



Sprechstimme Reconsidered Once Again: ‘. . . though Mrs. Stiedry is never in pitch’

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ABSTRACT: The MTO article “[The Test Pressings of Schoenberg Conducting *Pierrot lunaire*: *Sprechstimme* Reconsidered](#)” by Avior Byron claimed that “Schoenberg accepted very different performances . . . of the *Sprechstimme* notation by Erika Stiedry-Wagner in a period of not more than three days.”⁽¹⁾ The present article discusses a surprising letter that Schoenberg wrote at the end of 1941, which seems (at first) to contradict Byron’s claim. We present this letter and suggest that Schoenberg’s conception of *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot lunaire* presumably changed as a result of listening to recordings, an assumption which finally strengthens the argument presented in the aforementioned article.

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Introduction

[1] Unpublished correspondence and other evidence discussed in this article suggests that Schoenberg’s conception of *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot lunaire* changed as a result of listening to recordings. An exact reproduction of notated pitch was of no concern to Schoenberg as long as performances of *Pierrot lunaire* were not recorded. As technological possibilities changed, reproducing pitch became a major concern. Schoenberg’s awareness that listeners would be able to check recorded performance against the score played a major role in his changing conception of the role of *Sprechstimme* notation.

[2] In “[The Test Pressings of Schoenberg Conducting *Pierrot lunaire*: *Sprechstimme* Reconsidered](#)” (*Music Theory Online* 12.1, 2006), Avior Byron demonstrated that Schoenberg’s conception of *Sprechstimme* changed in different periods. “Schoenberg accepted very different performances (although not completely different) of the *Sprechstimme* notation by Stiedry-Wagner in a period of not more than three days.”⁽²⁾ In a letter to Erwin Stein dated 25 December 1941, Schoenberg offered what might be taken as the composer’s final opinion on Stiedry-Wagner’s performance on the *Pierrot* recording as well as a hint about his true concern for the adherence to notated pitch in *Sprechstimme*. Schoenberg wrote:

I am interested in your plan to perform my *Pierrot lunaire*. I hope it is you, who will rehearse and conduct this performance. But who will recite, and who are the other performers?

Do you know that, in September 1940, I conducted a recording of it for Columbia, with [Rudolf] Kolisch, [Eduard] Steuermann and Mrs. Stiedry. These records have only been released two months ago, and I doubt, whether you know them. They are to a great part quite good, though Mrs. Stiedry is never in pitch and several pieces are not very well recorded. I can say, most was played better than recorded. Nothing is better recorded, than played.⁽³⁾

This criticism standing, one may argue that Stiedry-Wagner was the best performer that he could find at that time, and point out the fact that they were good friends. Indeed, she was Schoenberg's favourite performer and she performed many times under his baton, as well as that of Erwin Stein and other conductors. It is hard to believe that only after two decades did Schoenberg notice that her *Sprechstimme* was so off-pitch.

[3] A sharp change in Stein's conception of *Sprechstimme* happened in the early 1940s. After receiving the letter from Schoenberg from 25 December 1941 where he complained that "Mrs. Stiedry is never in pitch," Stein, who worked for two decades with Schoenberg and Stiedry-Wagner, began to lose confidence concerning the composer's intentions. On 18 March 1942 he wrote to Schoenberg: "I have had, so far, about fifteen rehearsals with the speaker of *Pierrot*, Miss Hedli Anderson, and I have every confidence that she will do it well. Her voice has a much higher range than Erika Wagner's and it will perhaps be possible for her to speak the actual pitches, as noted in the score."⁽⁴⁾ On 29 April 1942 he continued to report to Schoenberg: "Last Saturday we had the first full rehearsal of *Pierrot* and it was rather satisfactory. I think the speaker, Miss Hedli Anderson, will be very good indeed. She really is able to speak the actual pitches as noted in the score. Of course, she still makes some mistakes, but we have a month before us as the performance is going to take place on May 29th."⁽⁵⁾ These letters show that Stein was suddenly attempting to coach Hedli Anderson to hit the exact notated pitches, something that he did not do with Stiedry-Wagner. It is amazing how one sentence by Schoenberg was able to destabilize Stein's confidence.⁽⁶⁾

