1].

Pierrot is a melodrama, defined by Peter Branscombe as "a kind of drama, or a part of a drama, in which the action is carried forward by the protagonist speaking in the pauses of, and later commonly during, a musical accompaniment."[46] The history of the melodrama as purely musical genre is separate from that of opera or theatrical plays. Schoenberg had used melodrama

---

[42] See page 37 and following for further discussion of Zehme's *Pierrot* cycle.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 6.

[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] Peter Branscombe, "Melodrama," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Table 1 Instrumentation for *Pierrot*

Short title		Instrument							
		Piano	Flute	Piccolo	Clarinet*	Bass Clarinet	Violin	Viola	Cello
1	Mondestrunken	x	x				x		x
2	Columbine	x	x		x		x		
3	Dandy	x		x	x				
4	Wäscherin		x		x		x		
5	Valse	x	x		x	x			
6	Madonna	+	+			+	+		+
7	Mond		x						
8	Nacht	x				x			x
9	Gebet	x			x				
10	Raub		x		x		x		x
	Transition	x							
11	Messe	+		+		+		+	+
12	Galgenlied			x				x	x
13	Enthauptung	x				x		x	x
	Transition		x			x		x	x
14	Kreuze	+	+		+		+		+
15	Heimweh	x			x		x		
	Transition	+		+	+		+		+
16	Gemeinheit	+		+	+		+		+
17	Parodie	x		x	x			x	
	Transition	x							
18	Mondfleck	+		+	+		+		+
19	Serenade	x							+
	Transition	+	+		+		+		+
20	Heimfahrt	+	+		+		+		+
21	Duft	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

x = instrument is used
+ = instrument is used and all five instrumentalists are playing
* = clarinet is in A except in 'Der Mondfleck,' which calls for clarinet in B-flat.

(Although not specifically noted, soprano (*Sprechstimme*) appears in each poem.[47])

[47] This table is copied from Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 22.

in works before *Pierrot*, including *Gurrelieder* (1910-1911) and *Die glückliche Hand* (1910–13). While these works employed the voice in both "notated speech" (*Guerrelieder*) and "relative pitches and precise rhythms" (*Die glückliche Hand*), neither presents exactly the same challenges as the *Sprechstimme* of *Pierrot*.

Sprechstimme denotes a type of vocal performance between song and speech. Bryan Simms calls *Sprechstmme* "an enduring and perhaps insoluble interpretive enigma for the performer."[48] Alban Berg, a Schoenberg disciple, "insisted that passages in Sprechstimme 'are not to be sung' but must be delivered as 'a spoken melody' (*Sprechmelodie*): 'in singing the performer stays on the note without change; in speaking he strikes the note but leaves it immediately by rising or falling in pitch'."[49] As an element of expressionism, *Sprechstimme* is a distortion of pure singing, used to communicate the immediacy of an emotion to the listeners. In composing *Pierrot*, Schoenberg adopted the techniques of expressionism including *Sprechstimme* to illustrate the subconscious or extreme states of being and to focus on the dark, alienating images prevalent in Giraud's (and Hartleben's) poetry.

Schoenberg's use of *Sprechstimme* displeased many critics. Even a decade after its emergence, the American music critic Henry Edward Krehbiel described *Sprechstimme* as "a sort of whine which is neither speech nor song."[50] Combined with the challenging atonality of the music, *Pierrot* was a departure both from the contemporary Viennese idiom of composers including that of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler and Schoenberg's own earlier works.

In setting the twenty-one-poem cycle of *Pierrot*, for *Sprechstimme* and chamber ensemble, Schoenberg alternated the character of verse and the instrumentation used in subsequent poems to create a dreamlike sequence. As Oliver Neighbor has demonstrated, Schoenberg's setting of the *commedia* poems draws the listener into a world of shadow and parody:

> Parody assumes a very important role in *Pierrot lunaire*…. [Schoenberg's] highly stylized use of the speaking voice, for which he notated relative pitches as well as exact rhythms, proved an ideal vehicle for the Pierrot settings, which were conceived in what

---

[48] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 132.

[49] Paul Griffiths, "Sprechgesang," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

[50] Henry Edward Krehbiel, "Affectation in Modern Music," *New York Tribune*; February 11, 1923, sec. 5, p. 5.

> he described as a light, ironic-satirical tone. The rather modish verses, by turns grotesque, macabre or consciously sentimental, provide the occasion for presenting… human activity as a shadow play in which menace and absurdity are on a level. The focus shifts at random, as in a dream, between the lunatic activities of the clown, impersonal scenes, the poet in the first person and the self-absorbed artist, who is not spared.[51]

Reacting to the macabre character of *Pierrot*, Dunsby sees a connection between Schoenberg's transition into atonality, his composition of *Pierrot* and his personal life in the years preceding it. In 1908, Schoenberg's wife, Mathilde, began an affair with the artist Richard Gerstl and left Schoenberg to live with Gerstl. When she returned to Schoenberg, Gerstl committed suicide. To Dunsby, Schoenberg's choice of poems for *Pierrot*, which was composed in 1912, reflects his reaction to this sequence of events—Schoenberg becomes Pierrot, Columbine his wife, and Harlequin (Gerstl) is absent from the script.[52]

Although the subject of *Pierrot* may have had special personal relevance for Schoenberg, he was not alone in his choice of material. Dunsby describes similar uses of the *commedia* characters, "often their actual names; their disembodiment, usually as marionettes or puppets; and their lack of rootedness…"[53] by other composers, writers, and artists during the same period. One of the most famous of these settings was Igor Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, discussed in greater detail on page 40.

The figure of the clown Pierrot was a part of the European cultural experience in the decades surrounding the composition of *Pierrot*, and would have resonated both with fellow artists and with members of the public who came to hear the piece. In fact, as Edward Steuermann notes, Schoenberg's composition of the musical setting for Hartleben's poems was commissioned by the former actress Albertine Zehme.

> [Zehme] had for some time been drawn to the commedia dell'arte character of Pierrot. Having discovered Giraud's cycle of poems, *Pierrot lunaire*, translated by E. O. Hartleben and composed as 'melodrama' by Vrieslander, Mrs Zehme toured Germany declaiming these piquant and somewhat bizarre lyrics. But the music was obviously not strong enough, and someone advised her to approach Schoenberg, who was also considered 'bizarre,' to say the least, and at this time not very well known, for it was

---

[51] Neighbor et al, *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, 43-45.

[52] See Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 13.

[53] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 7.

before the performance of the *Gurrelieder*, an event which made him world famous.[54]

Perhaps Walter Dahms' reference to "artists, lusting after sensations" who attempted to introduce Schoenberg's "lunatic art" into Berlin is directed toward Zehme and her exploration of melodrama and lyric declamation.[55] Steuermann's description of *Pierrot's* commission, the prevalence of artistic experimentation, and the widespread popularity of the *commedia* characters in German society demonstrate that although Schoenberg's setting of *Pierrot* is experienced currently as an isolated phenomenon, *Pierrot* was part of a trend at the time of its commission. The drama of the three *commedia* clowns served as a way for many Western Europeans to understand "the cruel alienation of the times"[56] and as an artistic representation of their own world. Thus, in presenting his cycle of Hartleben's poems, Schoenberg connected his musical innovations to both his own personal experience and the cultural experience of the decade in which *Pierrot* was written.

Conclusions

The style of *Pierrot*, including the exploration of atonality, the extreme expressionism of the poems' texts and their musical settings, and the innovation of *Sprechstimme*, provided Schoenberg with the tools to create a representation of the *commedia* story, one of his culture's myths. The public reception in Germany demonstrated his success. However, for critics, *Pierrot* presented several problems. Analyzing atonality in works including *Pierrot* was a problem for critics, even as it arose. The style was described either as "a necessary expression of its time—the evolutionary outgrowth of a crisis in music at the turn of the century or the product of a vigorous revolution that swept aside the remnants of an exhausted romanticism."[57]

Schoenberg preferred the first of these descriptions, seeing his own musical style as connected to and drawing upon the romantic tradition. Yet at the same time, Schoenberg's explorations of the limits of atonality were already pushing him toward that which would become

---

[54] Edward Steuermann, *The Not Quite Innocent Bystander* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989), 35.

[55] Both of the quotations in this sentence come from Walter Dahms, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 63. [Full quotation on page 19.]

[56] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 7.

[57] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 4.

the 12-note system. To Schoenberg, atonality represented just one step in his compositional development.

The critical reception of *Pierrot* demonstrates the difficulties of evaluating a work that falls outside the common boundaries of its era. The public, including the audience members who attended the performances, were more accustomed to experiencing rather than analyzing their era (as opposed to critics, whose profession depended on their ability to analyze their experiences), and therefore able to understand the emotions in *Pierrot* even if the compositional techniques were foreign to them. In contrast, the critics found it so difficult to accept *Pierrot's* compositional idiom that they were not pacified by the ability of expressionism to express the underlying story.

The incomprehension that greeted Schoenberg's early Viennese premieres in the years before the successful Berlin premiere of *Pierrot* demonstrates that Viennese audiences were not yet interested in the exploration of music without tonality. However, as we have seen, audiences in Berlin by the time *Pierrot* was premiered had become accustomed to Schoenberg's music, whether they truly understood his compositional innovations or not. Moreover, the deeper psychological resonance of the *commedia dell'arte* was strong enough to overcome listeners' difficulties with *Pierrot's* particular style.

Schoenberg believed that *Pierrot* formed a part of the continuous musical tradition of Europe. In creating *Pierrot*, Schoenberg had relied on techniques of atonality and expressionism which, although problematic for the critics, allowed Schoenberg to express the *commedia* story in a way that his public audience found essentially comprehensible.

In the years following the 1912 premiere, the German critics began to agree with the public acceptance of *Pierrot*. Reich quotes the Berlin music critic Walter Schrenk, who wrote in 1924 that "this melodrama is numbered among the unique, unrepeatable creative works which… mark the destiny of… art music…. This is not a matter of drawing comparisons… it is only to point out that… it was, in a sense, created at a crucial moment for music."[58] Schoenberg's *Pierrot* both fit into the cultural tradition from which it had arisen, and added a new compositional element to that tradition. In doing so, *Pierrot* provided German audiences with a means for understanding their culture, their time, and their new music.

---

[58] Walter Schrenk, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 79.

II. EUROPEAN MODERNISM

"Modernism… is a fiction, but an indispensable fiction."

--Daniel Albright[1]

Introduction

This chapter discusses the cultural modernism of Austria and Germany in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Because of the close relationship between the two countries (and their respective capital cities, Vienna and Berlin), I will not discuss the two individually. Instead, I will present the common cultural trends against which Schoenberg's music, as well as that of the other modernist composers and artists, was experienced by the public and by the critics.

Modernism came to Berlin before Vienna. Although the two cities were closely related culturally, the willingness of the Berliners to experiment with new forms of expression was greater than that of the Viennese, who saw themselves as guardians of the classical tradition. The differences in Schoenberg's reception in Vienna and Berlin should be attributed to this difference in perspective. Artists and musicians in both cities (including Schoenberg's own circle of acquaintances) experienced modernism as the essential mood of their era. Because Schoenberg lived in both cities (and experienced modernism's effect on the artistic communities in both) during the years surrounding *Pierrot*, I have chosen to combine the study of Austrian and German modernism in this chapter.

Understanding European modernism provides a background against which to examine the positive reception of *Pierrot* in Berlin in 1912. Additionally, the discussion of European modernism in this chapter, when contrasted with the American modernism in chapter III, demonstrates the importance of cultural relevance in forming public opinion. Because of the widespread acquaintance with the *commedia dell'arte* and the Pierrot figures in Europe, *Pierrot*, unlike many of Schoenberg's earlier compositions, was well received by the public at the premiere performances given in Berlin. In contrast, the critical response focused on Schoenberg's particular compositional idiom rather than on the cultural relevance of *Pierrot*. Critical reactions condemned Schoenberg's music as incomprehensible even as the public began to accept it.

---

[1] Daniel Albright, "Series Editor's Foreward," in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (New York: Garland, 2000), viii.

Modernism and the Socio-Political Background in Vienna and Berlin

The difficulty of defining modernism has been noted by scholars in all fields. Not only is the concept itself elusive and prone to subjective analysis, but the idea of a fixed period in which modernism can be said to have existed (and the question of its end and related questions of postmodernism) varies among scholars. According to Daniel Albright:

> If modernism can be said to reach out beyond the present moment, it is also true that modernism can be said to extend backwards almost indefinitely. Wagner, especially the Wagner of *Tristan und Isolde*, has been a continual presence in twentieth-century art… Modernism created its own precursors; it made the past new, as well as the present.[2]

As with Schoenberg's own description of his compositional idiom (an inevitable continuation of the romantic tradition), modernism connected itself to the past even as it broke with that same past. Modernism arose as an extension of late nineteenth-century explorations, yet sought a new framework with which to understand the present. Therefore, it possessed an essentially dual nature from the moment of its conception. Schoenberg understood this dichotomy well, as his own musical explorations traced the same path between confirmation and transformation of the nineteenth-century traditions.

The European exploration of modernism began well before the turn of the century and was advanced by artists in all fields. William Everdell writes that "[modernism's] intellectual origins lie in an often profound rethinking of the whole mind set of the nineteenth century, the world view that originally gave rise to speed, industry, world markets, and the newly aggressive tone of the word 'modern.'"[3] The American experience of modernism, discussed later, began in the early years of the twentieth century and flourished in the years following the First World War.

European countries' experience of modernism was not simultaneous. "Modern" was already a common descriptor for the artistic scene in Paris in the late decades of the nineteenth century. In Germany, modernism did not really take hold until the beginning of the twentieth century. (Richard Wagner, the Germanic precursor to modernism, and the first musical modernist to some because of his explorations of the limits of tonality, is an exception to this broad

---

[2] Ibid., xi.

[3] William Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997), 9.

timeframe.[4]) Vienna's experience of modernism did not begin until the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century. Viennese society was more resistant to change, and more enamored of continuity in the arts as in society at large, than most other European capital cities including Berlin.[5]

According to Everdell, emerging modernism was "seen to be a culture of analysis, a culture at home with bits and pieces and proud of contradictions."[6] Fredric Jameson agrees that modernism before 1914 was defined by the concept of nonsimultaneity—the "coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history—handicrafts alongside the great cartels, peasant fields with the Krupp factories or Ford plant in the distance."[7] In both Germany and Austria, this nonsimultaneity appeared as the movement forward in the arts was tempered by the stasis of governmental politics.

The artists working around the turn of the century expressed both their ties to the immediate past and, according to Martin Green and John Swan, their reaction to the stasis in the political culture. In the early years of the twentieth century, Schoenberg and his circle instinctively realized that the political and societal norms that had been established and maintained for the past centuries were no longer relevant:

> The idea of decadence suggests to us also the decay of European civilization, its coming to an end, its moral and political exhaustion. This was an idea which pressed upon the commedia artists… and upon the audiences for the commedia movements. Their art was not political or realistic, but it was significantly a reaction to the world around them, and it is possible to sketch in the vision of that world which several of them shared.[8]

Composers, artists, writers, and others sought a form of release from this decadence or stasis in the expressionism of their art. However, rather than entirely breaking with the past and its

---

[4] For more on the role of Wagner in early modernism, see Leon Botstein, "Modernism," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.40625.1>

[5] See, for example, Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986).

[6] Ibid., 28.

[7] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University, 1991), 307.

[8] Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 22.

traditions, modernist artists sought to differentiate themselves from the past through an extension of the past's traditions and modes of expression.

In Germany, a sense of the historical past was particularly important in light of the recent unification of the German states under one government. In order to create a sense of nationality with an allegiance to Germany rather than to individual regions such as Prussia or Saxony (to name just two out of 38),[9] the historical past, exemplified by Wagner's use of a mythical German history in his operas, became important. According to Walter Frisch, "German modernism is ambivalent in admiring and fostering the new, at the same time clinging fervently to the past out of a sense that the past (especially the German past) was an essential part of the German character that could not be abandoned."[10] In Germany, therefore, modernism emphasized a sense of historical and artistic continuity even while moving forward.

Similarly, the historian Carl Schorske describes Vienna's

> cultural innovators [as having been] in continuous dialogue with a present that was still tradition-laden. They were themselves engaged in transforming their cultural legacies as much as rejecting them. Indeed, some of the most self-consciously radical creators of the 'New' culture… would temper their break from the past with claims of attachment to some aspect of tradition even as they shook its systemic foundations.[11]

Vienna, the capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, possessed what Joan Allen Smith calls "a more clearly defined intellectual character than have most cities at most times." [12] Under Emperor Franz Joseph, whose reign stretched throughout the long decades from 1848 until 1916, Austria-Hungary fell into a pattern of stasis in which political reforms were virtually unheard of (universal male suffrage, for example, was allowed by the Emperor only in 1907), and control of all areas of intellectual and cultural life was maintained by the governmental bureaucracy.

---

[9] During the discussions of unification between 1849 and 1871, the question of *Grossdeutschland* vs. *Kleindeutschland* became important. The larger Germany would have included Austria as part of the German empire. Although the eventual unification of the German states resulted in two separate countries, Germany and Austria, the importance of the discussion shows that Germany and Austria were closely linked, both politically and culturally.

[10] Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 8.

[11] Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1998), 10-11.

[12] Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait*, 15.

Since the military and political patterns in the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed impervious to change, Viennese innovators were found primarily in the arts, and the Viennese sense of artistic supremacy was carefully cultivated.[13] Although change came slowly to Vienna in many areas, artists, musicians, and writers in Vienna formed a community filled with cultural innovations and artistic exploration. The resultant works, although departures from the creations of the nineteenth century, were still presented with reference to the creative past. The German political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt writes that:

> The end of a tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that this power of well-worn notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its living force and as the memory of its beginning recedes; it may even reveal its full coercive force only after its end has come and men no longer even rebel against it. [14]

Twentieth century artists' reference to the era just past, therefore, was indicative of the power that the traditions of the nineteenth century still held in the minds of twentieth-century Europeans. It was particularly strong in the work of those artists and musicians including Schoenberg, who saw their work as an expression of their own society and, at the same time, a furthering of their tradition. In this context, Schoenberg's insistence that his work was based on that of Brahms and Wagner is relevant. Rather than declaring his own independence from the past and rejecting previous ideals of musical beauty, Schoenberg affirmed his connection to that past and those ideals, often to the consternation of Viennese audiences and critics. Even for an independent mind such as Schoenberg's, a complete break with the past was unthinkable.

Schoenberg, Modernism, and the *Commedia dell'Arte*

Set against the lush romanticism and impressionism of the nineteenth century, Schoenberg's circle challenged perceptions of beauty and the ability of the forms of the past to express the experience of modern life. Joan Allen Smith describes Schoenberg and his Viennese circle as occupying a position of unique cultural importance.[15] She places Schoenberg in an

---

[13] See Everdell, *The First Moderns* and Carl Schorske, *Thinking with History*.

[14] Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 26.

[15] Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle*, 39-60.

ideological collaboration with the architect Adolf Loos and the artists Oskar Kokoschka and Vasily Kandinsky, who had turned away from the ornate styles of the nineteenth century toward a simpler, more direct approach which emphasized humanity and artistic clarity.

Schoenberg saw himself as a product of the past, and his innovations as continuations of (and inevitable consequences of) the nineteenth century tradition rather than departures from those older models. Christopher Hailey calls Schoenberg "a *conservative* revolutionary"[16] and believes that, "as a product of Hapsburg Vienna he could hardly have been otherwise."[17] While Schoenberg did not think of himself as a revolutionary, his own writings validated Hailey's description of the strong influence of his Viennese upbringing and cultural experience. Further, Schoenberg's acquaintance with the other modernists then working in Vienna inspired him "to draw radical consequences from his profound identification with his musical heritage."[18]

The Viennese modernists were searching for a new way forward. Their search led both to a rethinking of the techniques of the past and to confrontation and conflict with the present. According to Hailey, the conflict with the present became especially intense for Schoenberg during the periods he lived in Berlin (1901-1903, 1911-1915, and 1926-1933). The music written during these periods reflects Schoenberg's encounter with the present—"new literary impulses and technological wonders on the one hand, economic chaos and political madness on the other."[19] *Pierrot*, written in the spring of 1911, was one of these works. Schoenberg's most radical works could only be written outside of Vienna, in an atmosphere slightly less committed to upholding the romantic past, and more open to new ideas.

The source of much of Vienna's popular musical culture and Schoenberg's inspiration for *Pierrot*, was the *commedia dell'arte*, then present in the cabarets. Although the cabarets provided access to lowbrow entertainment rather than to art music such as Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, the attraction to cabaret culture was strong. Leon Botstein writes that Schoenberg was influenced by

---

[16] Christopher Hailey, "Introduction," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), xii. Hailey's emphasis.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Christopher Hailey, "Introduction," in *Constructive Dissonance*, xiii.

the debate in Vienna surrounding the city's self-proclaimed role as keeper of the romantic tradition versus the growing influence of its cabarets.

