

**Thesis of DLA doctoral dissertation**

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**THE „SPRECHGESANG”  
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG’S  
PIERROT LUNAIRE IN THE MIDDLE**

**The Liszt Academy of Music**

**Doctoral School No 28 for Sciences in Art and  
Cultural History**

**Budapest, 2017**

## **Antecedents of my research**

In the course of my performance career, none of my first encounters with a piece have been as determining as that with the piece by Arnold Schonberg, entitled “Pierrot lunaire”. The learning process had an effect of a revelation on me. I have always been one of those performers to whom the text is the most important, as well as the authentic presentation of the content behind the words with the appropriate tone of voice. It was in this piece that I first experienced the expressive possibilities of speech to such extent. I decided on the theme of my future thesis in the course of learning the piece. As a singer and a teacher, I consider the detailed analysis of the pieces to be learned, knowledge of the specific style, the history of the piece’s creation, as well as complete compliance with the information provided by the musical score, score-authenticity, very significant. The musical score contains all the information for the performer, by taking it into consideration and by compliance with it, the most authentic performance can be realized. The score by Schonberg has the kind of essence, regarding its cumulative information, the studying of which and its performance according to the composer’s intentions, provides a new world view for the performer. Besides studying the musical score, knowledge of professional literature is also indispensable. Literature is practically inexhaustible in connection with the life and career of Arnold Schonberg, thus it is very difficult to enrich the existing plentiful sources with new thoughts. A significant portion of existing publications were written in English and German, they are on the one hand analytic studies with an objective tone, on the other hand, their themes are related to biographical data. For me publications relying on the letters and diaries of Schonberg are of outstanding significance, since these really contain the composer’s thoughts, without any interpretation or transformation.

## Sources

The basis of my thesis is constituted by the musical score of *Pierrot lunaire* (Universal Edition, UE 5336). I have reviewed a portion of professional literature, such as János Kárpáti: *Schoenberg, Eliezer Rapoport: On the Origins of Schoenberg's in Pierrot lunaire*, Ralph Wood: *Sprechgesang*, H.H. Stuckenschmidt: *Schönberg*, René Leibowitz: *Schoenberg and his School*, Anthony Payne: *Schoenberg Oxford Studies of Composers*, Walter Frisch: *Schoenberg and his World*, Josef Rufer: *Das Werk Arnold Schönbergs*, however I only rely on these sources occasionally. I rather used quotes found in the composer's diaries and correspondence, such as Erwin Stein: *Arnold Schönberg's letters*, Joseph Auner: *A Schoenberg Reader*, and *Musik Konzepte 112/113.: Schönberg und der Sprechgesang*, which reflect the composer's own visions, as well as emotions. My analytical work was assisted by interesting quotes published in books, such as Nicolaus Harnoncourt: *Music, as dialog*, Nicolaus Harnoncourt: *Speech-like music*, W. Allan: *Atlas in Renaissance Music*, W. Kempe: *The Education of Children in learning*, G.G. Butler: *Music and Rhetoric in Early-Seventeenth-Century*; as well as commentaries related to the subject.

## Method

The selected theme of my thesis is *Sprechgesang* – In the focus Arnold Schönberg's piece entitled *Pierrot lunaire*. A necessary and indispensable part of the study of *Sprechgesang*, meaning speech-singing, is the examination of the evolution of the connection between speech and song, going back to the beginnings. Therefore, the first chapter leads from the development of antique Greek drama, through English rhetoric, all the way to the development of Italian and French speech-centric opera. I analyze the birth of *Sprechgesang*, through the significance of cabaret, which was the greatest inspiration for Schönberg while composing *Pierrot lunaire*. By

focusing on the songs, I construct my opinion one by one for the musical formation of the text context, with particular attention to references on the indications described in the musical score. I direct attention to Sprechgesang, as a performers' challenge, and to its possible technical realizations, primarily relying on Schonberg foreword, which is on the first page of the musical score. I formulate my opinions about performance methods by the comparison of multiple audio recordings. Since the amount of professional literature summarizing the composer's art is practically impossible to process, I rather form my own opinions. I aspire to contribute to the more authentic interpretation of Schonberg's piece with useful information and my own observations.

## **Conclusions**

The selection of the theme for my thesis was guided by a personal emotional reason, my prepossession in favor of *Pierrot lunaire*, also interpreted by me. The conveying of text by painting it with voice and voice-tones. The accurate absolving of the composer's instructions is the guiding thread of an authentic performance. The confident undertaking of the technical methods of *sprechgesang* is a great challenge for the performer. Schonberg's instructions related to interpretation considerably differ from the terminology of other composers, they indicate the composer's intentions in detail and consistently. Speech and music are inseparable from each other, one follows or compliments the other. This is also the main conclusion of the opera entitled *Capriccio* by Richard Strauss. My thesis may primarily serve as a study for artist candidates.

## **Activity related to the subject range of my thesis**

28<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Budapest, Festetics Palace – Schönberg: Pierrot lunaire, Intermoduláció Ensemble, conducted by László Tihanyi.

July 2011, Szombathely, International Bartók Seminar and Festival

- Solo participant at the rehearsals of the Conductor course
- Advanced course for the participants of the singing course, technical challenges in connection with the piece entitled Pierrot lunaire
- Program of the closing concert: Schönberg's piece entitled Pierrot lunaire, with the participation of the best of the conductor course.