[4] Yet Schoenberg's sudden criticism of Stiedry-Wagner's off-pitch *Sprechstimme* could not erase the twenty years of Stein's experience with her and the composer. Indeed, Stein had doubts, and they are reflected in a letter dated 30 November 1942 where he wrote to Schoenberg about the 1940 recording: "You told me that you were not satisfied with Erika Wagner and I realized what you mean when I heard the records. There was lively discussion how the speaker's part should be rendered, after the hearing of the records in the office of Columbia between Walter Legge (the manager), Cecil Gray (a musical writer) and me. I had a difficult task in defending Erika Wagner. In this connection I would like to receive your definite advice. Shall one try to get the pitches as noted?"⁽⁷⁾ This was probably the first time that Stein asked Schoenberg a direct question about getting the pitches as noted. Unfortunately, Schoenberg never answered it since he did not receive the letter.⁽⁸⁾

[5] Stein continued to coach Hedli Anderson to reproduce the precise notated pitch, and in the same letter from November 1942 he wrote to Schoenberg: "Hedli Anderson succeeded almost completely in keeping them. [Karl] Rankl was very much thrilled by it and I liked it much better, when "zärtlich [*sic*; originally 'lieblich'] klagend" really hit the F \sharp , or "träumend spielt er" the E, or the last "o alter Duft" was spoken that you could distinguish the A \sharp -C \sharp against the third of the strings."⁽⁹⁾ Stein's new practice in London was observed by one of his performers, Peter Stadlen: "During the rehearsals Stein did his best to get Hedli [Anderson] to a correct rendering of the written pitches. I did the same when I conducted some performances from the piano a few years later. It was all the more astonishing that Stein both before and after the performances spoke out against the adherence to the pitches in this piece in articles and letters. With that he reflected Schoenberg's own confusion and changeable views in this question."⁽¹⁰⁾ Stadlen and other authors who noticed the change in Stein's practice seem to suggest that Schoenberg's conception of *Sprechstimme* was unclear and confused from the very beginning.⁽¹¹⁾

[6] A close examination of the reception of Stiedry-Wagner's *Sprechstimme* by Schoenberg and his circle, as revealed in their largely unpublished correspondence, can put Schoenberg's complaint that "Mrs. Stiedry is never in pitch" in context. It will be argued that Schoenberg's complaint is a sign of a change in his conception of *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot lunaire*, one that was directly influenced by the rise of recordings as a medium.

The Perception of Stiedry-Wagner

[7] In order to understand how Stiedry-Wagner was perceived by Schoenberg and his circle one needs to return to 1920, the year she entered the world of *Pierrot lunaire* when the Society for Private Musical Performances wanted to perform it in their concerts. At first they asked the singer Marie Gutheil-Schoder, who sang in the première of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op. 10, to do the *Sprechstimme* role. On 28 November 1920 Stein wrote to Schoenberg, who was staying in Holland at that time, that there was much trouble with Gutheil since she had little rehearsal time due to an opera part that she had to sing, and that she had technical problems in performing *Sprechstimme*:

The rehearsals are very exhausting for her and she hasn't found the right way of speaking yet. I think (and she said it to me), that usually she is forced to speak low. On the climax in 'Madonna' it turned out that initially her voice wasn't strong enough while speaking. She spoke the preceding parts *so* low that at the climax she reached only a middle register, which lacked tone and resonance. I tried it with singing, and by this roundabout way the passage became quite all right. It seems to me, that with her we should proceed generally from singing notes, of course, only as a temporary solution [*Übergang*].⁽¹²⁾

[8] Stein asked Schoenberg whether they should try to find someone else instead of Gutheil.⁽¹³⁾ On 20 December 1920 he wrote to Schoenberg: "I started studying *Pierrot* with Wagner and today I decided to quit with Gutheil . . . At the last rehearsal (Saturday) Gutheil lamented again that she couldn't find the natural expression—all the time she fell back into *singing*."⁽¹⁴⁾ At a certain point an unexpected competition evolved between Gutheil and Wagner. On 13 January 1921 Stein wrote to Schoenberg:

Gutheil . . . herself was in favor . . . that I should try with someone else, because she wanted to reserve the right to say . . . that she is not able to do it. Yet one day, when I came to her and told her that Erika Wagner wanted to speak *Pierrot*, and [that] I considered her suitable, Gutheil's ambition was revived. So she wanted me to study it with both of them. This I did for a short time—just like a theatre director—and left both of them in the dark about who should speak it in the performances. Wagner's speech-technique was much more skillfully used, however; she also had much more time to rehearse and soon moved ahead of Gutheil. Since I did not have enough time to go on studying with both of them and, as I saw that Wagner was better, [and] because I did not want to be insincere to Gutheil, I stopped rehearsing with Gutheil.⁽¹⁵⁾

The rehearsals with Stiedry-Wagner were very intensive.⁽¹⁶⁾ On 28 February 1921 Stein wrote to Schoenberg that Stiedry-Wagner had 37 solo-rehearsals: "four or five of them Kolisch did, in two of them Steuermann joined; once in December and once very briefly at the beginning of this month."⁽¹⁷⁾