> [T]here was a widespread public debate in fin de siècle Vienna regarding the quality of musical life, culture, and education in a city that had come to regard its status as the world capital of music as axiomatic and indisputable… Schoenberg's reaction against the influences of late Romanticism was deepened by his exposure to Vienna's popular commercial musical culture.[20]

Cabaret nightlife spread outward from Paris in the early years of the twentieth century. As with other elements of modernism, cabarets reached Vienna long after they were established in other major Germanic cities including Berlin. William Everdell describes the artistic styles found in the cabarets as "the sources of much that was new in the theater,"[21] including:

> the dream play, the chamber drama, audience participation, discontinuity of scenes, and separation of dramatic elements…. The new ironic monologue in poetry, stream-of-consciousness in fiction, *Sprechstimme* (speak singing) in music—even some ideas of modern art, architecture, and film—can be traced back to the avant-garde vaudeville that flourished despite censorship in places like the Chat Noir in Paris; but Vienna was a city of cafés like the Grienseidl and the Central. It had no Black Cats, no cabarets as yet. … Vienna's first cabaret, the Nachtlicht, did not open until 1906, and the Fledermaus, its most celebrated, not until 1907.[22]

Everdell further credits the Black Cat with having established the connection "between high culture and low, [and making a distinction] between performance and art."[23] This was due in part to the French composers who were active in the early years of the twentieth century, including Claude Debussy, Erik Satie, and Gabriel Fauré, who were "more at home in cabarets than they were in concert halls."[24]

In Vienna, the cabaret culture, once established, became the "prime breeding ground for new means of expression. It was within the conventions of cabaret that the conventions of a *fin-*

---

[20] Leon Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture: Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, and the Emergence of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), 9.

[21] Everdell, *The First Moderns*, 22.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 272.

[24] Ibid.

de-siècle society could be ruthlessly challenged."[25] Schoenberg's proclivity to challenge these conventions has already been discussed. The combination of personal interest in reworking musical conventions combined with the cultural relevance of the popular Pierrot figures meant that, even without Albertine Zehme's commission, "Schoenberg was bound to write a commedia work at some point."[26]

Schoenberg first encountered the cabaret culture in Berlin while working at the Überbrettl. Although Zehme's commission came ten years after his first encounter with the "atmosphere of the commedia,"[27] the continuing cultural relevance of the *commedia* and the particular set of poems by Giraud/ Hartleben combined to create a project that Schoenberg described as, "a marvelous idea, quite right for me. Would do it even without a fee."[28]

The actress for whom Schoenberg composed *Pierrot* and her interest in melodrama played a significant role in the popular reception of *Pierrot* in Berlin. Albertine Zehme (1857-1946) was a Viennese actress, married to a wealthy Leipzig attorney. In an attempt to revive her career around the turn of the century, Zehme chose to recite melodramas. Since such recitations were composed of "a poetic or dramatic reading alternat[ing] with or … accompanied by instrumental music,"[29] "the possibilities in repertory for the aspiring reciter were virtually endless."[30] Zehme also anticipated Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme*, in her choice to transform *Lieder* melodies into melodramas, "simply by speaking the voice line or reducing the melody to an expressive singsong."[31] She published a treatise on recitation explaining her methods in 1920, *Die Grundlagen des künstlerischen Sprechens und Singens* (Fundamentals of Artistic Speaking and Singing).[32]

---

[25] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 4.

[26] Ibid., 8.

[27] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 196.

[28] Schoenberg, quoted in Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 200.

[29] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 119.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 120.

[32] Albertine Zehme, *Die Grundlagen des künstlerischen Sprechens und Singens* (Leipzig, Carl Merseburger, 1920).

Zehme did much to prepare Berlin culturally for Schoenberg's *Pierrot*. In March of 1911, just weeks before Schoenberg began composing, Zehme gave a set of performances of Vrieslander's *Pierrot* songs, transformed into recitations. In what Simms describes as evidence of "her histrionic style,"[33] Zehme attached a note to her program explaining "Why I Must Speak These Songs":

> The words that we speak should not solely lead to mental concepts, but instead their sounds should allow us to partake of their inner experience. To make this possible we must have an unconstrained freedom of tone. None of the thousand vibrations should be denied to the expression of feeling. I demand tonal freedom, not thoughts! ... For our poets and composers to communicate, we need both the tones of song as well as those of speech. My unceasing striving in search of the ultimate expressive capabilities for the "artistic experience in tone" has taught me this fact.[34]

Zehme's close relations to both the style of *Pierrot* and to Hartleben's poems were instrumental in Schoenberg's early plans for the composition. She sent Schoenberg the list of poems that she preferred, procured the texts for him, and even suggested the three-part form for the cycle.[35] Although Schoenberg later departed from Zehme's structure, changing the poems, their order, and their total number and adding instruments to what was originally conceived of as a work for voice and piano, Zehme's earlier cycles seem to have played some role in the composition. According to Simms, Schoenberg "retained some elements of Zehme's narrative progression from lightness, to darkness, to death, but he… reconstituted [Hartleben's] poetry to create a parable concerning the destiny of the artist in a hostile society."[36]

In writing *Pierrot*, Schoenberg relied both on the familiar, lowbrow Pierrot character, and on his own interpretation of the *commedia* characters in a tragic satire. Schoenberg's innovations, especially the use of *Sprechstimme*, allowed him to create a musical depiction of the inner state of Hartleben's Pierrot. As with other artistic explorations in the modernist tradition, Schoenberg found the old models insufficient. Instead, it seemed necessary to extend the limits of vocal expression through *Sprechstimme*, in order to adequately express the inner emotions of *Pierrot*.

---

[33] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 120.

[34] Zehme, quoted in Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 120-121.

[35] See Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 123.

[36] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 125-126.

Additionally, the use of atonality allowed Schoenberg to extend the limits of musical expression, rejecting old conventions.

To Schoenberg, the musical modernism of *Pierro*t also expressed the experience of the artist whose work was rejected by his society. In his musical depiction of *Pierrot*, Schoenberg expressed his "belief that he was a man with a mission who was misunderstood and persecuted."[37] The harsh critical response to a compositional idiom still unfamiliar to his audience strengthened this belief. The favorable public reaction, however, must have been a surprise.

The Berlin Premiere of *Pierrot*

The Berlin premiere of *Pierrot* provoked divergent public and critical reactions. The positive public (i.e. non-critical) response indicates that Schoenberg's subject (as well as his treatment of it) was comprehensible to his audience, already familiar with the poems, the actress, Albertine Zehme, and the cult of Pierrot. The critical reaction, on the other hand, focusing on the musical developments and on Schoenberg's innovations (including the use of *Sprechstimme*), found much to dislike. Jonathan Dunsby attributes the critical reaction to dissatisfaction with composers' departure from the models of romanticism and the abandonment of tonality rather than to *Pierrot* itself since,"[Early critiques of *Pierrot*] often conceal, under the guise of specific criticism, an attitude to the composer, and indeed to the radicalism of art in general before the First World War, rather than to the work."[38]

The public reaction to the premiere was overwhelmingly positive. According to H. Stuckenschmidt, "The performance—to the astonishment of the critics—resulted in an ovation for Schoenberg. The greater part of the audience remained in the hall after the end of the performance and forced a repeat."[39] Anton Webern, who attended the premiere, admitted that, "Naturally there were a few people who hissed… but that meant nothing. There was enthusiasm

---

[37]Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 196.

[38] Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire, 8.

[39] H. Stuckenschmidt, *Arnold Schoenberg* (London: Calder, 1959), 60-61.

after the second part, and in the third there was one place where unrest was caused by an idiot who was laughing… but at the end… it was an unqualified success."[40]

Pierrot's success in expressing emotions relevant to its culture is demonstrated by the acclaim with which Igor Stravinsky greeted the performance. Igor Stravinsky, whose own compositional style was very different from Schoenberg's, described his first experience of *Pierrot* as "the great event in my life then."[41] Already acquainted with the *commedia* figures, Stravinsky was more impressed with the instrumental music than with Zehme's recitation of the poems:

> Albertine Zehme, the Sprechstimme artist, wore a Pierrot costume and accompanied her epiglottal sounds with a small amount of pantomime. I remember that and the fact that the musicians were seated behind a curtain, but I was too occupied with the copy of the score Schoenberg had given me to notice anything else. I also remember that the audience was quiet and attentive and that I wanted Frau Zehme to be quiet too, so that I could hear the *music*.[42]

Stravinsky's own setting of the Pierrot story is found in his *Petrushka*, which expresses the interaction between the characters as a comedy rather than as the dark melodrama that Schoenberg chose. In setting *Petrushka* as a comedic ballet, Stravinsky chose to express the "immortal laughter of the puppet-man… at the expense of the human hypocrites… who preside over his demise."[43] The differences in the two composers' approaches to the Pierrot story and Stravinsky's own success in his collaborations with Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes meant that his own position was not endangered by any success of Schoenberg's. His response to *Pierrot*, therefore, signifies genuine approval.

The premiere was followed by two more performances at the Choralian Hall in Berlin and by a European tour of eleven other cities, including Munich, Prague, and Vienna. Willi Reich notes that *Pierrot* was not equally successful in all of these cities. "On the tour there were disturbances among the audience in a number of cities; indeed, it 'went without saying' that in

---

[40] Anton Webern, quoted in John Winiarz, "Schoenberg—Pierrot lunaire: An Atonal Landmark," *La Scena Musicale* 5, no. 7 (2000), http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm5-7/schoenberg-en.htm.

[41] Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 78.

[42] Ibid, 53. Stravinsky's emphasis

[43] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 207.

Vienna the successful *Guerrelieder* would be played off against the problematic *Pierrot*."[44] This first reaction was mitigated somewhat in 1929, when Viennese music students "performed [*Pierrot*] with an understanding and a beauty of sound that left nothing to be desired."[45]

The public reaction was contradicted by the hostile critical comments. Leon Botstein believes that, "The premiere of *Pierrot* in Berlin in 1912 [was a watershed] in the history of twentieth-century concert life. The sharp and divided response by audiences, critics, and musicians were turning points in twentieth-century modern art and culture."[46] The positive public reaction and the hostile critical reaction seemed irreconcilable. The public proved willing to accept expressionism and atonality as valid musical techniques when used to express the extreme emotional state of a particular story. For the public, the cultural relevance of *Pierrot* led to acceptance of Schoenberg's musical idiom.

In contrast, the critics continued to condemn that same idiom and to struggle to uphold the standards of the previous century. The German critic Otto Taubmann exemplified this hostility in an article in Berlin's *Börsenkurier*—"If that is the music of the future, then I have a prayer to my Maker: please never make me endure another performance."[47]

Later critical assessments were more generous, although critics expressed the difficulty of understanding Schoenberg's music, even with the best intentions. In 1921, the German music critic Paul Bekker wrote of Schoenberg that, "Ein großer Teil der Werke Schönbergs ist noch unbekannt….Selbst der vorurteilslose, mit gutem Willen kommende Hörer fühlt wohl die magische Kraft, zugleich aber starke Befremdung und Widerstand in sich." [48]

American audiences first heard of the existence of *Pierrot* through the writings of the retired critic James Huneker, who attended the Berlin premiere. Huneker admitted in his review that he, "fear[ed] and dislike[d] the music of Arnold Schoenberg…. Certainly, he is the hardest

---

[44] Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 78-79.

[45] Ibid., 79.

[46] Leon Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture: Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, and the Emergence of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), 4.

[47] Otto Taubmann, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 78.

[48] Paul Bekker, *Kritische Zeitbilder* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 11. ("A large part of Schoenberg's work is still unknown…. Even the non-judgmental, good-willed listener feels simultaneously the magical power and the surprise and resistance within himself.") My translation.

musical nut to crack of his generation, and the shell is very bitter in the mouth."[49] His impressions of *Pierrot* followed:

> What kind of music is this, without melody, in the ordinary sense; without themes, yet every acorn of a phrase contrapuntally developed by an adept, without a harmony that does not smite the ears, lacerate, figuratively speaking, the eardrums; keys forced into hateful marriage that are miles asunder, or else too closely related for aural matrimony; no form, that is in the scholastic formal sense, and rhythms that are so persistently varied as to become monotonous—what kind of music is this I repeat that can paint a "crystal sigh," the blackness of prehistoric night, the abyss of a morbid soul, the man in the moon, the faint sweet odors of an impossible fairyland, and the strut of the dandy from Bergamo? There is no melodic or harmonic line, only a series of points, dots, dashes, or phrases that sob and scream, despair, explode, exalt, blaspheme.[50]

In Huneker's diatribe, there is no sense of possible reconciliation. Without the inherent understanding of the cultural relevance of *Pierrot*, Huneker could find nothing in the work that pleased him. This attitude anticipates that of the New York critics who attended the 1923 American premiere.

Huneker described Schoenberg as "an auto-didact, the lessons in composition from Alexander Zemlinsky not affecting his future pathbreaking propensities. His mission is to free harmony from all rules…. His knowledge must be enormous, for his scores are as logical as a highly wrought mosaic; that is, logical, if you grant him his premises."[51] Although Huneker praised Schoenberg's abilities in mood painting, he found little consolation in the idea that such music might eventually become part of the repertory, and ended his review with the comment that, "If such music making is to become accepted then I long for Death the Releaser. More shocking still would be the suspicion that in time I might be persuaded to like this music, to embrace it after abhorring it."[52]

Huneker died in 1913, ten years before the New York performance of *Pierrot*, but his influence as the preeminent writer for the *New York Times* was strong. Many of the critics whose

---

[49] James Huneker, "Schoenberg, Musical Anarchist, Who Has Upset Europe," *New York Times*, January 19, 1913, www.proquest.com.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

opinions are discussed later began their careers working under Huneker, and would have absorbed his ideas about modern music.

Conclusions

The Berlin premiere of *Pierrot* set the stage for the subsequent reception in New York. Both the positive audience reaction and the harsh critical commentary were already present in 1912. *Pierrot* was successful in the public arena in Berlin because German audiences were familiar with the *commedia* characters and found Schoenberg's interpretation of *Pierrot* relevant to their own experience. Music critics, on the other hand, were unconvinced by Schoenberg's *Pierrot* because of their commitment to the romantic tradition and their resistance to innovations such as atonality and *Sprechstimme*.

The favorable public reaction to *Pierrot* in Berlin demonstrates *Pierrot's* essential comprehensibility when performed for an audience whose cultural experience it reflects. Schoenberg's compositional innovations were understood by audiences whose experience of modernism was similar to Schoenberg's own. To German audiences, the critical dismissal of *Pierrot* based on condemnation of Schoenberg's compositional techniques, did not affect personal approval or understanding. In America, where the experience of modernism was delayed and the *commedia* characters were unfamiliar, the public reaction relied more on critical appraisals and less on instinctive understanding.

Leon Botstein believes that, in Gemany and Austria, "The pre-World War I controversy surrounding Schoenberg was rooted in the fear that he would become the future."[53] In 1923, that future arrived in New York.

[53] Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture," in *Constructive Dissonance*, 8.

III. NEW YORK MODERNISM

"America might be the world's youngest country in terms of history and chronology, but in terms of modernity, it was the oldest; it had been modern long before modernism existed anywhere else."

-- Ann Douglas[1]

Introduction

In order to understand the New York reception of *Pierrot*, one must look beyond the musical scene of 1923. The artistic and cultural climate of the city was directly influenced by the political and social questions of the decade and by New York's recent emergence as "the world's most powerful city."[2] This chapter examines the political and social questions facing New York and the rest of America in the decade following World War I. Particularly significant to this study are the cultural experience of American modernism, the musical life in New York and the cultural divisions within the city, and finally, the circumstances of the premiere of *Pierrot* on February 4th.

American modernism differed from the European modernism in which Schoenberg composed *Pierrot*. The cultural relevance of the *commedia* figures and the public's familiarity with the cabaret culture in Europe enabled *Pierrot's* popular success despite critical misgivings about Schoenberg's compositional techniques. In New York, *Pierrot* lacked similar cultural relevance. The critics occupied a stronger position in determining the success or failure of *Pierrot* since the public was less interested in the *commedia* itself and not inclined to overlook the difficulties of Schoenberg's compositional idiom as the audiences in Berlin had been.

Political and Social Questions

In the decade following World War I, "America seized the economic and cultural leadership of the West."[3] Like the rest of America, New York faced the challenge of defining its new place as the leader of the Western world. Local newspapers and literary magazines reflected

---

[1] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996), 193.

[2] Ibid., 4.

[3] Ibid., 3.

this challenge as they explored America's new role. Newspapers contained numerous interviews given by allied military commanders and by vanquished Germans, and articles describing the "Red scare" of communism and workers' strikes. The most popular political strategy, isolationism, emphasized the need to retreat from the world stage in order to concentrate on maintaining and strengthening the 'American way of life.' The ideals of isolationism attracted the allegiance of many public and private citizens.[4]

The sectional divisions of newspapers including the *New York Tribune* reinforced the trend toward isolationism.[5] The *Tribune*, one of the largest daily papers in New York, had two news sections. The first covered national issues, Congress, and regional questions; the second news section considered questions of international importance, including the continuing debate over reparations to be paid by Germany, and the spread of Bolshevism in eastern and central Europe. Five years after the end of World War I, cartoons still depicted stereotypical Germans as evil or treacherous, and Allied soldiers as heroes.[6]

Americans found themselves torn between the new role of world power that they had won (and the international responsibilities that such power indicated), and the desire to focus on national developments. President Wilson's League of Nations struggled to maintain peace and avoid international conflicts, hampered by the isolationism of the United States (which never joined the League) and by the limited power given to the League at its creation in 1919. Europe still faced unrest, hunger, poverty, and difficult economic conditions following the end of the War. A letter to the editor of the *Tribune* from a concerned citizen, Morrison I. Swift, published on February 4th, 1923, described the dangers then present in the Allies' peace:

> After four years of chaos it must be confessed that the terms of the peace were fatally wrong, and the common conclusion is that they were too harsh…. On the contrary, the great fatality of the peace was letting Germany off … too easily. The peace conference muddled and ruined its case by a confusion of the issues…. What was the use of fighting the war if the power that caused it was to be left at liberty to start another one? ...

---

[4] See Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty* and Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 3.

[5] One might argue that similar sections exist in newspapers in the 21st century, and that the trend present during the early 20th century was not unique. What is striking about the division of news in the newspapers from 1923 is the complete separation between world and national news. Modern newspapers tend to combine the most important international and national stories in the first section of the paper. The *New York Tribune* maintained a strict division.

[6] See the *New York Tribune*, microfilm. For this study, I concentrated on February, 1923, since *Pierrot* was first performed on the 4th of that month.

> [C]ivilized man must rise above the nation idea. The intelligent know that Europe can survive permanently only as a United States of Europe. Reducing the power of a nation that endangers European peace is a step toward that higher union, not only justified but imperative, if white Europe is not to go the way of ancient Greece.[7]

Although Swift's distrust of Germany and his desire for harsher terms, including the dissolution of the German empire, was not necessarily shared to the same degree by other New Yorkers, his prescient endorsement of a United States of Europe is striking. New Yorkers such as Swift realized that the world order had changed. Newspapers including the *Tribune* reflected their struggle to understand the new order.

Politically, America faced an era of increased power and international influence. In contrast, Germany and Austria, defeated in the War and humiliated under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, lost much of the influence they had enjoyed. This political shift was reflected in the cultural scene as well. Only a generation before, German musicians and conductors had toured America, bringing their culture to a society ready to accept what Europeans offered. After the War, the American cultural and musical scene developed its own patterns, including a rather skeptical approach to the new music coming from Germany and Austria.[8]

An alternate explanation for America's dislike of European musical developments is offered by Metzer, who attributes New York's cultural and social patterns to similarities with Britain rather than to opposition to Germany. In particular, Britain had not yet embraced artistic modernism. Rather, British society still relied on the artistic ideals of the nineteenth century. The *commedia* figures did not seriously influence British society until 1918, and the modernists' challenge to the status quo had not yet crossed the Channel.[9] Even in the early 1920s, as British society explored the *commedia*, American society remained culturally dependent on the

---

[7] Morrison I. Swift, "Peril in German Strength: Failure to Break Up the Empire the 'Fatal Error' of the Peace Conference," *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

[8] See Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University, 2000).

