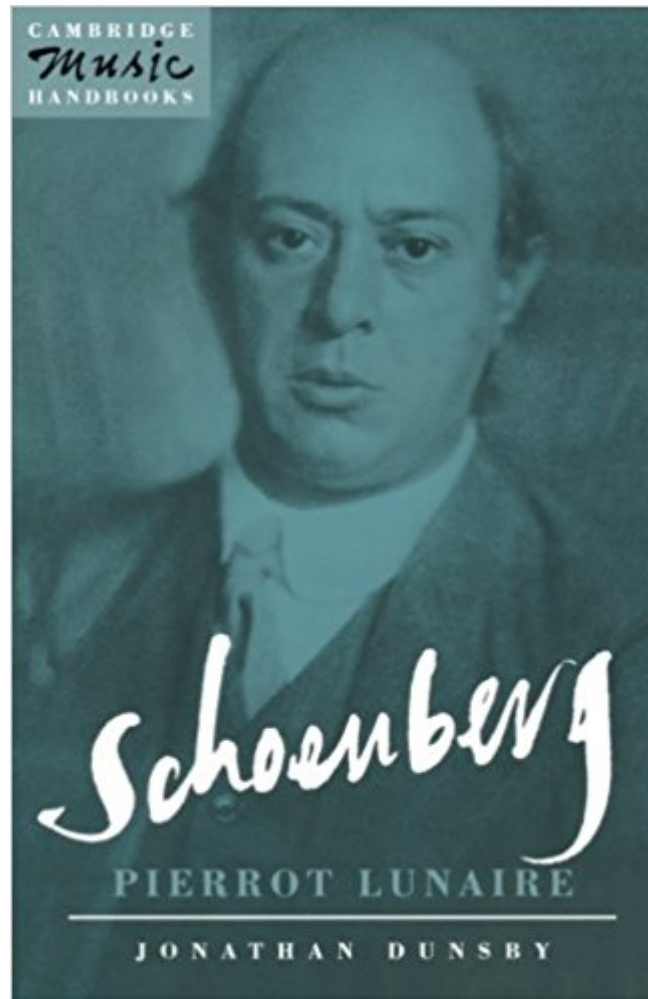


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Schoenberg: Pierrot Lunaire (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

Pierrot lunaire (1912) is one of the most important music theater works ever written. This is the first guide in English to a work that continues to be performed, broadcast, and recorded worldwide. The book describes the artistic environment around the turn of the century from which Pierrot emerged, and discusses Schoenberg's working methods and intentions in composition. In a clear and imaginative description of the work itself, the author takes each of the twenty-one melodramas in turn, considering both the music and the narrative. The text of all twenty-one poems is provided in German and in a new English translation by Andrew Porter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As many who admire a lot of so-called "difficult" music know, the more you listen, the more you hear. If a work is really inspired and intelligently composed, any open-minded listener can come to appreciate it. After 90+ years, most who care about 20th century music would probably agree that PIERROT LUNAIRE has stood the test of time. It's mesmerizing, beautiful, frightening, all at the same time. Certainly it's challenging too, but what really good music is not? Jonathan Dunsby had done a service to Schoenberg with this straightforward analysis of PIERROT. Plenty of background information is provided (although more on Albertine Zehme and the early performances of the piece would have been useful). Musical analysis is not forbiddingly technical. Anyone who can read music should be able to follow Dunsby's lead with a score. Those who don't read music should be able to

hear what the author points out in precise prose. It is important to cover as many aspects of PIERROT as possible: because the piece itself is brief and because Schoenberg carefully chose and set each poem. Dunsby treats each melodrama as a separate entity, but he also relates each one to the whole. It is also commendable that he discusses much of PIERROT in terms of melody. The composer was in the process of inventing a new kind of melody and he started an exploratory process that still continues today. Over and over again, Dunsby points out the kaleidoscopic melodic and instrumental variety of this fascinating musical landmark. PIERROT is not an important "museum piece", but an engaging masterpiece that lives on in performance today.

Jonathan Dunsby has helped to demystify the difficult and complicated issues surrounding this Schoenberg masterwork. The included English translation by Andrew Porter is excellent, and, by the way, can be heard with the German version (yes, both the English and the German on the same recording!) on Bridge BCD 9032 with Lucy Shelton and the Da Capo Chamber Players. Dunsby gives a detailed history of the work itself and the modern expressionist era that surrounds it, and a very useful interpretive and intentionally incomplete analysis of each of the twenty-one melodramas that will help the performer or the listener gain a better understanding of the work that shaped contemporary classical music. This is not for the faint of heart! Both Schoenberg and Pierrot are very complex, so be prepared to dig into specialized terminology and subject matter.

I purchased this book for my music theory class. All explanation and analysis about Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire organized very clearly and easy to understand.

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