[9] Although Gutheil was an accomplished singer it is clear that from the very beginning Stein saw Stiedry-Wagner as superior to her in performing the *Sprechstimme*. On 20 December 1920 he wrote to Schoenberg: "Rhythmically and in general musicianship, Wagner is doing at least as well [as Gutheil], in every other respect, voice, ease of expression, natural rendition of the melody of the words [*Wortmelodie*] she is doing much better."⁽¹⁸⁾ On 13 January 1921 Stein confirmed to Schoenberg that while Stiedry-Wagner's *Sprechstimme* technique was "much better" than that of Gutheil, he also had some minor criticism: "Up to now we have learned the first 15 pieces of *Pierrot*. The first part is doing quite well, but is still too stiff. Rhythmically Wagner is quite good. At the moment she is doing best the grotesque pieces like "Gebet an *Pierrot*". . . Whether she will really be completely good I can't say, but she will be reasonable anyway."⁽¹⁹⁾

[9] It seems that Stein was satisfied not only by Stiedry-Wagner's *Sprechstimme* but also by her singing in general. After her performance in the Society's concert given on 20 and repeated on 23 January 1921, Stein wrote to Schoenberg: "Mrs. Wagner is a valuable addition to the Society [for Private Musical Performances]. She sang her *Lieder* very well, namely those from Op. 6 (by heart!); in Op. 14 she was also quite sure of herself although not yet convincing enough."⁽²⁰⁾ However, not all members of Schoenberg's circle were impressed by Stiedry-Wagner's performance in these concerts. [Alban] Berg, for example, wrote to Schoenberg: "Your songs, sung by Wagner, were very beautiful, as far as that is possible for such a 2nd-rate singer."⁽²¹⁾ On 3 February 1921 Stein wrote to Schoenberg, "at first everybody ([Anton] Webern as well!!) liked [Stiedry-Wagner] very much." He went on writing about his aforementioned dilemma of choosing between Gutheil and

Stiedry-Wagner, and concluded:

I am still convinced that Wagner will be very good. That is also the opinion of Berg and Kolisch, both of whom have listened to her several times. But I don't know how to make a decision if, as is happening again and again, every member of the managing committee [of the Society for Private Musical Performances] has a different opinion about a performer or a performance. For example, just about Wagner: [Josef] Polnauer and Dr. [David Josef] Bach liked her voice very much, Rankl did not like her at all. In between these views you could find many different shades of opinion: 'ability to interpret but no voice', 'beautiful voice but no ability to interpret', 'beautiful voice but technically imperfect', etc. Or: Webern liked her *very much* at first, then less and less, until he eventually arrived at the opposite opinion. *Most* of the others liked her better each time. Berg for example liked her best on the last occasion, in Op. 14, just when Webern did not like her at all. So the only thing I can do is to rely on my own judgement. If I am wrong with this—I will take the responsibility.⁽²²⁾

[10] After hearing Stiedry-Wagner twice, Steuermann wrote on 10 February 1921 to Schoenberg, "She is musical enough to learn it, has a nice *Sprechstimme*, but without a special range and without an overpowering weight [*Volumen*]. It seems to me that artistically she is able to follow everything."⁽²³⁾ Steuermann's criticism has nothing connected to her off-pitch singing: "at the moment there was still a lack of real intensity. She is probably prevented by technical difficulties. Now I am going to accompany her more often at the rehearsals: if she hears more of the music, she will probably get more emotional."⁽²⁴⁾ It is clear that what was interesting for Steuermann, and arguably for Schoenberg, was musical expression rather than a strict reproduction of notated pitch. Steuermann continued, "We don't have the difficulties with her that we had with Mrs. [Albertine] Zehme (the continual replacing [*Surrogieren*] of the real expression by a theatrical expression, that Zehme was already familiar with). If Wagner does not find the right way of expression, then nothing really happens."⁽²⁵⁾ Stein also pointed to some problems with her expression in some of the songs. On 28 February 1921 he wrote:

I think that Wagner is really good, even if she does not do everything well the first time. Passages like: 'Da vergisst Pierrot', 'Stricknadeln', the beginning of 'Gemeinheit' are excellent; she has problems with the expression in 'Nacht' and 'Der kranke Mond'. Above all: what she does is real, without sentimentality, pathos and singsong [*Singsang*]. Perhaps from time to time [it is] too genteel, the seriousness is not cold enough, the tragedy is not overwhelming enough. However, both are there. And when you wrote that everything had to stay *allegretto*, I thought I understood you to mean that *those* qualities didn't matter too much.⁽²⁶⁾