[9] According to Martin Green and John Swan, Wagner was very popular in England in the first decade of the twentieth century. "But after 1918 Wagner was just another composer….After 1918 the commedia dell'arte excited the avant-garde, and the theater belonged to the Ballets Russes—especially their *Petrushka*—and to the long-running 1920s production of *The Beggar's Opera*." (Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 41.

Edwardians' "perceived certainty of moral and spiritual truths."[10]

Modernism's embrace of "moral uncertainty and irrationality and [its willingness to] openly examine all aspects of human behavior…"[11] seemed an affront to American culture of the 1920s. German modernism challenged America's Edwardian certainty and presented a vision of the world that denied the validity of the Edwardians' "universal laws or principles true for all times and places"[12] which governed every aspect of life, from politics to personal morals to art.

American Modernism in New York

Most members of New York's artistic circles were not involved in the political questions of the day. One of the quintessential American writers whose experience of modernism has shaped current perceptions, F. Scott Fitzgerald, remarked that, "It was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all."[13] Although the world looked to America after the end of the First World War, the American artistic response to the War turned inward, to self-expression and exploration rather than to public reaction to the world's recent experiences.

New York's cultural scene was dominated by the bohemians of the 1920s. The historian Christine Stansell describes the bohemians as, "a generation of willful, ambitious arrivistes [who have] become in historical memory a band of kindly, colorful dreamers…. [I]t was the bohemians who made modernity local and concrete, tangible to a popular American audience."[14] The bohemians have been described as a group composed mainly of writers living in and around Greenwich Village, whose opinions formed the central experience and expression of cultural life in the decades between the wars. The group was interested in artistic and personal exploration, and in the local experience of life in New York.

In the decade after 1918, New York, as America's most powerful city, attracted authors and musicians from all over the country in larger numbers than ever before. They came to New

---

[10] David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 675.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Francis Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 18.

[14] Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 3.

York intent upon the pursuit of what Harold Stearns described as a "self-conscious and deliberately critical examination of ourselves without sentimentality and without fear."[15] This searching appeared in the writing of the Greenwich Village bohemians.

Similarly, New York proved a cultural center for the African-Americans seeking a new life in the north. Harlem, soon to emerge as the center of Jazz, earned a reputation as the "black Manhattan." Douglas believes that the difference in expression between Greenwich Village and Harlem was not one of intent, but of method. "The younger generation of Harlem artists turned their back on the struggle for economic and political opportunity undertaken by their just-predecessors. Black Manhattan put its money on culture, not politics; Negroes were to write and sing and dance their way out of oppression."[16] Douglas attributes the Villagers' turn to literature and the Harlemites' to music to differences in literacy rates, and cultural traditions.

The need for personal expression through culture appeared in America and in Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century. The American expression of modernism was primarily literary. In this, it differed from the musical and artistic modernism expressed by Schoenberg and his compatriots in Vienna. In New York, the different forms of expression given to the experience of modernism further emphasized the city's many social and racial divisions.

Musical Life in New York[17]

Musical life in New York reflected the divisions present in the society. New York during the first decades of the twentieth century was a city of neighborhoods. Each neighborhood provided its residents with a self-contained world out of which they rarely needed to venture. New Yorkers divided themselves (and were divided by) questions of heritage, racial identity, wealth, and social class.[18] In 1919, Shaw Desmond described New York as being:

---

[15] Harold Stearns, quoted in Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 53.

[16] Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 18.

[17] Although it is a serious omission, I have chosen not to discuss jazz and its contribution to New York musical life in detail. Excellent works on Harlem and the Jazz Age include Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996), and the oral interviews in Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989).

[18] See Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989).

> …like a giant grapefruit. It is segregated into water-tight compartments. It is not a city—but a city of cities. The men and women I meet each day know nothing of their fellows. My waiter, Alphonse, doesn't know that a few hundred yards away there is a block of streets around Sixty-first where only black men live. The Irishman I met yesterday in the subway had never been in Wall Street. Chinatown is only a name to the information bureau. And I am told that only 65 percent of New Yorkers speak American.[19]

In his oral history of Manhattan,[20] Jeff Kisseloff described each neighborhood as having had, "its own life force, its own values and heroes. These things were sometimes determined by the area's geographical features… at other times by the kind of people who lived in the area and took responsibility for it…and at other times by twists of fate…"[21] The music New Yorkers listened to or played, and the concerts they attended, were also determined by their neighborhood traditions and social position.

Because of the fragmented nature of the city's cultural life, it is difficult to diagnose the exact condition of the American cultural and musical relationship to Europe in the 1920s. While theaters and concert halls presented frequent opportunities to attend performances of European works, such performances were not universally attended any more than they are nearly a century later. The audiences for the establishment productions of European works came primarily from the upper classes (those living in the wealthy neighborhoods), with a few seats in the balconies reserved for those who could not afford better tickets. The audience for the premiere of *Pierrot* would have consisted of a similar group.[22]

Less wealthy New Yorkers, and those who were not members of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition, were also acquainted with the famous European works. Doll Thomas recalled how, "the Lafayette [Theater in Harlem] gave the colored performers a chance to

---

.

[19] Shaw Desmond, quoted in William K. Klingaman, *1919: The Year Our World Began* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 284.

[20] Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989).

[21] Kisseloff, "Introduction," *You Must Remember This*, xvii.

[22] See Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989) and Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/ Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University, 1988).

perform in their own talent…. We were doin' dramas. Then… we even did light opera and then did complete opera. We did *Faust* with a complete colored cast."[23] The exact composition of the audience for a production at the Metropolitan Opera, therefore, does not provide details about which people were acquainted with art music and European culture, but about which people could afford to attend the most extravagant performances with the most famous artists. Again, that these people did not attend the premiere of *Pierrot* does not indicate that they would have had less interest in the music, but that it occurred in a venue out of their range.

In 1902, the journalist and music critic Richard Aldrich described how institutions including The People's Choral Union, the People's Symphony, and the Hebrew Educational Alliance were providing musical education and performances for the poorer classes. Noting that the wealthy often assumed that the poor were only interested in the "cheapest and poorest forms of music"[24] such as brass band concerts, Aldrich countered that:

> The [poorer people's] attitude in the matter is not to be ascertained from the noisiest of the applause to be heard in… concerts [of classical works] but from a quieter attitude of attention that does not always put itself in plain evidence on such occasions. There is an intense desire to know and appreciate better things among this class of people; it manifests itself in many directions, and the essentially popular nature of the work done by the three institutions we have mentioned shows how potent it is in music.[25]

Aldrich believed that the work being done by educational organizations in order to spread appreciation for classical music and participation in the musical life of the city was genuinely appreciated by those who participated since "there is no social standing to be gained on the east side by appearing at these concerts, as there is in other quarters up town by appearing at the opera or at the Philharmonic."[26] Like the productions at the Lafayette, the concerts of the People's Symphony provided venues in which many New Yorkers could hear the famous European works within their own communities.

---

[23] Doll Thomas, Interview in *You Must Remember This*, 274.

[24] Richard Aldrich, "Education in Musical Taste," in *Concert Life in New York, 1902-1923* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 3.

[25] Ibid. The idea of poor people appreciating the "better things" raises problems in 2006 because everything (normatively speaking) should be of equal value and worthy of equal affirmation. However, in 1902, Aldrich was reaffirming his tradition—the European-based, college-educated tradition to which poorer listeners aspired. For members of that tradition, and those who aspired to it, it was better.

[26] Ibid., 5.

Organizations like the People's Symphony made it possible for New Yorkers of all social positions to attend concerts of classical music and opera. Although the existence of the People's Symphony and the Lafayette Theater presents no clear information about the composition of the audience who attended the premiere of *Pierrot*, the profusion of cultural establishments indicates New York's cultural affinity for European works of the nineteenth century at all levels. The combination of Edwardian propriety and identification with the romanticism of Germanic tradition created a cultural situation unlike that in either England or Germany. When musical modernism came to America, audiences and critics for whom Mahler was modern enough were unprepared for the dissonance of atonality and for the violence of expressionism.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, classical musical organizations relied on the famous names of the previous century (and slightly on the impressionists of the first decade) rather than on the works of the newest composers. The music of Charles Ives, for example, was not given its own review in the twenty years during which Richard Aldrich covered the New York concert scene. Even the critic Paul Rosenfeld, who supported modern American composers including Ives and Varèse had strict boundaries in his musical world. "American music is not jazz,"[27] he wrote. "Jazz is not music."[28]

An examination of the schedule of performances for the week in which *Pierrot* was first performed demonstrates this musical conservatism [see Figure 1]. The number and variety of opera performances is the most striking element of the concert programming. Operas included *Cosi fan tutte, Tosca, Faust, Tannhaüser, Romeo et Juliette,* and others. Instrumental programming remained within the established canon of works. As this week also included the fortieth anniversary of Wagner's death, a Wagner festival lasting for three weeks and including multiple performances of that composer's works was advertised next to this calendar.[29]

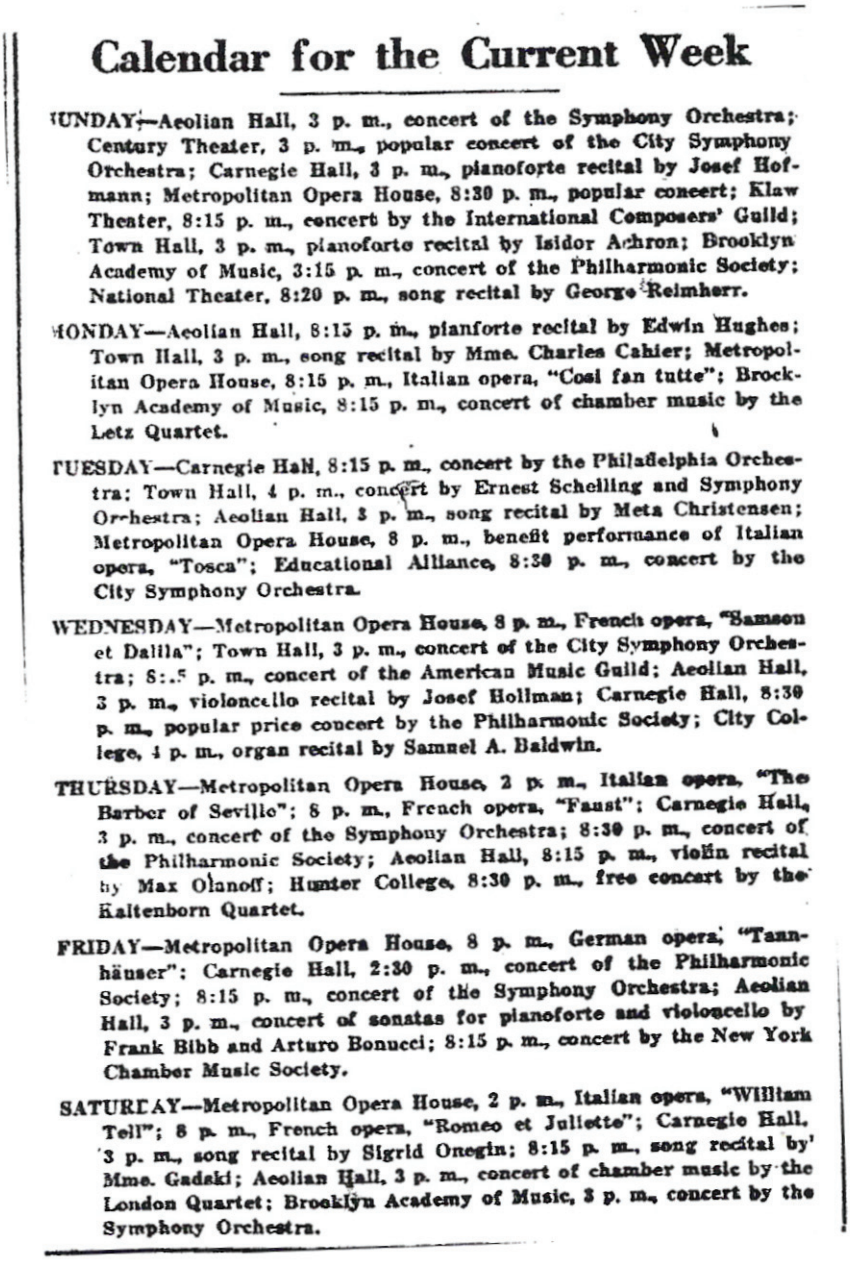
That Wagner was honored in America was due in large part to the critical assessment of his work by W. J. Henderson and Henry Edward Krehbiel, the latter of whose opinions are discussed in detail in the following chapter. Wagner's reception was already established in 1864, when a review of *Tannhaüser* in the *New York Times*, while cautious about the harmonic

---

[27] Paul Rosenfeld, "Jazz and Music: Music in America," in *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism*, ed. Herbert A. Leibowitz (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 221.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Already in 1900, the *New York Times* critic W.J. Henderson felt that, "the Wagner drama is now accepted by the mass of music lovers as a matter of course. It no longer puzzles them." Reviewing the recent Wagner cycle offered by the Metropolitan opera, Henderson criticized the Met for the poor quality



Calendar for the Current Week

SUNDAY—Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., concert of the Symphony Orchestra; Century Theater, 3 p. m., popular concert of the City Symphony Orchestra; Carnegie Hall, 3 p. m., pianoforte recital by Josef Hofmann; Metropolitan Opera House, 8:30 p. m., popular concert; Klaw Theater, 8:15 p. m., concert by the International Composers' Guild; Town Hall, 3 p. m., pianoforte recital by Isidor Achron; Brooklyn Academy of Music, 3:15 p. m., concert of the Philharmonic Society; National Theater, 8:20 p. m., song recital by George Reimherr.

MONDAY—Aeolian Hall, 8:15 p. m., pianforte recital by Edwin Hughes; Town Hall, 3 p. m., song recital by Mme. Charles Cahier; Metropolitan Opera House, 8:15 p. m., Italian opera, "Cosi fan tutte"; Brooklyn Academy of Music, 8:15 p. m., concert of chamber music by the Letz Quartet.

TUESDAY—Carnegie Hall, 8:15 p. m., concert by the Philadelphia Orchestra; Town Hall, 4 p. m., concert by Ernest Schelling and Symphony Orchestra; Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., song recital by Meta Christensen; Metropolitan Opera House, 8 p. m., benefit performance of Italian opera, "Tosca"; Educational Alliance, 8:30 p. m., concert by the City Symphony Orchestra.

WEDNESDAY—Metropolitan Opera House, 8 p. m., French opera, "Samson et Dalila"; Town Hall, 3 p. m., concert of the City Symphony Orchestra; 8:.5 p. m., concert of the American Music Guild; Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., violoncello recital by Josef Hollman; Carnegie Hall, 8:30 p. m., popular price concert by the Philharmonic Society; City College, 4 p. m., organ recital by Samuel A. Baldwin.

THURSDAY—Metropolitan Opera House, 2 p. m., Italian opera, "The Barber of Seville"; 8 p. m., French opera, "Faust"; Carnegie Hall, 3 p. m., concert of the Symphony Orchestra; 8:30 p. m., concert of the Philharmonic Society; Aeolian Hall, 8:15 p. m., violin recital by Max Olanoff; Hunter College, 8:30 p. m., free concert by the Kaltenborn Quartet.

FRIDAY—Metropolitan Opera House, 8 p. m., German opera, "Tannhäuser"; Carnegie Hall, 2:30 p. m., concert of the Philharmonic Society; 8:15 p. m., concert of the Symphony Orchestra; Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., concert of sonatas for pianoforte and violoncello by Frank Bibb and Arturo Bonucci; 8:15 p. m., concert by the New York Chamber Music Society.

SATURDAY—Metropolitan Opera House, 2 p. m., Italian opera, "William Tell"; 8 p. m., French opera, "Romeo et Juliette"; Carnegie Hall, 3 p. m., song recital by Sigrid Onegin; 8:15 p. m., song recital by Mme. Gadski; Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., concert of chamber music by the London Quartet; Brooklyn Academy of Music, 3 p. m., concert by the Symphony Orchestra.

Figure 1 ***New York Tribune*** **February 4, 1923. The International Composers' Guild concert on Sunday included the premiere of** ***Pierrot.***

innovations praised many elements of the work: "The concerted pieces and the choruses are always vigorous. Some of the combinations are really overwhelming. The orchestral partition is exceedingly well considered."[30] Further:

> There are extravagances of harmony to which it is not necessary to refer. They are frightful on paper, but not always disagreeable to the ear; nevertheless, it must be confessed that some of the modulations are abrupt and harsh. Our forefathers used to go from key to key with great dignity and stateliness; Wagner rushes about like a steam engine."[31]

The comparison of Wagner to a symbol of America's emerging modernism, the steam engine, is perhaps indicative of the conflicting opinions about modernization even in 1864. Such discussions would only become more intense as the turn of the century approached.

According to the historian Joseph Horowitz, the American Wagnerism movement, which reached its height at the end of the nineteenth century, "dominated America's musical high culture for three decades. It became an essential component of general intellectual discourse. And it contributed a significant… chapter to the history of the 'new American woman.'"[32] Wagner's music offered American women a form of emotional release. Yet,

> Wagnerism in America did not, as in Europe, herald an iconoclastic modernism. To genteel culture-bearers, Wagner seemed meaningful, titillating, and, mainly, reassuring. He stirred powerful and neglected feelings, yet was found not to challenge but to reinforce the intellectual mainstream.[33]

Although the Wagner cult did not last with the same intensity in the first decades of the twentieth century, American audiences (both critical and public) remained attached to the German romantic tradition.

---

of the staging, since, "The time has gone by when 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' could be treated as a novelty to this public and put forward in any sort of manner with the confident expectation that we would not know that all was not as it should be." (W.J. Henderson, "Themes and Topics in the Musical World," *New York Times*, March 4, 1900, www.proquest.com.)

[30] "Amusements," *New York Times*, January 21, 1864, www.proquest.com.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Joseph Horowitz, "Finding a 'Real Self': American Women and the Wagner Cult of the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Summer, 1994), 189.

[33] Ibid., 193.

In addition to the Wagner cult described by Horowitz, Lawrence W. Levine analyzes American musical culture during the nineteenth century and finds that the European operatic tradition throve at all levels of American society. Throughout the nineteenth century, American audiences attended performances of entire operas and selections of operatic arias in which, "it was common… for opera companies to insert popular airs of the day either as a supplement to, or as a replacement for, certain arias."[34] Although this practice declined in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and was no longer in use after the First World War, American audiences clearly attended frequent operatic performances. New York audiences in particular, would have been especially knowledgeable about operatic standards and about the various performers passing through the city. New York's musical life, while more romantic than modern in the 1920s, possessed a varied character, and the abundant orchestral and operatic programs offered weekly (not to mention the numerous recitals by European instrumentalists and singers) demonstrated an appreciation for the European tradition.

Critical approval (including Krehbiel's) of Wagner did not extend to his musical descendants. Critics described the New York performances of Richard Strauss's *Salomé* as music to "sicken the mind and wreck the nerves."[35] William Everdell describes both the American critics and public as "enthralled by the late romantic tradition"[36] and uninterested in the music of contemporary composers, including that of Charles Ives, a native New Yorker.

The International Composers' Guild (sponsors of new music performances including the premiere of *Pierrot*) gave only one concert during the week of February 4th. There were numerous symphony concerts, instrumental recitals, and an incredible number of operas. A closer examination of a few concert programs shows that the City Symphony "pops" concert program included Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, Liszt's "Les Preludes," and other works by Bizet and Mozart. The New York Symphony was offering works by Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Wagner, Mozart, and (surprisingly) Richard Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*.[37]

---

[34] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/ Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, M.A.: 1988), 90.

[35] See William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997), 273. Everdell's reference to the "late-romantic tradition" is to Wagner and Mahler. Presumably, Everdell places Richard Strauss in the category of "modern" composers.

[36] Ibid., 273

[37] "In the World of Music and Musicians," *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

As demonstrated by the listing of concert programs for the week of February 4th (typical of the programs for the rest of the year) neither the public nor the music critics were well acquainted with (or interested in) the newest developments in European music. The music historian Oscar Thompson described the American school of music criticism as "singularly self-sufficient and self-contained throughout the years… Ordinarily, [critics] wrote as if completely ignorant of, and totally disinterested in, the verdicts that already had been formulated in Italy, France, Germany, or England, on the new music or the new interpreters passing in review before them."[38] This observation, taken with the absence of new works from the standard concert repertoire, may explain why American audiences lacked a context in which to understand Schoenberg's *Pierrot*.

