Spitalfields music festival

Pierrot Lunaire

Hebrides Ensemble

Tuesday 9th July 2024 | St Mary-at-Hill

Electra Perivolaris Brushstrokes of Nightmares and Dreams (World Premiere, a Spitalfields Music and Hebrides Ensemble co-commission)

Helen Grime Seven Pierrot Miniatures

Arnold Schoenberg Pierrot Lunaire

Hebrides Ensemble
Stephanie Lamprea Soprano
Paintings by **Kirsty Matheson**

Brushstrokes of Nightmares and Dreams

When asked to compose this new work for Hebrides Ensemble as a companion piece for Pierrot Lunaire, I was interested in finding a new perspective and a new means of reflecting on the haunting and dream-like themes and atmospheres of Schoenberg's masterwork. I have long admired the paintings of Scottish double bassist and fine artist Kirsty Matheson and when I discovered that she was completing a sequence of paintings of each movement of Pierrot, this struck me as the ideal inspiration for a new compositional process in my piece.

I have selected four of Kirsty's paintings which each correspond to a movement of the Schoenberg and of my piece, starting with 'Moondrunk' before moving into the 'Waltz', 'The Speck of Moon' and then the final movement 'The Ancient Scent' which I have re-named 'Awakening' in my piece. I selected these specific sections of the Schoenberg in Kirsty's paintings as they represent the journey through Pierrot, from nightmarish darkness to light. Each movement is influenced by the visual shapes and uses of colour, shade, movement and gesture in each of the four canvases to reflect the atmospheres of the text. The movements are separated by duo interludes for solo soprano and each instrument which use my own English translation of Albert Giraud's original French poetry.

As such, I hope this new reflection on Pierrot through the lens of Kirsty's paintings creates an alternate perspective on the images in the Pierrot text and enters into an interesting dialogue with Schoenberg's original.

Electra Perivolaris

Seven Pierrot Miniatures

In Seven Pierrot Miniatures, I took the Commedia d'elle Arte character, Pierrot, as my primary source of inspiration. Other, more tenuous, links to Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire also served as a starting point in forming the general shape of the work. The piece is cast in seven short movements whereas the Schoenberg is in three sets of seven movements. Although there is no part for voice, I have taken seven poems by Albert Giraud (none of them set in Pierrot Lunaire) as points of departure:

1. The Clouds
2. Decor
3. Absinthe
4. Suicide
5. The Church
6. Sunset
7. The Harp

Each movement takes its impetus from the corresponding poem, but in the piece as a whole, I wanted to explore the extreme contrasts of the multi-faceted character of Pierrot in a musical setting. There is an almost mirror-like quality

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to the form of the piece and a sense of ending where it has begun: movements 1, 3, 5 and 7 are closely linked, both in terms of their musical material and a sense of melancholy, dream-like quality and longing. Movements 2 and 6 are also strongly connected, with allusions to the more mischievous, violent side of Pierrot. Movement 4 serves as a sort of pivot point within the work, juxtaposing a surreal, shimmering calm with brutal outbursts. There is never any direct repetition, yet there is a strong sense of material returning and mutating as the work unfolds.

Helen Grime

Pierrot Lunaire

Schoenberg's setting of Giraud's words is a totemic work; a key proponent of the heavily notated sprechgesang style of vocal delivery that became synonymous with musical expressionism in the early twentieth century. Though the style appears in earlier German works, it is most widely associated with serialist composers, with Schoenberg's pupil Alban Berg also making famous use of it in his operas Wozzeck and Lulu.

Written in 1912, the work precedes Schoenberg's first use of a fully serialized tone-row (Waltz from 5 Klavierstücke, op. 23) by nearly ten years. Instead, Pierrot is written in a freely atonal style, paired with experimentation with various classical forms, such as canon and fugue. The use of classical structures, combined with atonality would become a hallmark of the Second Viennese School.

Pierrot, the character itself, is the archetype of the sad clown. It is portrayed in this work not just musically, but dramatically too. The character has been the subject of art since its inception in the late seventeenth century, from decadents to symbolists, through modernists and eventually David Bowie.

Hebrides Ensemble is an award-winning Scottish collective of musicians that commissions, performs and records the best of contemporary classical chamber music. For thirty years we have been at the leading edge of Scottish cultural life, creating a body of work that is a vital element in our country's musical legacy. It celebrates and champions a diverse range of composers and performers and is committed to the development of the next generation of emerging talent.

Hebrides Ensemble thanks Creative Scotland for their continued support through the National Lottery Extended Programme Fund.

Colombian-American soprano **Stephanie Lamprea** is an architect of new sounds and expressions as a performer, composer, and multidisciplinary artist, specializing in contemporary classical repertoire. Trained as an operatic coloratura, she uses her voice as a mechanism of avant-garde performance art, creating "maniacal shifts of vocal production and character… like an icepick through the skull" (Jason Eckardt).

An established multidisciplinary artist, Stephanie has collaborated as a soprano and composer with contemporary artist Jesse Jones to co-create Mirror *Martyr Mirror Moon* , a film installation presented at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham in partnership with the National Gallery in London. A prolific recording artist, Stephanie released albums Quaking Aspen, Georges Aperghis' 14 Récitations, and Don't Add to Heartache, to international critical acclaim.

Stephanie is currently the 2024-25 Digital Post-Doctoral Research Fellow for the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh.

Kirsty Matheson is a Glasgow based artist and musician. In 2021 she asked the question "Can I paint music?". What followed was 100 paintings of 100 pieces of music in 100 days and the resounding answer, yes. Tom Service on BBC Radio 3 called Kirsty an "artistic polymath" describing her work as a "jaw-dropping kaleidoscope of images". As well as producing many private commissions, Kirsty has had a solo exhibition at Celtic Connections in Glasgow, been commissioned to paint Dunedin Consort's 23/24 Season and by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra to paint Jay Capperauld's piece 'The Origin of Colour' for the opening of their 50thanniversary season.