[11] The single documented case of someone from Schoenberg's circle who might be understood as mentioning Stiedry-Wagner's off-pitch singing was on 6 March 1921 when Webern wrote to Schoenberg:

Wagner: I listened to one rehearsal with the piano (Steuermann was playing) where she—it was already at the end of the rehearsal—was just speaking with 'half voice' [*markierte*]. Musically instructed in a tremendously clear manner by Stein. But the following still seems to me to be missing above all: the ability as a speaker to give genuine linguistic shape [to the material] within the tempi, rhythms and pitches. I am so filled by this music that I have to say this. God knows this is not to cast a bad light on Stein's splendid efforts. Because I definitely believe that he will overcome all difficulties.⁽²⁷⁾

[12] It is not clear what "genuine linguistic shape" [*wirklich sprachlich zu gestalten*] means. In fact, one may assume that Webern was taking issue with Wagner's preoccupation with and efforts (successful or not) to hit the correct notes, whereas he would prefer a more natural "shape" above all. Moreover, one should note that "pitches" appear last in the list of "the tempi, rhythm, [and] pitches."⁽²⁸⁾ Yet, even Webern acknowledged that reproduction of the notated pitch is not the most important thing in *Sprechstimme*. On 21 February 1922 he wrote to Heinrich Jalowetz that Darius Milhaud and Marya Freund performed *Pierrot lunaire* at Alma Mahler's house. He claimed that "they did not grasp the thing correctly. Freund kept to the written pitches with painstaking care. It became singing, etc., somehow it did not work."⁽²⁹⁾ About four years later Stein reported to Schoenberg: "I am keen to tell you some things about the *Pierrot*-performance. Of the performers Wagner was rhythmically very good, apart from that not much different as then [i.e. in the performances of 1921/22]. Webern listened at the last rehearsal. He liked the performance very much."⁽³⁰⁾ Did Webern change his mind, and if so, why? Stein did not report that

Stiedry-Wagner's reproduction of pitch had improved. The only further discussion of Stiedry-Wagner's intonation can be found in a letter by Ernst Bachrich dated 18 February 1921, admittedly concerning the performance of the Lieder Op. 14 when there was little time for rehearsals. Bachrich wrote to Schoenberg: "Mrs. Wagner, who I think is a good performer of your works, was insecure, mainly in intonation."⁽³¹⁾

[13] Alexander Zemlinsky, who was at present the conductor of the German Opera in Prague, was very impressed by Stiedry-Wagner. On 29 November 1921 he wrote to Schoenberg from Prague: "Dear friend, we now listened to your 'Pierrot' in a wonderful performance. Everybody—Stein, Mrs. Wagner (admirable for her musicality) [and] Steuermann etc. were extraordinary."⁽³²⁾

[14] On 26 August 1922 Stein wrote to Schoenberg from Darmstadt, "Now that you have listened to Wagner; do you agree to a solo recital [with her]? Do you think that we can use her as a Lieder singer?"⁽³³⁾ Schoenberg sent the letter back to Stein with his annotations in the margins. He answered, "She has much to learn. Nice voice, but small. She forces [it] and has almost no head-notes."⁽³⁴⁾ In spite of this criticism, there is no comment by Schoenberg concerning Stiedry-Wagner being off-pitch. Whatever criticism Schoenberg had of Stiedry-Wagner, he recommended her again and again over the years for the *Sprechstimme* role in *Pierrot lunaire*. On 1 August 1922 he wrote to her, "I don't have to invent compliments to explain to you what you already know: that you are a 'great attraction' etc."⁽³⁵⁾ In a letter dated 8 July 1923 he advised Joseph Rufer to engage her for a performance of *Pierrot lunaire*.⁽³⁶⁾ He suggested her again to Stein in a letter dated 20 July 1933 when a situation occurred where there was very little time for rehearsals.⁽³⁷⁾ There is no further significant correspondence on *Sprechstimme* and Stiedry-Wagner from the mid-1920s up to 1940. As mentioned above, when the opportunity came to record the piece with the composer conducting, Schoenberg wrote on 31 August 1940 to Erika and Fritz Stiedry about thoroughly refreshing the *Sprechstimme* in order to achieve "that light, ironical, satirical tone in which the piece was actually conceived."⁽³⁸⁾ There is no mention of any change in the role of the notated pitch. In 1940 Schoenberg wrote a text for the commercial recording where he claimed, "Since then [Stein's Pierrot performances of 1921] Erika Stiedry-Wagner has, with a few exceptions—of which I want heartily to mention the great Marie Gutheil-Schoder—spoken the vocal part, and this proves the great satisfaction which her performance always has been to me."⁽³⁹⁾ In the light of the other letters mentioned above, this seems more than propaganda attached to the record sleeve.