The New York Premiere of *Pierrot*

As advertised, the American premiere of Schoenberg's *Pierrot* took place on February 4th, 1923, in the Klaw Theater in New York. The concert was sponsored by the International Composers' Guild, an organization founded and maintained by Edgard Varèse and Carlos Salzedo for the presentation of new works. From 1922 to 1927, the Guild presented premieres of works by modern American and European composers including "Varèse's *Hyperprism*, *Octandre* and *Intégrales*, and American premières of Berg's *Kammerkonzert*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, Stravinsky's *The Wedding*, and Webern's op.5."[39]

The advertisement in the *New York Tribune* described *Pierrot* as a "melodrama,"[40] "a very ancient invention rarely employed." Schoenberg's treatment was said to present "difficulties of interpretation [that] can hardly be over estimated." The International Composers' Guild selected Louis Gruenberg to conduct the premiere after Schoenberg turned down an invitation from Varèse.[41] According to Metzer:

---

[38] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428.

[39] Rita H. Mead, "International Composers' Guild," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

[40] This and the two following quotations are taken from "Composers Guild Giving 'Pierrot Lunaire' To-night," *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

[41] The other musicians involved were Jacob Mestechkin (violin), Leroy Shield (piano), William Durieux (cello), George Possell (flute), Robert Lindemann (clarinet), and Greta Torpadie (soprano). Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 289.

> In his curt response [to Varèse], Schoenberg questioned the group's ability to perform the work and turned down the invitation. The composer's resentment was largely fueled by the guild's disruption of his plans to present both *Pierrot* and *Guerrelieder* during a 1923 American tour. He asked a New York reporter to warn audiences not to regard the performance as definitive, since 'a stranger' could not express his artistic ideas.[42]

The International Composers' Guild was not deterred by Schoenberg's dismissal of its activities. Instead, the Guild increased publicity for the concert, even including a lecture by Carl Engel, the head of the music division of the Library of Congress, given on January 7, 1923.[43] Engel's work at the Library of Congress focused on the expansion of the collection of American music and music literature, with an emphasis on the works of modern composers. Although he did not specialize in Schoenberg's music, his interest in the new, his position as the curator of the American manuscript collection, and his membership in the Guild may all have contributed to his being chosen to give the explanatory lecture.[44] Efforts to promote the concert proved successful, and the premiere was sold out. According to Claire Reis, the chairperson of the Guild's executive committee, approximately two hundred people were turned away at the door.[45]

After the premiere, the critics agreed that the performance had adhered to Schoenberg's score, if not perfectly, then at least well enough to be able to judge the merits of *Pierrot*. The one noted exception was the Guild's decision to hire Greta Torpadie to perform the *Sprechstimme* part.[46] The music critic Henry Edward Krehbiel wrote particularly that the score called for a male singer and that the New York performance, therefore, was not according to the composer's

---

[42] Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire,'" 672. This anticipated tour never occurred. Schoenberg first reached America in 1933, as a refugee from Nazi Germany. His position in the United States was never very solid. His contemporary, Igor Stravinsky, enjoyed much greater respect and more musical understanding.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Rita Benton, "Libraries: Canada and the USA: Washington, DC," *Grove Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90> [No record of the details of this lecture could be found.]

[45] Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire,'" 672.

[46] According to Carol Oja, Varèse defended the ICG's decision to hire Greta Torpadie in a letter to Schoenberg, describing her as a "Swedish singer, trained in Europe, very well known here, a splendid musician, familiar with your style and possessing an excellent German pronounciation." Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 290.

directions.[47] Further, Krehbiel criticized Torpadie for her diction, which sees to have worsened as the evening progressed. To Krehbiel, understanding the poems would have been critical to correct assessment of *Pierrot*. The concert programs included English paraphrases of the poems, which Krehbiel deemed insufficient. The German words were not printed. That the audience could not have possibly understood the German indicated to Krehbiel that those who had applauded and praised the performance had done so out of ignorance.[48]

More positive assessments came from Aldrich, who wrote that the work had fared well "in the hands of last night's excellent and dedicated players."[49] Paul Rosenfeld cited the opinions of "Conductor Mengelberg, who heard the work under the direction of the composer himself [and] Darius Milhaud, who directed it in Paris"[50] as proof that the performance had been faithful to Schoenberg's score. If critics reacted doubtfully to *Pierrot*, their doubts should not be ascribed to the quality of the performance.

Because of the lack of documentation, it is more difficult to evaluate the public reaction to *Pierrot*. Krehbiel described the scene at the premiere: "The performers seemed to be in deadly earnest, and so, also, no doubt, were a great many who listened to them."[51] According to Aldrich, "The younger and youngest generations of the local musical intelligentsia were enthusiastically present. There were also musicians of the elder line, curious, but less enthusiastic."[52]

Judging from the subsequent history of the International Composers' Guild, the audience reaction was mainly favorable. According to Metzer, "Whereas many concertgoers may have

---

[47] This criticism may have come from Schoenberg's directions on the performance of *Sprechstimme* in the score of *Pierrot*, in which he refers to "Der Sänger." The German clearly refers to a male singer. The history of *Pierrot* is at odds with this notation, as it was composed for the actress Albertine Zehme, who was the work's first "Sängerin." Perhaps Schoenberg's notation, which should probably have been taken generally, was interpreted too literally by Krehbiel.

[48] See Krehbiel, "The Curse of Affectation and Modernism in Music," *New York Tribune*, February 11, 1923, sec. 5, p. 5.

[49] Aldrich, "International Composers' Guild," in *Concert Life In New York, 1902-1923* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 725.

[50] Rosenfeld, "Musical Chronicle," *The Dial* 74, 431.

[51] Henry Edward Krehbiel, "Symphony Gives Concert Marred by Burlesque: 'Petroushka' Played Without Choreographic Setting Induces Buffonery Into Pleasing Program: Composers' Guild Heard: Grotesquerie Again Evident in Satie Selections and in Discordant 'Pierrot' Suite," *New York Tribune*, February 5, 1923.

[52] Aldrich, "International Composers' Guild," in *Concert Life in New York*, 725.

been dismayed, the work proved to be a popular success."[53] In fact, the performance was such a success that members of the Guild pressed for a second performance despite the International Composers' Guild's charter stating that it would only give premieres. The division over a second performance proved so great that a group of the Guild's members, including Louis Gruenberg, the conductor at the premiere, split away, founding the League of Composers.[54]

The differences between the International Composers' Guild and the League of Composers proved more than a dispute over offering second performances. According to Carol Oja, the League of Composers' stated goal "was to 'program music representative of the present time' and to choose it 'regardless of nationality of school or composer.'"[55] In reality, the ICG and the League came to represent two different groups of composers. The composers of the ICG included the "experimentalists" Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, Charles Ives, Charles Seeger, Nicholas Slonimsky, and Edgard Varèse. The League consisted mainly of the composers who studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, including Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Virgil Thomson, and others.[56] In both organizational and compositional identity, American composers were divided into these two groups—those whose idiom developed within the United States and those whose studies led them to Paris.[57] Some of the internal divisions in New York's musical society may have also been reflected in the response to *Pierrot*. Composers in the original Guild would have been more sympathetic to Schoenberg's expressionism and his explorations of atonality. Those American composers who studied in Paris would have adopted a very different idea of musical modernism from that expressed by Schoenberg.[58]

The strongest opinions both against and for *Pierrot* came from the critics, whose opinions demonstrated their own musical leanings rather than attempting to provide entirely objective evaluations of *Pierrot*. In forming their opinions of *Pierrot*, the critics relied on their own life experiences and years of writing about music in New York in order to evaluate Schoenberg's

---

[53] Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire,'" 674.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 178.

[56] Ibid., 178-179.

[57] For a more complete discussion of Boulanger and the identification and styles of American composers, see Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern* (New York: Oxford University, 2000).

[58] Although I have found no clear evidence for this assumption, Oja does mention the possibility and the several different trends present in New York in the 1920s.

work. The reputations of the critics and the influence of their respective newspapers in informing and educating the public indicate that the music critics' reviews would have been widely read and discussed. Established critics who denounced *Pierrot* represented the traditional, elder generation of concertgoers and musicians. Since New York's orchestras and operas depended on such listeners for their survival, the directors of influential organizations noted the critical opinions against musical modernism, and cited them in defense of conservative programming. The younger critics, writing for the bohemian audience and the emergent interest in modernism among the younger generation, applauded Schoenberg's *Pierrot*. Yet even the younger generation found it necessary to explain Schoenberg's music to readers.

Conclusions

The First World War caused a break in the transatlantic sharing of artistic ideas. Although the European composers and musical ideals of the nineteenth century had become well-established in America, newer developments including musical modernism did not reach American until well after their emergence in Austria and Germany. Because of this delay, the *commedia* figure of *Pierrot*, part of the German experience of the turn of the century, seemed strange to American audiences of 1923.

Modernism found expression through music and art in Europe and primarily through literature in America. Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, while comprehensible to European audiences as representative of the modernism prevalent in the society, was criticized for its musical innovations. In America, musical modernism was confusing for audiences, both public and critical. The writings of the American music critics reflect America's unfamiliarity with the *commedia*, with musical modernism, and with Schoenberg's compositional techniques. The critical opinions expressed after the premiere of *Pierrot*, both by establishment and avant-garde critics, reflect the difficulties American concertgoers encountered in coming to terms with *Pierrot*.

The lack of cultural relevance of *Pierrot's* poetry (and the difficulty of understanding the German texts) meant that Americans encountered Schoenberg's expressionism without being culturally prepared for the breakdown of tonality. Public reactions at the New York premiere were polite rather than enthusiastic (as they had been in Berlin). Critical reactions, divided along generational lines. The elder critics evaluated Schoenberg's atonality as a foreign and unnecessary concept. The younger critics accepted the premise of atonality, that the old tradition

needed extension, but still found that *Pierrot* needed explanation and repeated hearings before it would be comprehensible.

Pierrot did not possess the same cultural relevance for New Yorkers as it had for Berliners. The role of the New York music critics in evaluating all of the aspects of *Pierrot* proved more influential than the public reaction at the premiere in determining Schoenberg's lasting position in the American classical canon. Because of the basic conservatism of the most influential New York critics, written estimations of Schoenberg as incomprehensible and unnecessarily atonal have survived in the popular imagination despite the mixed public reaction at the premiere and the subsequent performances of *Pierrot*.

IV. THE CRITICS

> "…Surely the present structure of society, which rests on the newspaper, invites attention to the existing relationship between musician, critic, and public as an important element in the question How to Listen to Music."
>
> -- Henry Edward Krehbiel[1]

Introduction

Along with the questions of geographical and cultural separation between Europe and America in the early decades of the twentieth century, New York's experience of modernism was complicated by the divided opinions of the generations. The older generation of critics tended to agree more with the older generation of German critics, disapproving of Schoenberg and his fellow modernists. The younger generation of American critics embraced modernism both in their own cities and cultural venues and in the foreign musical trends that they began to explore after the end of the First World War.

In order to examine this generational divide as a part of Schoenberg's reception in New York, this chapter examines the opinions of three of the most influential music critics writing in New York at the turn of the century-- Henry Edward Krehbiel of the *New York Tribune*, Richard Aldrich of the *New York Times*, and Paul Rosenfeld of *The Dial*. While Krehbiel and Aldrich were well established in their careers in 1923, Rosenfeld was a member of the younger generation whose career had only begun a few years before.

All three of the critics discussed here took a firm position on modernism in music. Each attended the New York premiere of *Pierrot* and recorded his impressions in subsequent reviews and essays. These three critics were selected for this study based on the number of their essays on music and on the wide circulation of the newspapers in which their writings appeared. The articles of Krehbiel, Aldrich, and Rosenfeld are representative of the larger critical community and of the divide within that community. According to David Metzer:

> In attacking or praising *Pierrot*, critics relied on contemporary ideals of the nature and role of music, and throughout their reviews these ideals were educed. In particular, the work, as would be expected, challenged traditional views of tonality and genre; however, it also touched upon both conceptions regarding the limits of expression and the expectation that music be beautiful and moral.[2]

---

[1] Henry Edward Krehbiel, *How to Listen to Music (Hints and Suggestions to Untaught Lovers of the Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 298.

[2] David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 674-675.

Like Metzer, I believe that it is impossible to understand the critical reaction to *Pierrot* without first having understood the cultural world of New York in the 1920s. The critics' writings on the nature of music, the role of the critic, and modern music in general, illuminate the discussion of musical modernism in New York with specific examples. Critical reactions to *Pierrot* reflected the divisions then present in New York society between the older and the younger generations. Krehbiel and Aldrich represent the older generation. Rosenfeld represents the younger one. All three critics' reviews of the New York premiere of *Pierrot* appeared within a few days of the performance. These reviews reflected the diverse opinions of the critics in each generation. Although it is not possible to determine the extent of these reviews' influence in forming public opinions of Schoenberg or of *Pierrot* in New York during the 1920s, the critical writings reflect the diversity of opinion present at the premiere.

Henry Edward Krehbiel

Henry Edward Krehbiel (1854-1923) was one of the best-known critics writing in New York at the turn of the twentieth century.[3] From 1880 until his death on March 20th, 1923 (six weeks after the New York premiere of *Pierrot*), he wrote for the *New York Tribune*. Trained as a lawyer, Krehbiel was a self-taught musician and musical critic whose tastes were conservative rather than experimental. His writings include the completion of the first English language edition of Thayer's *Life of Ludwig van Beethoven* (1921)*; How to Listen to Music* (1896), which was reprinted 30 times; *Chapters of Opera* (1908); *More Chapters of Opera* (1919); and numerous other works. The two works on opera "comprise a two-volume history of opera in New York that has not been superseded."[4]

Krehbiel was a proponent of the theory that a culture's music reflected the lives of its people. A culture could be identified by its music, and members of that culture would naturally gravitate towards the musical style that best expressed its character. To Krehbiel, such identification was subconscious, but inescapable. German music such as *Pierrot* would,

---

[3] The information in this and the following paragraph as well as the quote is taken from Joseph Horowitz, "Henry Edward Krehbiel," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006), < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

[4] Ibid.

therefore, be most accessible to German audiences. American audiences would relate more fully to music written in a cultural idiom familiar to them, even when that idiom was adapted by a European composer. Krehbiel believed that his theory was proven in the critical and popular success of Antonin Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, with its incorporation of African-American (to Krehbiel, "American folk") melodies. Krehbiel also championed the conductor Anton Seidl, whom Joseph Horowitz calls "the key figure in an American Wagner movement of which Krehbiel was the central chronicler."[5]

Horowitz sums up the last years of Krehbiel's life thus:

> After the turn of the 20th century, Krehbiel's taste became increasingly conservative. His insistence that art serve a moral purpose was at odds with the new modernism; he chafed at the Caruso cult and other harbingers of a less élitist artistic climate. In a notorious obituary documenting his fierce admiration for the *fin-de-siècle* achievements of Seidl and Dvořák, Krehbiel denounced Gustav Mahler, whose New York career he had followed, for rescoring Beethoven, composing polyglot symphonies and underestimating the sophistication of New York's concert and operatic culture. His review of the American première of Strauss's *Salome* (in *Chapters of Opera*) is a masterpiece of shrewd opprobrium. No subsequent New York music critic has played so influential a role within the city's community of artists.[6]

Since Krehbiel disapproved of the compositions of Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss, it is not hard to imagine that his opinions of Schoenberg would be harsh as well. Additionally, Krehbiel's influential position within New York's cultural establishment indicates that members of the public who read his reviews regularly would have absorbed his opinions and evaluations of German composers writing at the end of the nineteenth century. As a leading member of the elder generation of music critics and concertgoers in New York, Krehbiel spoke for the New York establishment. His reluctance to accept the tenets of modernism and the German developments of the twentieth century demonstrates the attitude of the elder generation toward Schoenberg and his contemporaries as well as toward those composers in the generation before Schoenberg himself.

For the purposes of this analysis, Krehbiel's most important work is *How to Listen to Music*, first published in 1896, and reprinted (not revised, however,) in 30 subsequent editions.[7]

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Henry Edward Krehbiel, *How to Listen to Music: Hints and Suggestions to Untaught Lovers of*

The book presents Krehbiel's ideas about music, directed toward "those who love music and present themselves for its gracious ministrations in Concert-Room and Opera House, but have not studied it as professors and scholars are supposed to study."[8] In addressing himself to music lovers rather than to formally trained musicians, Krehbiel demonstrates his belief that:

> The capacity properly to listen to music is better proof of musical talent in the listener than skill to play upon an instrument or ability to sing acceptably when unaccompanied by that capacity. It makes more for that gentleness and refinement of emotion, thought, and action which, in the highest sense of the term, it is the province of music to promote. And it is a much rarer accomplishment.[9]

Krehbiel's attitude toward audience members and music lovers reveals the sensibility of a teacher, ready to explain musical concepts such as sonata form and organizational details such as the seating chart of the New York Philharmonic in detail. Krehbiel wants to create a pool of educated listeners who can tell the difference between a symphony and a sonata, and stresses this through a large section of the book dealing with instances of music's misrepresentation in literature, including cellists entertaining guests with solo renditions of Beethoven's symphonies, etc. He wants to create a class of society whose members understand musical matters, and will provide the modern musical performers with informed audience members. Krehbiel believes that his position enables him to help his readers to interpret the ideas of the composers, and advocates similar actions from other people:

> There is a greater need than pianoforte teachers and singing teachers, and that is a numerous company of writers and talkers who shall teach the people how to listen to music so that it shall not pass through their heads like a vast tonal phantasmagoria, but provide the varied and noble delights contemplated by the composers.[10]

Krehbiel's attitude reveals his belief that members of the general public, including those who attend symphony concerts and operas regularly, do so out of cultural obligation or habit

---

the Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

[8] Ibid., 3.

[9] Ibid., 4-5.

[10] Ibid., 12.

rather than true appreciation for the music. In his opinion, people should not attend concerts without understanding the vision of the composer. One might argue about the specific nature of that vision and Krehbiel's insistence on his own interpretation of classical compositions. However, Krehbiel's evaluation of the public as needing the instruction he could provide influenced his writing.

Krehbiel's book offers no description of the "modern" music developing during the early years of the twentieth century. This is not surprising considering that the first edition of the book was published in 1896. However, Krehbiel never found it necessary to update the book for subsequent editions published during his lifetime. Obviously, Horowitz's analysis of Krehbiel as a conservative is substantially correct.[11] Krehbiel's appreciation for developments in musical composition seems to have ended with Wagner. He disapproves of further innovations, including the music of Mahler.

In the final chapter of *How to Listen to Music*, "Musician, Critic, and Public," Krehbiel describes the role his work plays in society:

> I have been told that there are many people who read the newspapers on the day after they have attended a concert or operatic representation for the purpose of finding out whether or not the performance gave them proper or sufficient enjoyment.[12]

Krehbiel places himself and his reviews in a position from which to inform and influence New Yorkers' musical understanding. Although he seems dismissive of his audiences' capacity for musical understanding without expert guidance, Krehbiel's language may sound harsher to modern ears than it did in 1896. To Krehbiel, the public's need for guidance means that the critic has a responsibility to educate the public and to increase understanding and appreciation for music:

> The critic should be the mediator between the musician and the public. For all new works he should do what the symphonists of the Liszt school attempt to do by means of programmes [*sic*]; he should excite curiosity, arouse interest, and pave the way to popular comprehension. But for the old he should not fail to encourage reverence and admiration. To do both these things he must know his duty to the past, the present, and the future, and adjust each duty to the other.

---

[11] Horowitz, "Krehbiel," *Grove Music Online*.

[12] Krehbiel, *How to Listen to Music*, 297.

> Such an adjustment is only possible if he knows the music of the past and present, and is quick to perceive the bent and outcome of novel strivings. He should be catholic in taste, outspoken in judgment, unalterable in allegiance to his ideals, unswerving in integrity.[13]

Krehbiel's stated purpose, to mediate between the musician and the public, showing the public how best to appreciate the work of the musician and providing the background for musical understanding, was undoubtedly useful for his public in the years when Wagner was still relatively unknown and Krehbiel's writing provided the background for his innovations and operatic sagas. His strong personal dislike of the truly modern, however, also weakened his ability to objectively introduce composers such as Mahler and Richard Strauss to his public.

The depth of his reviews far surpassed that of those written today. Oscar Thompson described how, in one series of reviews, "Krehbiel wrote on three successive days after the first American performance of *Tristan and Isolde*, going back to the origins of the story and arriving at a discussion of the music only on the third day."[14] On his death in 1923, the *New York Times* obituary described him as the "dean" of the country's musical critics who "had put the profession of musical criticism upon a higher plane of knowledge and competence in all that makes for a true basis of judgment than it had ever occupied before his day."[15] Additionally, the obituary praised his reviews and the corresponding "advance in the numbers of the musical public in the United States, a great elevation in the standard of taste and knowledge."[16] All of this:

> [H]e wrought unselfishly, without fear or favor, always for what he believed to be the truest and the best in music and always against the insincere and shallow. He had a mind always open to the newer developments of art that seemed to him based on ideals of beauty and sincerity—such a mind must any critic have who would not block its progress and make for stagnation. But he was first of all a lover of the classics, a profound student of the masters and their work. The loss of such a man is the loss of a fine and noble influence for good.[17]

---

[13] Ibid., 323.