[15] In summary, despite some criticism of Stiedry-Wagner's vocal abilities, mostly concerning her vocal range, there was almost no comment by Schoenberg and members of his circle accusing her of not reproducing the notated pitch in a precise manner. The compliments that she received from them show the approval for and often great satisfaction with her *Sprechmelodie*. According to members of Schoenberg's circle, what was important was not the reproduction of exact pitch, but the "ease of expression, natural rendition/interpretation of the melody of the words [*Wortmelodie*]," "overpowering weight [and] real [musical] expression," and that the *Sprechstimme* will be "without sentimentality, pathos and singsong [*Singsang*]." In other words, the important thing was expression. The only thing that is mentioned to be reproduced precisely is rhythm.

[16] Schoenberg's complaint in the 25 December 1941 letter concerning the fact that "Mrs. Stiedry is never in pitch" should be understood in its historical context. He writes in this letter that he had just received the records. Although he had copies of the test pressings, these were of inferior quality compared to the commercial recording. But recording quality was not the only thing that influenced him. He wrote this complaint when he heard that Stein was planning a performance of *Pierrot lunaire*. Moreover, when Schoenberg received the record, he was listening to the recording while having in mind the thought that now and in the future, people would be able to check whether Stiedry-Wagner was adhering to the notated pitch. Schoenberg's intention concerning this recording is revealed from his letter to the Stiedrys dated 31 August 1940. After writing about the need to "thoroughly freshen up" the *Sprechstimme* he added: "It is difficult to do it in two weeks in such a manner that we can save it for posterity on records as the authentic interpretation."⁽⁴⁰⁾ A further indication that Schoenberg's reaction was influenced by his reaction to recordings is revealed in the letter of 25 December 1941 to Stein where he writes: "I can say, most was played better than recorded. Nothing is better recorded, than played."

[17] Moreover, Schoenberg's traumatic experiences of not recognizing an instrument playing in a wrong transposition were most likely to trigger such a reaction.⁽⁴¹⁾ In other words, he probably tried to defend himself against people who would use this recording as "evidence" for attacking his musical abilities.

[18] If faithfulness to the score were an important issue for Schoenberg we would expect that in the process of choosing the best takes for the commercial recording he, and perhaps also other people who were present in the event, would use scores.⁽⁴²⁾ Yet, in a recent interview Newlin said about the occasion: “My recollection is we were listening without scores. We were listening in a way, in other words, the person who goes on and buys this recordings is not going to have a score . . . Because, this recording should not be just for musicians to listen to, just for professionals to listen to. It should be something that a musical public can enjoy.”⁽⁴³⁾

[19] One should not underestimate the effect of listening to a recording on performers in general and Schoenberg in particular. Robert Philip, in his book *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, speaks about the great influence that recordings had on performers in the first half of the twentieth century.⁽⁴⁴⁾ After the invention of recording technology, and the start of its use in a commercial manner, for the first time in history performers could hear themselves while not performing. The effect of this experience is similar to that when one hears oneself speaking on an answering machine.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Yet in musical performance the shock is arguably greater since suddenly one’s interpretation is available to the masses and can be checked against the score. Philip argues that this is one of the crucial factors that changed the flexible performance practice of the early twentieth century to the strict, precise and score oriented one in the second part of that century.⁽⁴⁶⁾

[20] Although Schoenberg’s letter to Stein from 1941 concerning Stiedry-Wagner’s off-pitch *Sprechstimme* created a wave of performances by Stein, Stadlen, and possibly also others, attempting to reproduce the exact notated pitch, the composer himself returned to his previous conception of *Sprechmelodie*. This can be found in the letter to Hans Rosbaud from 15 February 1949 and to Daniel Ruyneman from 23 July 1949 which was quoted elsewhere. Perhaps the influence of recordings on Schoenberg’s conception of *Sprechstimme* was, after all, momentary.⁽⁴⁷⁾ It shows that in certain cases, a momentary and local context (i.e. recordings) can strikingly change the opinion of a composer/performer concerning how their music should be interpreted. The correspondence presented here strengthens one of the main arguments stated above: apart from a brief moment after he listened to the recordings at December 1941, reproduction of pitch in *Sprechstimme* was not the main issue for Schoenberg.

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Footnotes

1. Avior Byron, “The Test Pressings of Schoenberg Conducting *Pierrot lunaire: Sprechstimme* Reconsidered,” *Music Theory Online* 12, no. 1 (2006).

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2. Ibid.

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3. LC.

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4. LC.

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5. LC.

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6. It is well known that Schoenberg had very strong influence on his circle.

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7. LC.

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8. On 5 February 1944 Stein wrote to Schoenberg: "I got your letter of Oct. 1942 and answered it; I am sorry it did not reach you." LC.

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9. 30 November 1942, LC.

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10. Report by Peter Stadlen about Pierrot rehearsals of Stein for the performance on 29 May 1942. See Peter Stadlen, "Österreichische Exilmusiker in England," in *Österreichische Musiker im Exil—Kolloquium 1988 der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Musik*, (= ÖGM-Beiträge), Kassel 1990, 132. "Bei den Proben tat Stein sein Äußerstes, Hedli [Anderson] zur korrekten Wiedergabe der Tonhöhen anzuhalten. Auch ich strebte dies an, als ich einige Jahre später mehrere Aufführungen vom Klavier dirigierte. Um so erstaunlicher war es, daß sich Stein sowohl vorher wie auch nachher in Artikeln und Briefen gegen die Einhaltung von Tonhöhen in diesem Werk ausgesprochen hat, und damit Schönbergs eigene Verwirrung und Unbeständigkeit in dieser Frage reflektierte."

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11. Peter Stadlen, "Die von Schönberg intendierte Ausführungsart der *Sprechstimme* im 'Pierrot lunaire'," in *Stimme und Wort in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Hartmut Krones (ed.) (Wien: Boehlau 2001), 109–126. See also Thomas Brezinka, "Erwin Stein (1885–1958). Ein Musiker in Wien und London," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wien 2003), 100–105.

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12. LC. "Die Proben strengen sie sehr an, sie hat auch das richtige Sprechen noch nicht gefunden. Ich glaube (und sie sagte es mir), daß sie für gewöhnlich forciert tief spricht. Beim Höhepunkt in 'Madonna' zeigte es sich, daß ihr Organ beim Sprechen zunächst nicht ausreichte. Die vorhergehenden Stellen waren so tief gesprochen, daß sie mit dem Höhepunkt erst in eine Mittellage kam, die klang-, resonanzlos war. Ich probierte es mit dem Singen und auf diesem Umweg wurde die Stelle schließlich ganz gut. Es scheint, daß man bei ihr überhaupt vom gesungenen Ton wird ausgehen müssen, natürlich nur als Übergang."

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13. Schoenberg's answers to most of these letters are lost.

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14. LC. "Den Pierrot habe ich begonnen mit der Wagner zu probieren und bin seit heute entschlossen die Gutheil fallen zu lassen . . . Bei der letzten Probe (Samstag) hat Gutheil wieder gejammert, sie fände den natürlichen Ausdruck nicht—immer wieder kam sie ins Singen."

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15. LC. "Sie [Gutheil] war selbst dafür, dass ich es noch mit jemand anderm versuche, da sie sich vorbehalten wollte, mir

eines Tages zu sagen, dass sie es doch nicht machen könne. Als ich aber eines Tages zu ihr kam und ihr sagte, dass Erika Wagner den Pierrot sprechen wolle und ich sie für geeignet halte, ist Gutheils Ehrgeiz neu erwacht und da wollte sie, dass ich es mit beiden studiere. Das habe ich kurze Zeit getan und beide—wie ein Theaterdirektor—im Unklaren gelassen, wer es sprechen solle. Nun hat sich aber Wagner sprachtechnisch viel geschickter angestellt, sie hatte auch viel mehr Zeit zum Probieren und hatte Gutheil bald überholt. Da ich doch zu wenig Zeit hatte, nun mit beiden die Sache weiter zu probieren, mir die Unaufrichtigkeit, sobald ich sah, daß Wagner besser war, auch unangenehm war, habe ich die Proben mit der Gutheil eingestellt.”

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16. As she herself testified in a quotation mentioned in Byron, “The Test Pressings . . .,” [2.1].

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17. LC. “Bis jetzt waren folgende Proben: Soloproben mit Wagner: 37 (vier oder fünf davon hat Kolisch gehalten, bei zweien war Steurmann dabei, einmal im Dezember und einmal ganz kurz Anfang dieses Monats).”

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18. LC. “Rhythmisch und überhaupt musikalisch macht Wagner es mindestens so gut, in jeder anderen Hinsicht, Organ, Leichtigkeit des Ausdrucks, natürliche Wiedergabe einer Wortmelodie aber viel besser.”