[14] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 431.

[15] "Henry Edward Krehbiel" *The New York Times*, March 22, 1923, www.proquest.com.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

Krehbiel's position as "a lover of the classics" influenced his opinions of modern music, including *Pierrot*. His appreciation for the works of the classical canon and his reliance on nineteenth-century ideals of "beauty and sincerity" placed Krehbiel firmly within the realm of the old New York establishment, whose members regarded the emerging modernism of the 1920s with suspicion and distaste. However, for many years, Krehbiel was at the forefront of New York's musical life, and one of its primary chroniclers. His contemporary and colleague, Richard Aldrich, the music critic for the *New York Times* remembered Krehbiel thus:

> Krehbiel… had a place in America that corresponded to that of the great critics of the nineteenth century in Europe: a place of commanding influence and authority…. As a critic Krehbiel had an unusual power of analyzing and penetrating to the essential quality of a musical work on the first hearing. His analyses of important compositions from the score, before their first productions in New York, were masterly and authoritative…. [H]e was above all a classicist—a lover of Bach, of Mozart, of Beethoven, of Schubert, of the greatest men of the past who have erected the great and enduring foundations of the art…. It may be truly said that this quality of reverence for the great men of music made Krehbiel a purist. He was wroth with any who sought to tamper with the works of the masters as they had left them; and this brought him into some notable conflicts with men who thought their reputations entitled them to do what they pleased. With this reverence was connected a great love for beauty and a grave dissent from all efforts to make of music something that was not, in some way or another, a manifestation of beauty.[18]

Aldrich's reference to "men who thought their reputations entitled them to do what they pleased" is clearly an allusion to Krehbiel's disdain for Mahler's rescoring of Beethoven. Aldrich's description of Krehbiel's dislike of those whose "efforts to make of music something that was not… a manifestation of beauty" points equally clearly to Krehbiel's dislike of modernism and the developments of the early twentieth century.

Delineated both in his own writings and in the writings of his contemporaries is Krehbiel's clear preference for the classics over the modern developments in musical composition. His opinions, widely read, played a large role in the development of New York's musical taste. If he preferred Mozart to Mahler, it is reasonable that many New York concertgoers would reach the same conclusion.

---

[18] Richard Aldrich, "Henry Edward Krehbiel," *New York Times*, March 25, 1923, www.proquest.com.

Krehbiel's reaction to *Pierrot*

After the premiere of Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, Krehbiel wrote a lengthy article in the *Tribune* entitled "The Curse of Affectation and Modernism in Music."[19] Unable to find beauty or comprehensibility in *Pierrot*, Krehbiel commented: "…[W]hat Schoenberg calls melodrama [is] nothing new. His treatment is, however, grotesquely, horribly new. The inventors of the operatic form started out with the notion that the melos of their drama was to be drawn from a study of the inflections of the speaking voice."[20] Using examples ranging from ancient Hebrew poetry to Monteverdi to Beethoven to Humperdinck, Krehbiel describes composers' understanding of speech patterns and inflections in writing vocal lines. This description serves as the foundation from which he analyzes Schoenberg's newly developed technique of *Sprechstimme*, which was a puzzling novelty in New York. According to Krehbiel's analysis, composers have long understood how to match their music to natural patterns of vocal expression, but "not so Schoenberg. To him vocal melody is nothing…. The result is a sort of whine which is neither speech nor song…"[21]

Krehbiel deplored the music, the composer, and the relatively bland reaction of the concertgoers:

> I saw perhaps a score of persons who were brave enough to leave the room at the first opportunity which presented itself when they could do so without being rude, and more than another score who had the hardihood to smile sarcastically or amusedly whenever the performance struck them as absurd, and yet sat it out to the bitter end. But no one indulged in catcalls, or even hisses. That was an example of the good manners that habitually rule in American concert-rooms…. I also saw and heard a hundred or more persons stand up and applaud the performance before putting on their wraps and coats…. [M]usicians pulled my sleeve and either joked or swore—generally the former….[22]

Krehbiel clearly believed that the good manners of the concert audience indicated formality rather than true approval of *Pierrot*. Additionally, the fact that musicians in the

---

[19] Henry Edward Krehbiel, "The Curse of Affectation and Modernism in Music," *New York Tribune*, February 11, 1923, sec. 5, p. 5.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

audience "either joked or swore" proved that those whom Krehbiel would have described as knowledgeable disapproved of *Pierrot*. Krehbiel's opinion may have truly represented the attitudes present in the concert hall at the premiere. Or, his may have been the reactions of an elder critic displeased by the works he heard and the validation of a new generation whose compositional trends were foreign to him. In any case, his displeasure with both the music and the audience reaction featured strongly in his published reviews.

Krehbiel's review criticizes those members of the concert audience who applaud without understanding what it is that they are hearing. He characterizes the attitude of the public as insincere and "affected" since:

> …whether "Pierrot lunaire" be a great art work or one of no value whatever; whether it be the product of sincerity or a sham, the fruit of conviction or of a pose, it can only be judged if adequately heard. To be adequately heard it must be properly performed; to be appreciated its plan and text must be understood. On the last point it must be said that it can not be listened to… without knowledge of the language employed…. [I]t was not enough to learn the general mood of Hartleben's paraphrase of Giraud's French poems from Mr. Meltzer's translations, which were paraphrases confessedly based on both and could not fit the music like the German text. One had to know German and hear and understand the German words, for Schoenberg professed, at least, to interpret them. He gave no latitude, though they took it, to the performers for interpretation.[23]

Because the audience members in attendance at the premiere, according to Krehbiel, were not equipped to understand the text in relation to the text, Krehbiel believed that those who had applauded the work had done more out of habit (the "good manners that habitually rule in American concert-rooms") rather than out of true appreciation for Schoenberg's melodrama. Krehbiel commented at length on this affectation, finding in it, rather than solely in Schoenberg's music, the true crisis of modernity:

> …of all the many things with which music is cursed just now affectation is, I think, the most pernicious. It is affectation of musical culture which gives us many more symphony concerts than we can assimilate—an affectation rooted in the cult of conductors; many more performances of opera and fewer operas of pith and moment because of the adoration of singers; affectation (and I fear something worse) of composers who are pointing out "new paths"; affectation of critics who either wish to appear in the van of progress or fear to be classed as conservatives or retroactives when they assert that there are principles of beauty in artistic manifestations foreign to those which ages have proved to be fundamental; affectation, again, in the profession of

---

[23] Ibid.

> composers and critics that there is essential propriety and beauty in the thing called 'self-expression.' Affectation in a hundred other things allied to art or… asserted to be so allied. Affectation in the notion that beauty may be expressed in terms of ugliness, and that ugliness of subject is a fit object for expression. Affectation also in the notion that by piling up words critics can justify the composer when he leaves the province of his art.[24]

To Krehbiel, the affectation of the audience precluded any serious appreciation for Schoenberg's music. In his comments, one reads not only the words of an elder critic, discomfited by the manner in which classical performance was changing, but also the disapproval for those in his own profession who approved of those changes. Krehbiel's analysis of *Pierrot* and his scorn for the endeavors of the International Composers' Guild demonstrate his adherence to the nineteenth-century tradition and its ideas of beauty in music. Schoenberg's modernism had no place in Krehbiel's musical repertory.

Krehbiel found both Schoenberg's music and the understanding of the public unsatisfactory and insufficient at the premiere in 1923. Sadly, he died only a few weeks after the performance. Had he lived longer, Krehbiel might have revised his opinion after hearing *Pierrot* conducted by Schoenberg, especially given the nearly twenty-year interval between the two performances. Even innovations such as *Sprechstimme* do not remain new and controversial for decades, and with time, Krehbiel's ears might have become accustomed to some of what was so shocking to him in 1923. Or perhaps he would have found continued justification for his first impression of modernism:

> Self-expression, indeed! Give a child a hammer and a board, or place it upon the pianoforte stool; its poundings will be self-expression. Does not the right of a practitioner in art to express himself depend on what is in him that is worthy of expression? Shall that be determined by the skilled among the multitude… or by the self constituted groups whose mutual admiration make for self-glorification? …If things are relatively finite and we are proceeding to a negation of all that is pleasurable to the mind and senses (thinking that appreciation of beauty is indicated by development in what we call refinement and civilization) are those artists geniuses who are striving to hasten a return to savagery?[25]

---

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

New York audiences were content to applaud Schoenberg. Krehbiel attributed this acceptance to faulty understanding, 'affectation,' and a lack of appreciation for what he considered true beauty, supplanted by a desire for modernity in all its forms. His colleague, Richard Aldrich, agreed.

Richard Aldrich

Like Krehbiel, Richard Aldrich (1863-1937) was a member of the older, establishment group of critics writing in the 1920s in New York. Aldrich worked a music critic in New York from 1891 until 1923. He graduated from Harvard 1885 and, after preliminary work in Providence, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C., moved to New York, where he joined the staff of the *New York Tribune* as an assistant editor, working under Henry Edward Krehbiel. Aldrich maintained this position until 1902, when a vacancy appeared at the *New York Times* due to the retirement of W.J. Henderson. Aldrich moved to the *Times*, assumed the position of music critic, and remained there until 1923. After his retirement, Aldrich remained on the staff of the *Times* as "critic emeritus," writing special editorials and book reviews. His collection of reviews and opinion pieces, *Concert Life in New York, 1902-1923*, is the definitive collection of his views on every concert and artist to appear on the New York stages during the first decades of the twentieth century.[26]

Aldrich was described by the music historian Oscar Thompson as a member of the Old Guard in American criticism. Critics of this stature "drew neither their opinions nor their phraseology from abroad…. If they heard music abroad it was the same as hearing it in New York; they heard it with the ears, not of the country in which they were sojourning, but of America."[27] Thompson's appraisal, written just four months after the deaths of both Aldrich and Henderson, described the two men as, "fitting representatives for all, [who] influenced the whole course of America's music in ways that are incalculable. And they have done this as Americans, writing for American readers in an essentially American way."[28]

---

[26] Otto Kinkeldy, "Forward," in Richard Aldrich, *Concert Life In New York, 1902-1923* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941).

[27] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism: The Legacy Left by W.J. Henderson, Richard Aldrich, and their Colleagues of the Old Guard," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428.

[28] Ibid., 439.

In many of his pieces for the *Times*, Aldrich reflected on the purpose of musical criticism. In May of 1920, responding to a letter sent in by a reader, Aldrich explained that he expected his readers to approach music with "a certain level of intelligence and information."[29] The music critic:

> cannot be blamed for assuming that people who like music enough to take the trouble to go to concerts are not among those who do not want to think or have their intelligence appealed to, or are not among those who have not equipped themselves with enough of the elementary principles and terminology of music to make possible a discussion of the subject without them.[30]

While Krehbiel wrote as an instructor to an under-informed audience, Aldrich assumed that his readers knew something about music, and that they approached the subject with a basic understanding of musical terminology. His articles convey the sense of a critic who was writing for a discerning audience, and who could express his opinions of artists and composers based on common assumptions with his readers about what constituted a "good" performance and what the desirable characteristics were for performers and compositions.

Aldrich's reviews and commentary, according to Thompson, relied not on outside opinions or on the public reception of certain works or artists in previous performances, but on Aldrich's own, very personal tastes. As a critic who expected his readers to have their own opinions, Aldrich approached criticism as a conversation in which he could state his opinions clearly rather than being forced to take a purely objective tone. His readers would have been well acquainted with his tastes, which were distinguished by his "fairness, honesty, and a complete absence of any vaunting of self at the expense of an artist or composer…"[31] Thompson describes Aldrich's reviewing as "sturdy, dependable, and level-headed… in season and out, over more than two decades of honorable service, he was a critic remarkably consistent in his views; and his opinions were read from day to day for the solid oak they contained…."[32]

In a review of *Concert Life in New York* written in 1942, the music critic and writer Olin Downes described Aldrich's writing as "precious and irreplaceable…. This was a reflex of his

---

[29] Richard Aldrich, "Criticism in the Vernacular," in *Concert Life In America*, 670.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," 436.

[32] Ibid., 436-437.

own nature, the texture of a mind rarely attuned to high values, his noiseless devotion to the art that he loved, and his selfless endeavor to bring something of its beauty and significance to his readers."[33] Downes praised "the sincerity of [Aldrich's] attitude toward the latest music that he heard, and the fearlessness and perspicacity of his approach to it."[34] For Downes, as for researchers today, "whether [Aldrich] would have changed his judgment of Schoenberg's 'Pierrot Lunaire,' as some others did after hearing the composer's own interpretation of his work last season [i.e. 1941], is a matter for conjecture."[35] Aldrich's first impressions of the work (and the "other compositions, also said to be musical, associated with it on the program"[36]) were not positive.

Aldrich's reaction to *Pierrot*

Aldrich's review of *Pierrot*, which appeared in the *New York Times* on February 5th, 1923, expressed his extreme reservations:

> A momentous event in the music world, long expected, loudly heralded, at least once postponed, occurred last evening in New York: the first performance in America of Arnold Schoenberg's "melodrama," called *Pierrot lunaire*…. Schoenberg's music for this subject is as much a negation of music in hitherto accepted connotations as his *Five orchestral pieces*, but less actively repugnant to the unattached music lover because they are kept almost throughout on a much more subdued level. Of any relation to harmony, melody, or musical expression, as heretofore understood, there is nothing. The instrumental parts are written with great complication, and the ensemble as the composer wishes it is difficult, demanding great and careful study. But when it comes off, as no doubt it did in the hands of last night's excellent and devoted players… the result is a variedly rhythmical and dynamic succession of disagreeable noises. In cheerful alliance with Beckmesser, it may be said that there is "of melody not a single trace," of harmony also none, and the impression upon the unattached music lover is simply nil, or more or less wearisomely repugnant.[37]

---

[33] Olin Downes, "The Musical Criticism of Richard Aldrich: 'Concert Life in New York' Is a Selection From the Writings of Twenty Years," *New York Times*, May 31, 1942, www.proquest.com.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Richard Aldrich, "International Composers' Guild," in *Concert Life In New York, 1902-1923* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 725.

[37] Ibid., 725-726.

Clearly, Aldrich's impression of *Pierrot* demonstrated his own leaning toward nineteenth-century standards of musical composition. Although he credited the performers with excellence, his praise seemed somewhat coy, and his true opinion of *Pierrot*, "a negation of music in hitherto accepted connotations," indicated that to Aldrich, *Pierrot* was not music at all. Having come of age before the turn of the century, Aldrich's criteria for musical beauty were those of his colleague, Henry Krehbiel, and of the preceding century.

A few days later, reflecting on modernism and the criteria used to evaluate modern compositions, Aldrich questioned the younger music critics (who had embraced *Pierrot*):

> Are there any really bad compositions in the most modern vein, French, Italian, English, or American? The question is addressed to the ardent, zealous supporters of the newest, latest, furthest developments in musical art. They and their spokesmen set forth from time to time their views about these works, in articles of more or less critical intention and tendency. The worse they sound the better they are said to be. Modern works, in these judgments, all seem to be good and even very good and very fine. They possess the most varied assortment of delightful qualities….[According to these critics] it is nothing less than a crime for a composer to write in any of the idioms that have been handed down, or to hold any of the older ideals of beauty, however touched both may be with a new spirit and extended in adaptation to new and independent thought. Any who do not throw overboard all the baggage inherited from the past, all transmitted ideas of melody and harmony, are reactionaries, pulling back and hindering the onward march of music…. Only the iconoclastic are good and they are all fine.[38]

From these (and other similar) comments, it is clear that Aldrich doubted the validity of the course of modern composers. These opinions seem not to have changed with time, even after his retirement. Oscar Thompson tells a story of Aldrich that "he was known to have remarked, when some one told him that he ought still to be writing in the years of his retirement, that he preferred not to have to write about the kind of 'modern music' then being played."[39]

To Aldrich, *Pierrot* and other 'modern' compositions were symptomatic of an age in which any previous emphasis on musical beauty had been superceded by incoherence and ugliness. He was joined in this judgment by Krehbiel, as seen above. Aldrich and Krehbiel upheld the European tradition of the nineteenth century as the model on which twentieth-century

---

[38] Richard Aldrich "Some Judgments on New Music," in *Concert Life In New York, 1902-1923* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 727-728.

[39] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," 433.

composers should base their work. Although Schoenberg believed that his compositions were grounded in the traditions of the Germanic past, the innovative techniques used in *Pierrot* made it difficult for critics such as Aldrich and Krehbiel to accept Schoenberg as representative of the European tradition. To Krehbiel and Aldrich, compositions without clear tonality seemed barbaric and entirely detached from the classical tradition. They saw atonality as a direct challenge to rather than as a continuation of the romanticism they knew. In opposition, however, stood the younger critic, Paul Rosenfeld, who approved of the new music and of Schoenberg's additions to the tradition.

Paul Rosenfeld

Like Krehbiel and Aldrich, Paul Rosenfeld (1890-1946) came to music criticism from a background of recreational musical experience and work in literary criticism. Unlike those other critics, however, Rosenfeld was a strong believer in modernism, and a champion of composers from Stravinsky to Ives. Rosenfeld graduated from Yale in 1912 and spent one year studying journalism at Columbia University before leaving for Europe, where he spent the next three years. During his time in Paris, Rosenfeld became convinced, "that the effort to foster and create a complex, aesthetically rounded American art, unbeholden to European models, could only be made in America itself."[40] Rosenfeld's emphasis on American culture led him to champion American composers and artists, who were beginning to create the American version of modernism. Yet, Rosenfeld also approved of the work of Edgard Varèse and the International Composers' Guild, since by bringing contemporary European music to American audiences, the Guild broadened the American horizons of creative possibility.

On his return to America in 1916, Rosenfeld became involved with the growing group of modernists in New York's cultural scene, and with journals including *The New Republic* and *Seven Arts*, in which he published essays on the new American composers and on "291," Alfred Stieglitz' gallery for modern art. According to the historian Herbert Leibowitz, Rosenfeld's first true exposure to the *avant-garde* in music came during this same period, when he attended a concert of the music of Leo Ornstein (1893-2002). For Rosenfeld, this new music "… made the music of Wagner and Debussy seem stale and of the distant past. Here was a music which…

---

[40] Herbert A. Leibowitz. "Introduction," in *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), xvii.

sprang from a dynamic contact with the world of machines and electric power which was transforming the face and spirit of America." [41]

Leibowitz believes that these experiences with the *avant-garde* and with New York's modern art scene set the direction for the rest of Rosenfeld's criticism and that "[a]ll Rosenfeld's writings are henceforth governed by one overriding principle rather than by any uniform methodology. Rosenfeld believed that any self-betrayal of talent was due to the artist's withholding of himself from full contact with the 'object' world around him and to his negligence of the resources of craft at his disposal."[42]

To Rosenfeld, a composer of the twentieth century could only hope to find an authentic voice and a role in the musical life of his country if he was willing to engage the questions of his day. In examining the art, both visual and musical, of his age, Rosenfeld:

> would ask the composer, What satisfactions does your work provide for man? What does it say about you and your culture? What 'form of communion with your fellow man' does your music disclose? Thus Rosenfeld championed the modern… as a lucid and strict-minded humanist who compared the works of his contemporaries with the high achievements of the art of the past.[43]

Because of his strong interest in the artist's relation to his country, Rosenfeld promoted American modernism and composers including Ives, Copland, Gershwin, Sessions, Varèse, and others. In order to make this new music accessible and understandable to his readers, Rosenfeld wrote extensive essays on nearly every composer imaginable, from Wagner to Bartók, from Ravel to Schoenberg, explaining what he described as the progression of compositional styles and the place of the new composers in continuing and expanding the old tradition. In each of these essays, Rosenfeld's writing was impressionistic rather than factual. He attempted to give the reader a sense of the experience of hearing a certain composer's work rather than the details of harmonic progression or twelve-tone analyses that might have occupied another analyst.

Rosenfeld's essay on Schoenberg begins:

> Arnold Schoenberg of Vienna is the great troubling presence of modern music. His vast, sallow skull lowers over it like a sort of North Cape. For with him, with the famous cruel

---

[41] Ibid., xix.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., xx.