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19. Stein to Schoenberg, 13 January 1921, LC. “Von Pierrot haben wir bis jetzt die ersten 15 Stücke gelernt. Die erste Abteilung geht schon so ziemlich, ist aber noch zu steif. Rhythmisch ist Wagner recht gut. Am besten gelingen ihr einstweilen die grotesken Stücke, z.B. ‘Gebet an Pierrot’ . . . Ob sie wirklich restlos gut sein wird, kann ich nicht sagen, brauchbar aber jedenfalls.”

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20. Stein to Schoenberg, 24 January 1921, LC. “Frau Wagner ist ein Gewinn für den Verein. Sie hat Ihre Lieder wirklich sehr schön gesungen, namentlich die aus op 6 (auswendig!); in op 14 war sie ja auch recht sicher aber noch nicht überlegen genug.”

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21. BSC, 301. On 25 January 1921 Schoenberg wrote to Berg from Zandvoort in Holland: “You consider Frau Wagner only moderately good? And she’s to do Pierrot? I wanted Gutheil! That should have been possible!” BSC, 303.

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22. LC. ”Nun fanden wir schließlich Wagner, die anfangs Allen (auch Webern!!) sehr gut gefallen hat. . . . Meine Überzeugung ist nach wie vor, daß Wagner sehr gut werden würde. Das ist auch die Meinung von Berg und Kolisch, die einiges von ihr gehört haben. Aber ich weiß nicht, wonach ich mich richten soll, wenn, wie das immer wieder vorkommt, jedes Vorstandsmitglied über einen Mitwirkenden oder eine Aufführung anders urteilt. Z. B. gerade bei der Wagner, die Polnauer und Dr. Bach sehr gut, Rankl sehr wenig gefallen hat, dazwischen waren alle möglichen Meinungsschattierungen vorhanden, ‘Gestaltungskraft aber keine Stimme’, ‘schöne Stimme aber keine Gestaltungskraft’, ‘schöne Stimme aber technisch unvollkommen’ u.s.w. Oder: Webern gefiel sie anfangs sehr gut, dann immer weniger, bis er schließlich zum entgegengesetzten Urteil gekommen ist. Den meisten anderen hat sie von Mal zu Mal besser gefallen. Berg z.B. am besten das letzte Mal bei op 14, als sie Webern gar nicht gefiel.—Da bleibt mir doch nichts anderes übrig, als mich auf mein eigenes Urteil zu verlassen. Irre ich dabei, so trage ich die Verantwortung.”

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23. LC. “Sie ist musikalisch genug um es zu erlernen, hat eine hübsche Sprechstimme, allerdings ohne besonderen Umfang und ohne überwältigendes Volumen. Es scheint mir, daß sie künstlerisch auf alles eingehen kann, . . .”

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24. Ibid., “vorläufig fehlte es noch an wirklicher Intensität. Es ist wahrscheinlich, daß sie noch durch technische

Schwierigkeiten gehindert ist. Ich werde jetzt öfters bei den Proben begleiten: wenn sie mehr von der Musik hören wird, wird sie wahrscheinlich mehr ins Feuer kommen.”

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25. Ibid., “Die Schwierigkeit, die bei Frau Zehme war (das fortwährende ‘Surrogieren’ des wirklichen Ausdrucks durch einen ihr schon bekannten, theatralischen), fällt hier weg. Wenn die Wagner das Richtige nicht gefunden hat—dann geschieht eben nichts; . . .” Albertine Zehme sang in the premier and first *Pierrot lunaire* tour.

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26. Stein to Schoenberg, 28 February 1921, LC. “Ich finde, dass die Wagner gut ist, wenn ihr auch nicht alles gleich gut gelingt. Stellen wie: ‘Da vergißt Pierrot,’ ‘Stricknadeln,’ Anfang von ‘Gemeinheit’ sind ausgezeichnet; schwerer im Ausdruck fällt ihr ‘Nacht,’ ‘Der kranke Mond.’ Vor allem: was sie bringt ist echt, ohne Sentimentalität und Pathos und Singsang. Vielleicht mitunter zu vornehm, der Ernst nicht kalt genug, die Tragik nicht überwältigend groß. Aber da ist beides. Und ich glaubte Sie so zu verstehen, daß das nicht allzuviel ausmacht, als Sie schrieben, dass Alles ‘Allegretto’ bleiben müsste.”