> five orchestral and nine piano pieces, we seem to be entering the arctic zone of musical art. None of the old beacons, none of the old stars, can guide us longer in these frozen wastes. Strange, menacing forms surround us, and the light is bleak and chill and faint…. [T]he later compositions of Schoenberg withhold themselves, refuse our contact. They baffle with their apparently willful ugliness, and bewilder with their geometric cruelty and coldness. One gets no intimation that in fashioning them the composer has liberated himself. On the contrary, they seem icy and brain-spun. They are like men formed not out of flesh and bone and blood, but out of glass and wire and concrete. They creak and groan and grate in their motion. They have all the deathly pallor of abstractions.[44]

Yet Rosenfeld did not dislike Schoenberg. On the contrary, he took this position as a starting point from which to explain Schoenberg's music to a broad audience. To Rosenfeld, Schoenberg's music was intellectual and methodological rather than spontaneous or emotional. Reviewing Schoenberg's *String Quartet* Op. 7, Rosenfeld wrote that Schoenberg's "magnificent passages are interspersed with unmusical ones…. The work is full of music that addresses itself primarily to professors of theory. It is full of writing dictated by an arbitrary and intellectual conception of form…. There are whole passages that exist only in obedience to some scholastic demand for thematic inversions and deformations…."[45] Rosenfeld found such writing theoretically brilliant but musically lacking. Later in the same review, however, Rosenfeld wrote of Schoenberg's newest composition, *Pierrot*, that it heralded a new age in Schoenberg's compositions:

> It may be that after the cloud of war has completely lifted from the field of art, and a normal interchange is re-established, it will be seen that the monodrama, Opus 20, *Die Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire*, which was the latest of his works to obtain a hearing, was in truth an earnest of a new loosing of the old lyrical impulse so long incarcerated…. He is at least demolishing the old constraining superstitions, and in so doing may exercise an incalculable influence on the course of music. It may be that many a musician of the future will find himself the better equipped because of Schoenberg's explorations.[46]

Thus, Rosenfeld saw Schoenberg as breaking the barriers of his own tradition. Although the First World War had limited communication between the artistic communities of Europe and America for the years from 1914 to 1918, Rosenfeld was optimistic that normal communication

---

[44] Paul Rosenfeld, "Schoenberg," in *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 64-65.

[45] Ibid., 67-68.

[46] Ibid., 70.

would soon be reestablished and that Schoenberg's influence would be recognized on both continents.

Rosenfeld's reaction to *Pierrot*

Rosenfeld's later impressions and analyses of *Pierrot* followed directly from his positive experience of the premiere. Between 1920 and 1927, Rosenfeld was the music critic for *The Dial* and he recorded his immediate impressions in the next volume of the magazine. Rosenfeld described "the music of Schoenberg [as] concentrated as something squeezed with relentless might in a fist…. The softness and the non-essential have been forced out…. All steps have been abbreviated. This mind has the *tempo* of the modern world."[47]

Although Rosenfeld admitted that it was sometimes difficult to hear the relationships between the chords as something other than dissonance or the parts of the individual instruments as working toward a unified composition, he attributed this lack to the listener, not to Schoenberg, whose mind, he believed, perceived what others could not:

> Schoenberg overleaps processes of relationship which to minds of slower *tempi* seem irreducible and fundamental. In what appear succession [*sic*] of dissonances, he hears a common pitch. Elements which seem to have no common basis he approaches to one another as though they were blood-brothers. The voices of his music have almost anarchistic independence. They seem to lie far out from the common centre, on the edge of things. They are always like overtones of an implicit and unmentioned tone. But the links which connect, though they are fine almost to the point of invisibility, are formed of coldest, durable steel.[48]

Rosenfeld found beauty in Schoenberg's music and passages "comparable quite to the solo clarinet in the first movement of the C-minor symphony of Beethoven; to the solo English horn in the third act of Tristan; to the solo violin that opens the last scene of Siegfried."[49] And, while "a score of tortured and bizarre moods are expressed by this strange man,"[50] Rosenfeld attributed this partly to the story of *Pierrot* itself and to the moods expressed in Hartleben's poems. Schoenberg's music, Rosenfeld wrote, "has made a vital form of the mysterious stirrings

[47] Paul Rosenfeld, "Musical Chronicle," *The Dial* 74 (January-June, 1923): 426.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 427.

[50] Ibid., 429.

and rumblings of the subconscious…. This music is indeed the creature shaken by moods that come upon him…"[51]

To Rosenfeld, Schoenberg's expressionism was a perfect representation of Hartleben's poetry and of the emotional state of the Pierrot figure. Since Rosenfeld encouraged the seeking-out of new models, his opinions of *Pierrot* dealt with the emotional response rather than with the details of atonality and Sprechstimme that troubled Krehbiel and Aldrich.

Finally, Rosenfeld commented on the performance itself that it was "almost perfect."[52] This is in direct contrast to the opinions of both Krehbiel and Aldrich (mentioned in chapter III), who attributed some of the problems with *Pierrot* to the declamation by Greta Torpadie and to the lack of clarity in her diction, which made true understanding of the German words impossible in the second half of the performance.[53] Rosenfeld cited the opinion of "Conductor Mengelberg, who heard the work under the direction of the composer himself [and] Darius Milhaud, who directed it in Paris"[54] as agreeing that the performance had conveyed Schoenberg's intentions. Rosenfeld concluded that:

> The Guild deserves heartiest thanks for the thrilling event…. It is upon organizations of its kind that we are coming more and more to depend for nourishment. The musical institutions of New York are dead. It the Guild continues in the path it seems to be cutting for itself; and moves ever nearer the most daring and hourly of expressions, never again letting a revolutionary work come to us ten years late, it will in a very brief time become the most important instrumentality in the entire field.[55]

Conclusions

The three critics considered in this chapter are representative of the contrasting opinions found in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. The older critics came of age in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Their reviews and opinions of modern music reflect their

---

[51] Ibid., 430.

[52] Ibid., 431.

[53] See Krehbiel, "The Curse of Affectation in Modern Music," *New York Times* and Aldrich "International Composers' Guild," in *Concert Life in New York.*

[54] Rosenfeld, "Musical Chronicle," *The Dial* 74, 431.

[55] Ibid., 431.

unease at the speed of change and the direction of musical composition that America was just beginning to encounter. To Rosenfeld, born close to the turn of the century, modernism was the way of the world and something to be promoted and enjoyed. For him, unlike for Krehbiel or Aldrich, the ties to the past were visible in Schoenberg's music although they did not constrain Schoenberg's own style. That which shocked and disgusted the older generation seemed inevitable and progressive to the younger one.

None of the critics discussed here are widely remembered today. Each wrote for years about the musical scene in New York in publications with wide circulation and diverse readership. Yet, because of the extremely limited data on public response to critical opinions, it is difficult to estimate their importance to the readers of their reviews and to the concert-going public of the 1920s. It is not possible to prove conclusively that critical opinions influenced New York audiences or the public opinions of musical modernism.

Instead, the reviews of these critics serve as barometers by which to measure the range and force of opinion present in the city and in the Klaw Theater when *Pierrot* was first performed. Both generations were unfamiliar with the *commedia* and with compositional techniques such as atonality, and acknowledged the difficulties in understanding Schoenberg's *Pierrot* at the first hearing. Representative of these difficulties, the writings of Krehbiel, Aldrich, and Rosenfeld are informative and valuable. Not only do they represent the divided opinions between generations. These reviews also demonstrate both the conservatism of old New York and the beginnings of younger New York's experimentation with modernism. Therefore, although one cannot prove that the reviews themselves influenced *Pierrot's* reception in 1923, one can say with certainty that the reviews reflect the range of feeling present in the audience members at the premiere.

The generational divisions in New York's musical scene and the very different opinions of the three critics discussed in this chapter indicate the range of American perceptions of musical modernism in 1923. Any evaluation of the New York premiere of *Pierrot* would be incomplete without an understanding of the force of critical opinion and the challenge that Schoenberg's music faced in a culture unacquainted with (and largely suspicious of) atonality, expressionism, and the *commedia* itself. Because the public reaction to *Pierrot* remains undocumented, the critical perspectives, and critics' appraisals of the audience reaction at the premiere give the best estimate of the true nature of Schoenberg's reception in New York.

V. EXPLANATIONS and INTERPRETATIONS

"…almost every artistic impression is, ultimately, a product of the listener's imagination. It is indeed released by the work of art, but only if one has available receiving apparatus tuned in the same way as the transmitting apparatus."

--Arnold Schoenberg[1]

Introduction

Several explanations exist for the differences in reception of *Pierrot* in Berlin in 1912 and in New York in 1923. This chapter presents two possible explanations for these differences, as well as some ideas about why the critical and the audience reactions divided along geographical, cultural, and generational lines. While neither of these explanations offers definitive answers, each proposes one possible paradigm through which to understand the reception of *Pierrot* within a cultural context.

One explanation is offered by the sociological theory of functionalism proposed by Èmile Durkheim.[2] If the functionalist explanation is correct, the fundamental differences in musical life in Berlin and New York, along with the cultural relevance of the Pierrot figures in Europe and their lack of relevance in America, combined to create two very different spaces into which *Pierrot* was received. The differences in reception are due, in this explanation, to the cultural experiences of the audience members and the critics in each place, and have little to do with the musical modernism proposed by Schoenberg.

A second explanation, following the same functionalist tradition, posits that the delay caused by the First World War and the slower pace of musical innovation in America meant that the cultural and musical developments in Europe took longer to reach American audiences and that their reaction to *Pierrot* and to Schoenberg's ideas was due to a strong sense of isolationism and unfamiliarity with the European compositional developments of the twentieth century.

Both of the explanations proposed here offer a set of conclusions about the differences in reception of *Pierrot* in Berlin and New York. These explanations are offered as possible interpretations for the variance in reception that Schoenberg experienced in Berlin and in New York rather than clear support for any simple conclusion.

---

[1] Arnold Schoenberg, "Über Musikkritik," quoted in Willi Reich*, Schoenberg: A Critical Biography* trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971), 38.

[2] See the following subheading ("Functionalism") for further discussion of these ideas.

Functionalism

In contrast to the 1912 performances in Germany and Austria, the 1923 premiere in New York created much greater critical controversy, and provoked opinions that were both more antagonistic and more reactionary. Despite the years between the two premieres, the majority of audience members (and the elder music critics) in New York were not prepared for what they heard. Applying the theory of functionalism to the reception of *Pierro*t in Berlin and New York indicates that the reception in each city depended on the particular artistic and cultural climate of that city. The cultural relevance of the *commedia* characters and Giraud/ Hartleben's *Pierrot* poems determined the popular success of the Berlin premiere despite Schoenberg's potentially confusing compositional idiom. The New York premiere, in presenting a work that was well outside of the cultural norm of that time and place created such a stir not because of the work itself but because the culture was not ready to receive it.

The theory of functionalism is based on the work of the French sociologist Èmile Durkheim (1858-1918). In Barfield's *Dictionary of Anthropology*, Lewis Coser describes Durkheim's focus:

> The central insistence of Durkheim's work is that social behavior cannot be explained on psychological or biological levels…. Social phenomena are "social facts," and these are the subject matter of sociology. Their distinctive characteristics are not amenable to biological or psychological determinants and are external to individuals considered as biological entities. They endure over time while individuals die, and they have coercive power.[3]

Durkheim's concern with group characteristics and social phenomena formed the basis for the dominant school of French sociology in the period preceding World War II and influenced many scholars in related disciplines, including A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who developed the theory of functionalism. Functionalism "involves the assumption that there *are* necessary conditions of existence for human societies… and that they can be discovered by the proper kind of scientific

[3] Lewis Coser, "Durkheim, Èmile (1858-1918)," in Thomas Barfield, ed. *Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 136.

enquiry."[4] These "conditions of existence" are found in the examination of a community's social structure in which

> …The continuity of structure is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of the individual human beings and of the organized groups into which they are united…. The concept of function as here defined thus involves the notion of a *structure* consisting of a *set of relations* amongst *unit entities*, the *continuity* of the structure being maintained by a *life-process* made up of the *activities* of the constituent units."[5]

Music is a function of society because it is a recurrent activity that contributes to the maintenance of the societal structure. Through attending and giving musical performances, individual members of a society express their identification with both the particular musical style and what that style represents. Attending a classical concert is a different experience from attending a rock concert for many reasons, one of which is the difference in audience members and another of which is the difference in personal expectations of the musical experience. Composers use music to describe their experience of the time and place in which they live, and their music reflects both their own individuality and their historical circumstances. Individuals within a society use their music (whether consciously or not) to understand their own culture and their relationship to it. In the case of Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, musical modernism merged with the concurrent artistic modernism of the early 1900s in Vienna and Berlin to create a representation of what Jonathan Dunsby calls "the cruel alienation of the times."[6] As such, it provided its audience with a culturally relevant representation of their world, and was accepted enthusiastically by them. Even in its European reception, the relevance of the cultural figures of the *commedia* in general meant that *Pierrot* was accepted more quickly by the public than Schoenberg's compositional innovations were by the critics.

Music's centrality to culture and to questions of cultural identity fulfills Radcliffe-Brown's definition of function in that it presents a recurring (or continuous) social activity which changes over time, yet contributes to the life of the community. Additionally, Radcliffe-Brown cautions that "what appears to be the same social usage in two societies may have different

---

[4] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On the Concept of Function in Social Science," *American Anthropologist* 37 (1935): 394.

[5] Ibid., 396.

[6] Dunsby, *Schoenberg*: Pierrot lunaire, 7.

functions in the two."[7] In examining music in two different cultures, therefore, the possibility arises that the two cultures may experience that same music in two very different, culturally determined ways.

Modernism was not organic to New York. According to David Metzer, it arrived from Europe, and presented a challenge to New Yorkers' emotional and intellectual understanding.[8] Since modernism was not an intrinsic element of New York society, it had no clearly defined function in Radcliffe-Brown's sense.[9] It did not present New Yorkers with a way to understand their cultural and societal context (as it did for the Viennese or for the Berliners). Instead, modernism was an alien Weltanschauung that directly challenged New York's culture. *Pierrot*, part of this challenge to the status quo, was admired (from a distance) by the young critics, reviled by the old, and met by the general public (depending again on age) with varying degrees of confusion, acceptance, or dismissal.

In 1923, most of New York was still uninterested in radicalism or in modernism's challenge to the status quo. Metzer describes American society as culturally dependent on Britain and on the Edwardians' "perceived certainty of moral and spiritual truths."[10] Modernism challenged this certainty and presented a vision of the world that denied the validity of the Edwardians' "universal laws or principles true for all times and places"[11] which governed every aspect of life, from politics to personal morals to art. Modernism's embrace of "moral uncertainty and irrationality and [its willingness to] openly examine all aspects of human behavior…"[12] was an affront to American culture of the 1920s.

---

[7] Radcliffe-Brown, "On the Concept of Function in Social Science," 399.

[8] See David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4.

[9] One might argue, justifiably, that New York had no intrinsic cultural tradition and that all of its classical musical traditions were inherited in some form from Europe. As used here, however, "intrinsic" denotes a more specific sense, referring only to that musical culture which was established by the beginning of the twentieth century (imported and strange though it may originally have been) and against which Schoenberg's music had to compete for attention and acceptance. In this sense, modernism presented a difficult and alien idiom, contrary to the accepted classical and romantic tradition.

[10] David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire,'" 675.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Neither the public nor the music critics were acquainted with the developments in European music. Oscar Thompson described the American school of music criticism as "singularly self-sufficient and self-contained throughout the years… Ordinarily, [critics] wrote as if completely ignorant of, and totally disinterested in, the verdicts that already had been formulated in Italy, France, Germany, or England, on the new music or the new interpreters passing in review before them."[13] This observation, taken together with Metzer's analysis of the Edwardianism of American society, explains why American audiences were unprepared for (or lacked a context in which to understand) what they heard.

In the eleven years that followed James Huneker's assessment of *Pierrot* at the Berlin premiere, America remained isolated from the cultural developments in Europe. During the First World War, the flow of artistic and cultural ideas between Europe and America ceased, leaving each society to develop alone. Instead of exploring European musical modernism, American artists continued to perform the romantic works of the nineteenth century and to enjoy the large repertoire of operatic and symphonic literature that had entered the American classical canon before the turn of the century. Before the early 1920s, modernism was confined mainly to literary circles. American composers such as Charles Ives, whose music explored new dissonances and musical juxtapositions, were not performed before the founding of the International Composers' Guild in 1922.[14]

Politically, too, America was isolated from Europe.[15] Having won World War I, Americans retreated again to their own continent, and worked for their own prosperity. Isolationism was strong. President Wilson's League of Nations failed. The public was not interested in the rest of the world. Nor was the tortured European experience of the early part of

---

[13] Oscar Thompson, "An American School of Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428.

[14] One exception to this generalization was the success of Edgard Varèse, whose music was widely performed after the middle of the 1920s. Varèse established his reputation as a conductor of the romantic repertory, however. For more on the seemingly broad generalizations see David Metzer on cultural isolation (David Metzer, "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter, 1994): 669-699.) and Ann Douglas (Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996)) and William Everdell (William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997)) on Ives' failure.

[15] See, for example, Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996); Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000); William K. Klingaman, *1919: The Year Our World Began* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

the century familiar to Americans. While Europeans flirted with Pierrot in all his guises, Americans remained content to believe in prosperity and comfort, and the simple, tonal music they had heard for so many decades.

In such a setting, bringing *Pierrot* to New York could not succeed because, unlike in Berlin and Vienna, melodrama and the *commedia* cult were not yet established there and were not a part of the societal or cultural vocabulary. Although Schoenberg's music was accessible to European audiences, and his use of the Pierrot myth was culturally relevant to them, the very different developments in America meant that neither Schoenberg nor *Pierrot* was well received. Functionally, *Pierrot* did not speak to New Yorkers of a direct cultural experience.

The very different cultural contexts in which *Pierrot* was performed in 1912 and in 1923, and the very different reactions of critical audiences in Europe and in America, indicate that the isolationism of American critics meant that the musical developments in Europe did not resonate with the writers on whose opinions many concertgoers relied. While modernism and the commedia cult, of which *Pierrot* is a part, were well established and well received by European audiences, Americans who heard the work eleven years later lacked the cultural context in which to understand the work. Functionalism's claim, that music, as a cultural activity, provides members of a society with a tool for understanding their own culture, holds up well in this examination. Audiences to whom such music was more immediate were more receptive and better able to understand what was being said than those to whom the music came without the cultural context. Functionalism, therefore, does present one way of understanding the reception of *Pierrot* in New York.[16]

Cultural Delay

If functionalism provides one way to understand the differences in reception at the Berlin and the New York premieres of *Pierrot*, functionalism might also explain the delay in cultural transfer from Europe to America at the turn of the century. It is impossible to say whether

[16] Functionalism is necessarily a broader theory, and one that, to some extent, serves as an explanation for the reception of any cross-cultural performance. Any musical work, when performed outside of its own cultural context, will be heard differently by its audience. Therefore, functionalism explains more than the reception of *Pierrot* in New York. It explains the reception of any German work in America on a basic level. However, based on the descriptions provided in previous chapters of this thesis detailing the different experiences of modernism in Germany and America and the position of the *commedia* characters in both societies, I find it particularly relevant to the reception of *Pierrot*.

Schoenberg's *Pierrot* might have reached America sooner than it did, had World War I not intervened. Perhaps the two cultures were not as different as they have come to seem in retrospective analyses, and the delay was not so great before 1914. According to Ann Douglas, American modernism was well-established before the turn of the century, but found its expression through literature rather than through music.[17] Literary modernism did not come from Europe, but arose out of American authors' own examinations of their society. It is possible that musical modernism would have arrived sooner in New York if peace had been maintained.

Although the critical reaction in Berlin was dismissive at the premiere, by 1921, the German critic Paul Bekker was already writing analyses of Schoenberg's music and attempting to explain the developments it presented to his readers. Bekker described the duty of each person to decide for himself the merits of the art of his age—"Auf uns selbst kommt es an, auf den Mut zum eigenen Bekenntnis…. Für diese Betrachtung gibt es keinen Kanon des Schönen, oder des Charakteristischen, oder das Wahren. Schön, charakteristisch, wahr sind Begriffe, die jede Zeit nach ihrem Bilde prägt. Es gibt nur einen Kanon; den des Lebendigen."[18]

In 1932, Bekker published a book of *Letters to Contemporary Musicians*,[19] including one to Schoenberg, in which he praised Schoenberg for creating music that could be evaluated on the basis of its individual sounds (rather than on extra-musical programs or even on melodies and harmonic progressions). Although he approved of assessing music based on its pure sounds alone, Bekker objected to Schoenberg's belief that all the constraints of tonality could be eliminated. He concluded that Schoenberg was bound to be misunderstood by the majority of listeners, however, since, "die Luft der Sphäre, in der zu atmen Sie sich gewöhnt haben, ist gar zu dünn, als daß jemals ein größerer Kreis von Menschen sich darin aufzuhalten vermöchte."[20]

Bekker praised *Pierrot* as proof of Schoenberg's talent as a purely instrumental composer, even when he incorporated the voice:

---

[17] See Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday, 1996).

[18] Paul Bekker, *Kritische Zeitbilder* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 164. ("It is up to us to have the courage of our own confessions. … For this examination there is no canon of the beautiful, or the characteristic, or the true. Beautiful, characteristic, true are concepts, formed by each era after its own image. There is only one canon; that of the living.") My translation.

[19] Paul Bekker, *Briefe an Zeitgenössische Musiker* (Berlin-Schönenberg: Max Hesses, 1932).

[20] Ibid., 65-66. ("…the air of the spheres in which you have become accustomed to breathe is too thin for a large circle of people to enjoy.") My translation.

> Sie, Arnold Schönberg, sind reiner Instrumentalmusiker geblieben auch da, wo Sie die Singstimme in ihr Schaffen einbezogen haben. Darum, und weil es Ihnen gelungen ist, die instrumentale Denk- und Vorstellungsart ohne jede Einschränkung durchzuführen, haben Sie das erreicht, auf das es für die neue Generation ankam: Sie haben die Musik auf die ihr eigenen immanenten klanglichen Bewegungskräfte zurückgedrängt. Sie haben damit gewissermaßen den Prüfstein und das Gewissen für die Erkennung musikeigener Werte anschaulich faßbar gemacht. Sie haben aber gleichzeitig die Instrumentalmusik in dem von Ihnen gemeinten Sinne eines von außerklanglichen Substanzen befreiten Klangspieles ad absurdum geführt. Die Sinnenhaftigkeit, von der Sie hinweg wollten, ist gleichvoll nicht zu entbehren...[21]

Bekker believed that Schoenberg had been able to bring music back to a state where actual sound was the source of its comprehensibility, even if his developments had gone too far. To Bekker, the idea of freeing music from tonal relationships was impossible. However, Bekker's belief that Schoenberg's work would be appreciated by those who could understand it (i.e. also that there were those who could understand it and that it was worth understanding) is comparable to Paul Rosenfeld's similar belief that Schoenberg was "at least demolishing the old constraining superstitions, and in so doing may exercise an incalculable influence on the course of music."[22]

Even in 1921, Bekker's writings seem to be reaching a new critical understanding of Schoenberg's music that the lack of exposure to musical modernism in New York had made impossible in the first decades of the twentieth century. The delay in critical appreciation occurred both in Berlin and in New York. But even before the New York critics first heard the work, critics in Berlin were beginning to understand Schoenberg's work, or at least to analyze it on its own terms.

Because of the cultural delay between Europe and America, European critics (of the older generation) began to accept Schoenberg's *Pierrot* even before the American premiere. The

---

[21] Ibid., 65. ("You, Arnold Schoenberg, have remained a purely instrumental musician, even in those places in which you have incorporated the voice into your creations. Therefore, and because you have attained the execution of the instrumental manner of thinking and presentation without any limitation, you have realized that which was the goal of the new generation: you have forced music back onto the movement of its own intrinsic sound power. In so doing, you have more or less made the touchstone and the conscience for the recognition of music's own worth comprehensible. But at the same time you have led instrumental music in the sense you define as sound-games freed of unrelated substances ad absurdum. The mental confinement you wanted to escape cannot be done without.") My translation.

[22] Paul Rosenfeld, "Schoenberg," in *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 70.

American establishment critics (including James Huneker, who attended the Berlin premiere) were at a disadvantage both chronologically and culturally. The reactionary opinions expressed by Huneker, Krehbiel, and Aldrich arose from their own cultural experience, in which America lagged behind Europe in accepting new ideas and new departures from the old models. This cultural delay explains the difficulties Americans experienced in understanding *Pierrot* in 1923, even though the work had been composed and premiered more than a decade before.

Conclusions

Both functionalism and cultural delay offer possible lenses through which to understand *Pierrot's* reception in New York. While neither paradigm alone explains every facet of Schoenberg's different receptions in Berlin and New York, taken together, they offer a compelling scenario.

If functionalism is correct, *Pierrot* was essentially comprehensible to audiences in Berlin because of the relevance of the *commedia* myth, and regardless of the particular compositional techniques Schoenberg used. Even these techniques were comprehensible to German audiences, however, as they offered an extension of the German cultural tradition. To Germans living in the decades before the First World War, the extremes of expressionism and the inability of the old tradition to adequately express that modern experience led naturally to the ideas of atonality. Only the critics were unwilling to concede the limits of the romantic tradition they had upheld for the past decades. Functionally, *Pierrot* was comprehensible to Berlin audiences.

In New York, where neither musical modernism nor the *commedia* cult was established after the end of the War, *Pierrot* was not immediately comprehensible either to audiences or to critics. Additionally, cultural delay between Germany and America meant that any exposure American audiences might have had to atonality and expressionism was delayed by the War and by subsequent American reluctance to embrace the newest developments of German culture. The reactions of American audiences (both public and critical) reflected Americans' difficulties in understanding musical expressionism as much as they indicated particular responses to Schoenberg or to *Pierrot*.

VI. THE CANONIZING of *PIERROT*?

"In answer to the question 'what has been the importance of *Pierrot* since 1912?' it may well be that the wisest response is to claim that it is far too early to say."

-- Jonathan Dunsby[1]

Introduction

Examining some more recent writings on modern music and music criticism illuminates the legacy of the critical opinions offered after the premiere of *Pierrot* in New York. The following pages outline the attempts of several authors to describe the relationship between composers of modern music, their critics, and the contemporary public. In addition to the broader question of current opinions of modern music and the relationship between a modern composer and his public, this section answers the questions posed in the introduction: "What is the relationship between composer, critic, and public?" and, "Can our modern experience [of *Pierrot* and Schoenberg in general] be linked to the early critics whose reviews dismissed *Pierrot* as incomprehensible?" In this context, the reviews of the latest performances of *Pierrot* (in Boston in January 2006 and in London in March 2006) provide insight into current ideas about Schoenberg, his atonal works, and the fate of modern music in contemporary society.

Modern Perspectives on Criticism and Modern Music

In *The Agony of Modern Music*, Henry Pleasants blames the position of modern music and contemporary composers on the fact that composers are no longer interested in composing music that will please the audiences. "If… one believes, as most composers do, that serious music has been in decline for anywhere up to a century and a half, there is nothing for it but to congratulate the critics who pointed out, at each step along the way, that music was headed toward disaster."[2] Pleasants implies that Krehbiel and Aldrich correctly foresaw the decline of 'serious music' in Schoenberg's atonality, and that critics like Rosenfeld, whose assessments were more positive, were simply misguided. To Pleasants, Wagner was the last really modern

[1] Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 73.

[2] Henry Pleasants, *The Agony of Modern Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 48-49.

composer. "With him ended the long evolution of the art of music in the harmonic or European sense. All that has followed has been reaction, refinement—and desperate experimentation."[3]

Pleasants' opinions, recorded in 1957, express dismay with his contemporary musical situation in America, in which composers were no longer interested in their audiences and audiences were turning to the past in order to hear music to which they could relate. Pleasants was equally critical of neo-classicism and atonality, both of which "are products of critical reflection. They derive not from any spontaneous creative impulse… but from esthetic calculation and conviction, and from preoccupation with technical problems."[4]

To Theodor Adorno, the problematic relationship to modern music was indicative of the popular cultural stagnation in the twentieth century. In attempting to express the truths of his time, Schoenberg was working against the popular desire to relax into the "all-too-familiar, which is so far removed from the dominant forces of life today that the public's own experience scarcely communicates with that for which traditional music bore witness."[5] Additionally:

> The general public, totally cut off from the production of new music, is alienated by the outward characteristics of such music. The deepest currents present in this music proceed, however, from exactly those sociological and anthropological foundations particular to that public. The dissonances which horrify them testify to their own conditions; for that reason alone do they find them unbearable."[6]

That Schoenberg's public and critics did not appreciate his music when they heard it for the first time is, therefore, indicative of the state of the society and of Schoenberg's musical accuracy in representing that state to its listeners. The desire not to understand was as great as the resistance to the inherent character of the music. To Adorno, the public's relationship to modern music had only worsened in the intervening years since modernism was first presented.

Adorno also described the task of the modern composer as being "as impossible as is the dilemma of a writer who is called upon to create a unique vocabulary and syntax for every sentence he writes…. The difficulties involved in the necessary creation of the new idiom are

---

[3] Ibid., 3.

[4] Ibid., 57.

[5] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Continuum, 1973), 9.

[6] Ibid.

prohibitive."[7] The desire to create the new idiom and the unwillingness to sink into reprisals of the past (as did the neo-classicists including Stravinsky) indicate to Adorno Schoenberg's position as the composer whose work points toward the future. The critics' negative responses to atonality demonstrated their (unconscious) unwillingness to admit its relevance to their own society. The audiences' varied responses indicated their own ambivalence toward that same society rather than toward Schoenberg's music itself.

Gerald Abraham (1952) agrees with Adorno that modern music expresses ideas that its audiences are not ready to hear and that, "…the musical world as a whole (that vast majority of musicians and music-lovers whose tastes are intelligent without being intellectual) is nearly half a century behind the composers. There is no need to worry about that. It is no very new state of affairs, though the vanguard has probably never got quite so far ahead of the main body as it has recently."[8]

To Abraham, the distance between composers and the public is not an indicator of cultural decay as it is for Adorno. Nor is it a sign of the misguided composers who no longer try to write music for the public's enjoyment (as it is for Pleasants). Abraham agrees that the musical language of the modern composers is confusing and "seems to be not an extension of that of the last century, but a totally different one. That is partly an illusion caused by our lack of perspective. We are too close to the phenomenon to see it clearly."[9]

The modern American composer, George Rochberg (1918-2005), attributes Schoenberg's difficulties in the United States and the lack of American understanding of his music to his being a composer whose formative experience was wholly European. "Schoenberg's consciousness… was entirely European. There is no parallel, to my knowledge, of this inner journey in the American consciousness of the same period, neither in music not in literature…. The Atlantic, which divided the two continents physically, also kept the cultures apart spiritually."[10] In his compositions, Schoenberg responded to the world around him and, "his terrifying intuition of the state of the cultural chaos of the early decades of the twentieth century was captured and

---

[7] Ibid., 104.

[8] Gerald Abraham, *This Modern Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1952), 14.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] George Rochberg, *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer's View of Twentieth-Century Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004), 38.

embodied in *Pierrot lunaire*…"[11] To Rochberg, Schoenberg's music was so profoundly European that it would have been impossible for an American audience to have the same response to it as the audiences in Berlin or Vienna. Even European audiences had trouble understanding what they heard.

To Charles Rosen, seeking to explain Schoenberg's early reception in Europe, "The conservative taste in music of the Viennese public was the most uncompromising in Europe…. By 1910 a concert of contemporary music was an open invitation to a hostile demonstration."[12] Such hostility was understandable, since:

> A fear of what is original and difficult to comprehend is no doubt a constant in history, but the accelerated rate of stylistic change after 1800 and the rapid expansion of the mass public interested in consuming art combined to make the normally difficult relation between artist and public a pathological one. The artist and his public each conceived the other as a threat. The artist's answer to ideological pressure was one of deliberate provocation, while the public came to believe that a violent response to such provocation was a citizen's right and even a patriotic duty. A conservative taste in art seemed to many the last defense against anarchy.[13]

Rosen finds the reluctance of Schoenberg's contemporaries to accept his musical developments understandable since, "The achievement of Schoenberg and his school between the years 1908 and 1913 is still so explosive in its implications that we are only beginning to understand it today."[14] Rochberg agrees that Schoenberg's innovations have resulted in continued difficulties for modern composers:

> The break with tradition which resulted from profound changes affecting the sound, structure, and form of music continues to exert its powerful but negative influence on composers, few of whom have been able to accept it without qualm or reservation. This accounts in large measure for the difficulties they have experienced in attempting to solve their problems.[15]

---

[11] Ibid., 45.

[12] Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Viking, 1975), 9.

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid., 12.

[15] Rochberg, *The Aesthetics of Survival*, 16.

According to Carol Oja, the first American experience of modernism came through written appraisals rather than through actual performances in the early years of the twentieth century:

> The single most striking characteristic of all the articles about European modernists published in the United States during this period [1916-1920] was the degree to which they conveyed a sense of discovery. Compositions were often written about rather than heard; information was passed through magazines, newspapers, and personal correspondence.[16]

This sense of discovery was not yet present in 1915, when Edgard Varèse came to America. To Varèse, American audiences and performers were "hypnotized by the past."[17] Varèse was able to exploit Americans' fondness for the past in order to establish himself as a conductor (he chose Berlioz' *Requiem* for his debut performance). Varèse's position was both problematic and helpful for Schoenberg's reception in America. "The anti-German sentiment that Varèse exploited in promoting his career as a conductor strongly affected Schoenberg's reception in the United States."[18] However, Varèse and the International Composers' Guild were instrumental in increasing American exposure to European modernism and in encouraging American composers' explorations of the possibilities of atonality and its derivative forms.

More than four decades after the premiere of *Pierrot* in New York, Jacques Barzun described the willingness of audiences to attend performances of modernist works as indications that the "exclusivism of the old dispensation has also been broken"[19]:

> Nowadays modernism is sacrosanct under the name of experimentation, and though it is still ahead of the audience, its older achievements are sincerely admired. *Wozzek* makes at least as much money as *Don Giovanni* and the dress circle faces an occasional twelve-tone row with stoicism. This relative up-to-dateness is of course not universal, but it is sufficiently widespread to justify the statement that American concert-goers have become

---

[16] Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 56.

[17] Edgard Varèse, quoted in Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 26.

[18] Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 50. At the same time, Varèse, as one of the founders of the International Composers' Guild, played a fundamental role in introducing *Pierrot lunaire* to New York.

[19] Jacques Barzun, *Music in American Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), 31.

> musical internationalists and citizens of a wider world than that of the nineteenth century.[20]

Written in 1969, Barzun's appraisal of audiences' "stoicism" when faced with modernist works is still relevant. In *The New Yorker* of March 27, 2006, an advertisement for a New York Philharmonic concert described the program as consisting of, "Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra—the major work of his hard-core serialist period—[which] is enjoying an inexplicable banner year… Lorin Maazel will lead the work, which tests the mettle of even the finest orchestras. Ravel's "La Valse" and Rachmaninoff's "Paganini Rhapsody"… offer compensation for the perplexed."[21] Eighty years after the work was written, Schoenberg's *Variations* is still believed to be confusing for potential audience members. The critical opinions, however, have mellowed over time.

Modern Critical Opinions of *Pierrot*

In modern critical writings, *Pierrot* has assumed a position within the established canon of classical works. Critics confine their comments to appraisals of individual performances, and assume that the public (or at least those members of the public reading critical reviews) understand both the story and the music of *Pierrot*. One such current review evaluates a performance of *Pierrot* by members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in January of 2006. The reviewer, Richard Dyer, wrote of the work that its characteristic *Sprechstimme* was ubiquitous in 1912. "Listening to the crackly old records of the great German actor Alexander Moissi, it is clear that Schoenberg's wish for a style poised between speaking and singing, so puzzling to today's ears, was a way of notating the expressionistic delivery in the spoken theater of his time."[22] Dyer devoted the rest of his review to praising the musicians, who "played with unusual character, subtlety, and finesse,"[23] and to Anja Silja who:

> found a personal balance between speech and song, delivering clear, steady tone over a range of two and a half octaves and inflecting the text with the assurance of a native

---

[20] Ibid., 32.

[21] "Goings on About Town," *The New Yorker*, March 27, 2006, p. 15.

[22] Richard Dyer, "Levine and Silja Demonstrate Skill and Star Power," *The Boston Globe*, January 23, 2006, http://www.benheppner.com/Reviews34.html.

[23] Ibid.

> speaker, the accuracy of a superb musician, and the imagination of an immense theatrical personality -- if the text mentions a "pizzicato," she delivered one with her voice. "Pierrot" was premiered as music theater; Silja's presence made it that again.[24]

To Dyer, *Pierrot* is not a controversial work. It represents a particular historical attitude and its specific techniques are understandable as historical developments that fit into the context in which they were conceived. More recently, Tim Ashley praised a performance by members of the London Symphony Orchestra in *The Guardian* as "a benchmark performance that sets new standards of interpretation."[25] Ashley's review is also centered on the singer, in this case Barbara Sukowa, who:

> delivered the work from memory; she was at once the self-assured cabaret diseuse and a blasphemous high priestess presiding over Pierrot's ritual descent into near-madness. Poised on a dais above the players, she stretched her hands over them as if they were marionettes… Her voice caressed, nagged and snarled, occasionally taking flight into deranged snatches of lyricism that sounded like an untrained singer tackling a bravura aria by Mozart. Uchida and the ensemble, performing without a conductor, surrounded Sukowa's utterances with shards of sound that slid from tenderness to viciousness.[26]

It seems that modern criticism has fully accepted Schoenberg's music. The majority of modern audience members, while still preferring Beethoven or Mozart, is willing to listen to atonal music and, as contemporary critics write appreciatively of current performances, may even find something to like. Although performances of Schoenberg's music are still relatively few, those that do occur are evaluated by the critics as part of the canon. This new development, a complete reversal from the early decades of the twentieth century, in which the critics fought against the developments that the audiences were more willing to accept, raises an interesting question.

Is Schoenberg now sufficiently removed from our own time that we can listen to his music just as audiences in the 1940s listened to Wagner and Beethoven? That is, as Adorno commented then, are modern audiences able to listen to Schoenberg because he is no longer relevant to the contemporary experience? It appears so. Modern opinion is content to point out

---

[24] Ibid.

[25] Tim Ashley, "Pierrot Lunaire: LSO St. Luke's, London," *The Guardian*, March 13, 2006, http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/review/0,,1729535,00.html.

[26] Ibid.

the details of the performances without significant musical commentary. *Pierrot* has become part of the historical past. Even in 1975, Charles Rosen commented that:

> The ambience in which these works were created and which they still evoke has an old-fashioned air today. In their intense and morbid expressivity they seem to breathe the stuffy atmosphere of that enclosed nightmare world of expressionist German art in the decade before 1914. Even the wit and the gaiety are macabre; against a background of controlled hysteria, the moments of repose take on an air of death. The texts of *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire* are no longer satisfactory as literature; to approach these works, we need a sympathy for the period in which they were written (or at least a suspension of distaste).[27]

In the mid-1980s, Martin Green and John Swan wrote of contemporary performances of *Pierrot* and similar works that, "… they are retrospective, and they are triumphs of taste in art. The original works were bold, experimental, disturbing, and that is still discernable, but as produced now they are controlled by a decorum and sophistication that separates them widely from [contemporary compositions]."[28] In the intervening decades, this attitude seems to have increased.

Conclusions

Speaking of contemporary performances of his works, Schoenberg said, "My music is not modern. It is only badly played."[29] Perhaps the intervening decades have brought musical performance to a level at which techniques including *Sprechstimme* or atonality are surmountable difficulties. If Schoenberg's music is played better now, it can also be better understood. Or maybe the critical ear has become accustomed to so many extensions of Schoenberg's own techniques that the original seems tame and comprehensible. As the critical acceptance of Schoenberg has increased, public interest has decreased. Why this is the case seems a topic for further investigation.

In answer to the questions posed on page 13, the relationship between composers and their contemporary public has often been contentious in the twentieth century. Especially for

---

[27] Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 13.

[28] Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), xv.

[29] Schoenberg, quoted in Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 50.

Schoenberg, whose compositions departed from the models of the nineteenth century in ways that shocked critical ears, public recognition has come slowly. As the distance from Schoenberg's early atonal works (and *Pierrot* in particular) increases, however, critical opinions focus more on particular performances than on the details of Schoenberg's score. After nearly 100 years, *Pierrot* has entered the established canon.

CONCLUSION

"In the twentieth century the hostile critic has remained the spokesperson of the audience."

-- Leon Botstein[1]

As has been demonstrated in the foregoing chapters, the successful reception of a challenging work such as *Pierrot* depends on the attitudes of the public and of the critics. In Berlin, the cultural relevance of the *commedia* made *Pierrot* comprehensible to audiences. For Berliners, Schoenberg's ability to represent the range of emotions present mood in their era through use of a familiar cultural myth proved more important than Schoenberg's atonal idiom in determining the public reception of *Pierrot*. The negative critical reaction paled in comparison to the popular acclaim.