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27. Anton Webern to Arnold Schoenberg, 6 March 1921, LC. “Die Wagner: ich hörte eine Probe mit Klavier (Steuermann spielte) wo sie nur mehr—es war schon gegen Ende der Probe—markierte. Von Stein ungemein sauber musikalisch studiert. Aber was mir noch vor allem zu fehlen scheint: die Fähigkeit innerhalb der Tempi, Rhythmen, Tonhöhen nun wirklich sprachlich zu gestalten, als Sprecher.—Ich bin so voll davon, darum sage ich das. Bei Gott nicht, um Steins so prachtvolles Bemühen in ein schlechtes Licht zu bringen. Denn ich glaube bestimmt, daß er noch alle Schwierigkeiten überwinden wird.”

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28. As mentioned above, this was not the first time that Webern criticized Wagner. On 26 January 1921 he wrote to Schoenberg: “And that was the first performance [of Schoenberg’s Lieder Op. 14], about 14 years after you composed them!!! Unfortunately the performance did not please me much. It was not Stein’s fault. Wagner, who sang the Lieder, is very nice, yet insufficient.” “Und das war die Uraufführung [von Schoenbergs Liedern Op.14], nach 14 Jahren ungefähr!!! Sie befriedigte mich leider nur wenig. Es kann nicht die Schuld Steins gewesen sein! Die Wagner, die sie sang, ist sehr sympathisch, aber doch nicht ausreichend.” LC.

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29. “Nun, sie haben die Sache nicht recht begriffen. Die Freund hielt sich mit peinlichster Sorgfalt an die vorgeschriebenen Tonhöhn. Es wurde Gesang. U.s.w. es stimmte nicht recht.” Ernst Lichtenhahn (ed.), *Anton Webern. Briefe an Heinrich Jalowetz* (Mainz: Schott, 1999), 503.

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30. Stein to Schoenberg, 16 January 1926, LC. “Es drängt mich, Ihnen doch einiges von der Pierrot-Aufführung zu erzählen . . . Von den Mitwirkenden waren die Wagner rhythmisch sehr gut, sonst nicht viel anders als seinerzeit . . . Webern war bei der letzten Probe. Er fand die Aufführung sehr gut.”

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31. LC. “Frau Wagner, die ich als Interpretin Ihrer Werkes für geeignet halte, war unsicher, hauptsächlich in der Intonation.”

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32. Horst Weber (ed.), *Alexander von Zemlinsky. Briefwechsel mit Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg und Franz Schreker* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 228. “Lieber Freund, wir haben jetzt deinen “Pierrot” in einer wunderbaren Aufführung gehört. Alle-Stein, Fr. Wagner (bewundernswert in ihrer Musikalität) Steuermann u.s.w. hervorragend.”

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33. Stein to Schoenberg, 26 August 1922, LC. “Sind Sie mit dem Soloabend einverstanden? Sie haben jetzt ja die Wagner gehört. Kommt sie als Liedersängerin für uns in Betracht?”

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34. Ibid., margin notes by Schoenberg: “Sie hat viel zu lernen. Stimme ist hübsch, aber klein. Sie forciert und hat kaum Kopftöne.”

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35. LC. “Nicht wahr, ich muß nicht Komplimente drechseln, um Ihnen zu erklären, was Sie ohnedies wissen: daß Sie eine "große Attraktion" sind und dgl m.”

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36. GA, *Pierrot lunaire*, 300.

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37. LC.

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38. Rufer, *Schoenberg Catalogue*, 40.

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39. Ibid.

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40. Ibid. Schoenberg to Fritz Stiedry and Erika Stiedry-Wagner, 31 August 1940. “Es ist schwer, das in zwei Wochen so zu machen, dass man es auf Platten als die authentische Darstellung verewigen sollte.”

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41. For a discussion of these traumatic experiences see Avior Byron, “Schoenberg as conductor,” *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 1 (2006) <http://www.biu.ac.il/HU/mu/min-ad/06/Byron_Schoenberg.pdf>

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42. More about this event in the 2 October 1940 entry in Newlin’s diary: Dika Newlin, *Schoenberg Remembered*, 258.

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43. Avior Byron, “Schoenberg as Performer: an Aesthetics in Practice,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of London, 2006), appendix 4.

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44. Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recordings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

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45. See Ibid., 24–25.

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46. Ibid., 4–10.

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47. Although it is possible that the *Sprechstimme* notations of late works by Schoenberg from the 1940s were influenced by this experience. Using a single staff line, these notations are less precise than in *Pierrot lunaire*. For a description of the history of *Sprechstimme* from a philological point of view, see Christian Martin Schmidt, “Die Sprechstimme im Oeuvre von Arnold Schoenberg. Notation—Bedeutung—Editorische Probleme,” in *Opernedition. Bericht über das Symposium zum 60. Geburtstag von Sieghart Doehring* (Mainz: ARE Edition, 2005), 179–189.

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