In New York, *Pierrot* lacked the same cultural relevance that had helped to determine its successful public reception in Berlin. Additionally, the different experiences of modernism in Germany and America meant that Schoenberg faced the challenge of having to overcome the distance between his own and his audience's experience of their era. Although the New York audience at the premiere applauded *Pierrot*, the absence of unconscious identification with *Pierrot's* message meant that the work was received as musically important although requiring critical interpretation and explanation. The role of the music critics in evaluating *Pierrot* assumed greater importance in New York than in Berlin.

Schoenberg's own opinions on the relationship between composer, critic, and public stressed his belief in the comprehensibility of his music. Schoenberg's writings about his public reception point to his belief that the critics created an artificial sense of distance between his music and the public, who would otherwise understand it and be enthusiastic about his ideas. Therefore, Schoenberg believed that, if the audience and the musicians could interact directly, with no interference from the critics or other intermediaries, the public would accept his music. The interference of the critics and the reactionary tone of the critical opinions, in Schoenberg's opinion, unfairly prejudiced the public against him and his works.

---

[1] Leon Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture: Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, and the Emergence of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997), 7.

Schoenberg often attributed the hostile reception of his music to the critics. In an essay entitled "My Public," Schoenberg described the interaction between composer, public, and critic:

> Apart from these conductors [who don't understand the scores], those who get between me and the public are the many musicians who do not conduct but know other ways to mislead. I have seen countless times that, as regards the main point, it was not the public who hissed: it was a small but active 'expert' minority. The public's behavior is either friendly or indifferent, unless they are intimidated because their spiritual leaders are protesting…. What they are not interested in doing is using their more or less correct judgement [*sic*] in order to display themselves in a better light…. One may keep anything to oneself, except expert judgement—for what is expert judgement unless one shows it off? For this reason, I also take it to have been the expert judges, not the art-lovers, who received my *Pierrot lunaire* with such hostility….[2]

In order to counteract the influence of the critics, Schoenberg proposed that, "concert life must gradually cease to be a commercial business. Given the right organization, that will avoid all middlemen, arrangers and the like, and address itself directly to the public, it should easily be possible to do everything needed for the furtherance of art, even without state assistance."[3] Acting on his own recommendation, Schoenberg founded the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen or Society for Private Musical Performances in 1918. The Society's aim was to provide a location in which new works could be heard without the need for competition or "the corrupting influence of publicity."[4] In its desire to present new works in a friendly setting, the Society anticipated the International Composers' Guild (presenters of the 1923 premiere of *Pierrot*), founded in 1922 in New York.

Despite organizations such as the Society for Private Musical Performances or the International Composers' Guild, most potential audience members (especially in New York) remained at a distance from modern music and relied partly on the opinions of the critics in evaluating works in an unfamiliar idiom. The critical opinions, therefore, assume a more important role in posthumous evaluations of either city's musical culture than they may have possessed when written. The critical opinions expressed in newspapers and filed for future

---

[2] Arnold Schoenberg, "My Public," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 96-97.

[3] Arnold Schoenberg, "Guide-Lines for a Ministry of the Arts," (1919) in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 117.

[4] Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 120.

generations are more lasting than the opinions of the individual concertgoers whose reactions were not recorded publicly.

Schoenberg realized that negative critical opinions resulted at least partially from general (public and critical) unfamiliarity with atonality. In order to increase comprehension, he held a series of open rehearsals for his Chamber Symphony op. 9 in 1918 in Berlin. The critic Heinrich von Kralik attended the series, and wrote that the program of acclimatization had been at least partially successful: "Something that, heard for the ninth time, was still an acoustic monstrosity, emerges, when heard for the tenth time, as something already familiar, and may even be on the verge of revealing all manner of mysterious beauties—next time…."[5]

To Schoenberg, critics needed to be conscious of their own tendencies and preferences, and to avoid quick judgments:

> …almost every artistic impression is, ultimately, a product of the listener's imagination. It is indeed released by the work of art, but only if one has available receiving apparatus tuned in the same way as the transmitting apparatus. To convert an artistic impression into an artistic judgment, one must be practiced at interpreting one's own unconscious feelings; one must know one's own leanings, and the way in which one reacts to impressions. As for dispensing value judgments: one must then be able to compare artistic impressions with each other; either through one's nature, which must not lack characteristic qualities, or at least through one's training (=education plus development) one must find a vantage point from which it is possible to gain a closer insight into the nature of the work concerned. One must have a sense of the past and an intuition of the future. Finally, one may indeed go wrong; but then at least one must be someone![6]

Clearly, Schoenberg had little faith in the abilities of critics to competently evaluate his compositions.

According to Leon Botstein, "Although Schoenberg rather liked being seen as challenging norms and practices, he was ambivalent about how defensive and stubborn the audiences had become. He blamed performers rather than listeners and toward the end of his life hoped to achieve widespread recognition."[7] Schoenberg never achieved the status he believed he deserved in the United States. Whether this was due to the critical reception, to the public preference for Stravinsky's neoclassicism, or to some other combination of factors, Schoenberg's fate in the United States is indicative of modern audiences' relationships to modern music.

---

[5] Heinrich von Kralik, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 114.

[6] Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 38-39.

[7] Leon Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture," 7.

As we have seen, the relationship between musicians and their audience arises through the interaction of composers, critics, and the public. In contemporary Western societies, very few musicians attract an audience for their work without effort. More often, composers and performers must work to persuade potential audience members to listen to their compositions and to attend their performances. In doing so, musicians must often rely on the good opinions of critics, whose reviews, widely read by potential audience members, strongly influence contemporary opinions.

In the case of composers such as Schoenberg, whose works depart from the prevailing models of their era, the relationship between composer, critic, and public may have the power to create the reputation of the composer in his own time. Critical opinions formed after a work's premiere are often based on little more than first impressions and incomprehension, yet they influence both the contemporary reception and the historical evaluation of composers' works. These contemporary critical opinions provide one angle from which the researcher may understand a composer's reputation in his own time. Viewed historically, these same opinions provide useful insight into the endurance of critics' writings and their influence on later perceptions of a composer and his works.

Arising out of the historical context in which their authors lived and wrote, critics' opinions of modernist works such as Schoenberg's *Pierrot* reflected their own cultural experience, yet have been instrumental in positioning Schoenberg and his work within the classical canon. Both in Berlin and in New York, the cultural context in which *Pierrot* was first performed played a larger role than Schoenberg's compositional innovations in determining Schoenberg's reception and the subsequent controversy surrounding his compositions.

Finale

What is the relationship between composer, critic, and public? To Schoenberg, the critics represented a barrier to the public acceptance he believed he would otherwise be accorded. The public denoted a more encouraging audience, ready to recognize Schoenberg's work and ideas as representations of their time. To the critics, contemporary composers indicated a new direction in their art. As such, the new music was to be explained or analyzed for the public as well as for posterity, and either accepted or rejected based on contemporary ideals of musical beauty and desirability. As shown by the example of the three New York critics in chapter IV, when the

critical ideals of musical beauty differed, the reception of the works in question did as well. The public, the least clearly defined element in this equation, was influenced by its cultural norms and prevailing ideas about music. In creating their appraisals of contemporary compositions, members of the public relied on the critical opinions (at least as a base from which to proceed), on their contemporaries' opinions (which they probably discussed), and on their own impressions.

Critical opinions are just one of many sources available to audiences evaluating new works. However, as critical writings are archived and accessible long after the premiere of a new composition, critical opinions may play a larger role in the formation of later generations' opinions. The writings of a critic who dismisses his contemporaries' compositions as unworthy of serious attention may provide a basis for future rejection of that composer's work on the grounds that it was incomprehensible even when first composed. Or, a critic who praises a contemporary premiere may provide future audiences with the knowledge that a given work was popular even from its first performance and is, therefore, worthy of admiration.

Pierrot, as a representative of its time, offered an opportunity for contemporary audiences to hear a work that was culturally meaningful to their particular experiences of the world. According to Sherman Paul, "Only by spontaneously and openly responding to the world can the artist capture the rhythms of his time."[8] In Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, one can recognize the truth of this observation.

---

[8] Sherman Paul, "Paul Rosenfeld," in Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1961), xli.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abel, Angelika. *Musikästhetik der Klassischen Moderne: Thomas Mann—Theodor Adorno—Arnold Schönberg.* Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2003.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt. Edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann. London: Routledge, 1983.

------. *Philosophy of Modern Music*. Translated by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster. New York: Continuum, 1973.

------. *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. New York: Verso, 1992.

Abraham, Gerald. *This Modern Music*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1952.

Albright, Daniel. *Representation and the Imagination: Beckett, Kafka, Nabokov, and Schoenberg*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981.

-------. "Series Editor's Foreward." In *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, edited by Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman vii-xiv. New York: Garland, 2000.

Aldrich, Richard. *Concert Life in New York: 1902-1923*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941.

------. "Henry Edward Krehbiel." *New York Times*, March 25, 1923. www.proquest.com.

"Amusements." *New York Times*, January 21, 1864. www.proquest.com.

Arendt, Hannah. "Tradition and the Modern Age." In *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought.* New York: Penguin Books, 1978.

Ashley, Tim. "Pierrot Lunaire: LSO St. Luke's, London." *The Guardian*, March 13, 2006. http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/review/0,,1729535,00.html.

Bailey, Walter B. *Programmatic Elements in the Works of Schoenberg*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1984.

Barzun, Jacques. *Critical Questions on Music and Letters, Culture and Biography 1940-1980.* Selected and Edited by Bea Friedland. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982.

------. *Music in American Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969.

------, ed. *Pleasures of Modern Music: A Reader's Choice of Great Writings about Music and Musicians*. New York: Viking, 1951.

Bekker, Paul. *Briefe an Zeitgenössische Musiker*. Berlin-Schönenberg: Max Hesses, 1932.

------. *Kritische Zeitbilder*. Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921.

Bender, Thomas. *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1751 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987.

Benton, Rita. "Libraries: Canada and the USA: Washington, DC." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Berger, Karol, and Anthony Newcomb, eds. *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity: Essays.* Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University, 2005.

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. www.berliner-philharmoniker.de.

Boorstin, Daniel J. *America and the Image of Europe: Reflections on American Thought*. New York: Meridian Books, 1960.

Bornoff, Jack. With the collaboration of Lionel Salter. *Music and the Twentieth Century Media*. Florence, Italy: International Music Council, 1972.

Boston Symphony Orchestra. www.bso.org.

Botstein, Leon. "Music and the Critique of Culture: Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, and the Emergence of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna." In *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, edited by Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey, 3-22. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997.

Brand, Juliane, and Christopher Hailey, eds. *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997.

Branscombe, Peter. "Melodrama." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Brinton, Crane. *The Shaping of Modern Thought*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra. www.cso.org.

"Composers Guild Giving 'Pierrot Lunaire' To-night." *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

Coser, Lewis. "Durkheim, Èmile (1858-1918)." In *Dictionary of Anthropology*, edited by Thomas Barfield, 135-136. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Cox, Christopher, and Daniel Warner. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Crawford, Richard. *America's Musical Life: A History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.

Cross, Charlotte M., and Russell A. Berman, eds. *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*. New York: Garland, 2000.

------. *Schoenberg and Words: The Modernist Years*. New York: Garland, 2000.

Dineen, Murray. "Adorno and Schoenberg's Unanswered Question." *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 415-427.

Douglas, Ann. *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*. New York: Noonday, 1996.

Downes, Olin. "The Musical Criticism of Richard Aldrich: 'Concert Life in New York' Is a Selection From the Writings of Twenty Years." *New York Times*, May 31, 1942. www.proquest.com.

Dunsby, Jonathan. *Schoenberg:* Pierrot lunaire. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992.

Durst, David C. *Weimar Modernism: Philosophy, Politics, and Culture in Germany 1918-1933*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004.

Dyer, Richard. "Levine and Silja Demonstrate Skill and Star Power." *The Boston Globe*, January 23, 2006. http://www.benheppner.com/Reviews34.html.

Everdell, William R. *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997.

Fanning, David. "Expressionism." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* online. www.grovemusic.com.

Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California, 2005.

------, ed. *Schoenberg and his World*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1999.

------. *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg 1893-1908*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1993.

Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negros, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge, M.A.: M.I.T., 1963.

Goehr, Lydia. "Adorno, Schoenberg, and the Totentanz der Prinzipien—In Thirteen Steps." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 3 (Fall, 2003): 595- 638.

"Goings on About Town." *The New Yorker*, March 26, 2006.

Graves, Charles L. *Post-Victorian Music with Other Sketches and Studies*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1911.

Green, Martin, and John Swan. *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination*. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Griffiths, Paul. "Sprechgesang." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Haimo, Ethan. "Schoenberg and the Origins of Atonality." In *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture,* edited by Juliane Band and Christopher Hailey, 71-86. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997.

------. *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-Tone Method, 1914-1928*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

Henderson, W.J. "Themes and Topics in the Musical World." *New York Times*, March 4, 1900. www.proquest.com.

"Henry Edward Krehbiel." *The New York Times*, March 22, 1923. www.proquest.com.

Horowitz, Joseph. "Finding a 'Real Self': American Women and the Wagner Cult of the Late Nineteenth Century." *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Summer, 1994): 189-205.

------. "Henry Edward Krehbiel." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

------. "'Sermons in Tones': Sacralization as a Theme in American Classical Music." *American Music* 16, no. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 311-340.

Howe, Wirt. *New York at the Turn of the Century: 1899-1916.* Toronto: Privately Printed, 1946.

Huhn, Tom, and Lambert Zuidervaart. *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge, M.A.: M.I.T., 1997.

Huneker, James. *Ivory, Apes and Peacocks*. New York: Sagamore, 1957.

------. *New Cosmopolis: A Book of Images*. London: T. Werner Laurie, [19--].

------. "Schoenberg, Musical Anarchist, Who Has Upset Europe." *New York Times*, January 19, 1913. www.proquest.com.

------. *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect.* [New York: Printed for the Society, 1917?]

"In the World of Music and Musicians," *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University 1991.

Jumonville, Neil. *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1990.

Kemal, Salim, and Ivan Gaskill, eds. *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000.

Kisseloff, Jeff. *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989.

Klingaman, William K. *1919: The Year Our World Began*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Kluger, Richard. *The Paper: The Life and Death of the* New York Herald Tribune. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Krehbiel, Henry Edward. *How to Listen to Music: Hints and Suggestions to Untaught Lovers of the Art*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

------. "Symphony Gives Concert Marred by Burlesque: 'Petroushka' Played Without Choreographic Setting Induces Buffonery Into Pleasing Program: Composers' Guild Heard: Grotesquerie Again Evident in Satie Selections and in Discordant 'Pierrot' Suite." *New York Tribune*, February 5, 1923.

------. "The Curse of Affectation and Modernism in Music." *New York Tribune*, February 11, 1923, sec. 5, p. 5.

Lansky, Paul, George Perle, and Dave Headlam. "Atonality." *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy. (Accessed May 5, 2006). <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.47354#music.47354>

Leibowitz, Herbert A., ed. *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1969.

Lessem, Alan Philip. *Music and Text in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg: The Critical Years, 1908-1922*. Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research, 1979.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/ Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, M.A.: 1988.

------. "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences." *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (December 1992): 1369-1399.

------. *Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University, 1993.

Lipman, Samuel. *Music and More: Essays, 1975-1991*. Evanston, I.L.: Northwestern University, 1992.

London Symphony Orchestra. www.lso.co.uk.

Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. www.laphil.org.

MacDougall, A. Kent, ed. *The Press: A Critical Look From the Inside*. Princeton: Dow Jones Books, 1972.

Maus, Fred Everett. "Criticism, §I: General issues" *Grove Music Online,* ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 3, 2006). <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Mead, Rita H. "International Composers' Guild." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). < http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Metzer, David. "The New York Reception of 'Pierrot lunaire': The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath." *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter, 1994): 669-699.

Naremore, James, and Patrick Brantlinger, eds. *Modernity and Mass Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991.

Neighbor, Oliver. "Schoenberg, Arnold " *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed May 5, 2006). <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.25024.1>

------, Paul Griffiths, and George Perle. *The New Grove Second Viennese School: Schoenberg, Webern, Berg*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1983.

Newlin, Dika. *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg*. Revised edition. New York. W.W. Norton, 1978.

New York Philharmonic Orchestra. www.nyphilharmonic.com.

Oja, Carol J. *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s.* New York: Oxford University, 2000.

Paul, Sherman. "Paul Rosenfeld." In *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns*. By Paul Rosenfeld, vii-lvi. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1961.

Pike, Alfred. *A Phenomenological Analysis of Musical Experience and Other Related Essays*. New York: St. John's University, 1970.

Pleasants, Henry. *The Agony of Modern Music*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. "On the Concept of Function in Social Science." *American Anthropologist* 37 (1935): 394-402.

Radice, Mark A. *Concert Music of the Twentieth Century: Its Personalities, Institutions, and Techniques*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003.

Reich, Willi. *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*. Translated by Leo Black. London: Longman Group, 1971.

Reis, Claire R. *Composers, Conductors and Critics*. New York: Oxford University, 1955.

Ringer, Alexander L. *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

Rochberg, George. *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer's View of Twentieth-Century Music*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004.

Rosen, Charles. *Arnold Schoenberg*. New York: Viking, 1975.

Rosenberg, Harold. *Discovering the Present: Three Decades in Art, Culture, and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973.

Rosenfeld, Paul. *Discoveries of a Music Critic*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936. Reprinted by Vienna House, 1972.

------. "Musical Chronicle." *The Dial* 74 (January-June 1923): 426-432.

Saffle, Michael, ed. *Music and Culture in America, 1861-1918*. New York: Garland, 1998.

Samson, Jim. *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality, 1900-1920.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1977.

Schoenberg, Arnold. "My Evolution." In *Style and Idea* edited by Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black, 79-92. New York: St. Martin's, 1975.

------. "My Public." In *Style and Idea*, edited by Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black, 96-99. New York: St. Martin's, 1975.

------. "National Music (2)." In *Style and Idea*, edited by Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black, 172-174. New York: St. Martin's, 1975.

------. *Structural Functions of Harmony*. Revised Edition with Corrections. Edited by Leo Stein. New York: W.W. Norton, 1969.

------. *Style and Idea*. Edited by Leonard Stein with translations by Leo Black. New York: St. Martin's, 1975.

------. *Theory of Harmony*. Translated by Roy E. Carter. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1978.

Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1979.

------. *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1998.

Schwab, Arnold T. *James Gibbons Huneker: Critic of the Seven Arts.* Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University, 1963.

Shawn, Allen. *Arnold Schoenberg's Journey*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

Shead, Richard. *Music in the 1920s*. London: Duckworth, 1976.

Simms, Bryan R, ed. *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School.* Westport, C.T.: Greenwood, 1999.

------. *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908-1923*. New York: Oxford University, 2000.

Smith, Joan Allen. *Schoenberg and his Circle: A Viennese Portrait*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1986.

Sonneck, O.G. *Early Concert-Life in America (1731-1800)*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1907.

Stanley, Glenn. "Criticism, §II, 1: History to 1945: Germany and Austria." *Grove Music Online,* ed. Laura Macy (Accessed May 3, 2006). <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90>

Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.

Steuermann, Edward. *The Not Quite Innocent Bystander*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989.

Stravinsky, Igor, and Robert Craft. *Dialogues and a Diary*. New York: Doubleday, 1962.

Stuckenschmidt, H. *Arnold Schoenberg*. London: Calder, 1959.

Swift, Morrison I. "Peril in German Strength: Failure to Break Up the Empire the 'Fatal Error' of the Peace Conference." *New York Tribune*, February 4, 1923.

Terkel, Studs. *And They All Sang: Adventures of an Eclectic Disc Jockey*. New York: The New Press, 2005.

Thompson, Oscar. "An American School of Criticism: The Legacy Left by W.J. Henderson, Richard Aldrich, and their Colleagues of the Old Guard." *The Musical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1937): 428-439.

Thomson, William. *Schoenberg's Error*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. www.wienerphilharmoniker.at.

Vinen, Richard. *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, M.A.: Da Capo, 2000.

Walker, Alan. *An Anatomy of Musical Criticism*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968.

Wallace, Aurora. *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America: A History*. Westport, C.T.: Greenwood, 2005.

Wetzsteon, Ross. *Republic of Dreams Greenwich Village: The American Bohemia, 1910-1960*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.

Winiarz, John. "Schoenberg—Pierrot lunaire: An Atonal Landmark." *La Scena Musicale* 5, no. 7 (2000). http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm5-7/schoenberg-en.htm.

Zehme, Albertine. *Die Grundlagen des künstlerischen Sprechens und Singens*. Leipzig, Carl Merseburger, 1920.

VITA

Clara Schauman was born in Washington, DC. She holds a BA degree from Rice University in Political Science and German Language (2001) and an MM degree from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in Violin Performance (2005). She will receive an MM from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in Music (concentration in musicology) in 2006.