

CASE STUDIES:

ALISON SMART, an experienced professional soprano, was my special volunteer 'guinea pig'. A fine all-round musician, with a strong sense of relative pitch, she undertook to learn PIERROT LUNAIRE 'from scratch' under my supervision, and reported back to me at regular intervals, eventually bringing her pianist to run through whole sections. We began working together in March 2007, and finished in early February 2008, by which time Alison had achieved a confident, musically secure and strikingly individual interpretation of the whole work. There were a number of prolonged gaps in contact caused by our other engagements, but it was a luxury not to be forced to hurry the process. The extra time proved advantageous to Alison in the end, allowing the work to seep gradually into her unconscious.

Her approach from the outset was careful and extremely well-organised. She planned her learning assiduously, one step at a time. The words were her initial preoccupation. She wanted to examine and tease out the philosophical and psychological aspects of the text, to find a cohesive theme to the whole cycle, identify specific connections, and, crucially, to empathise with Pierrot on his turbulent emotional journey.

She was a little worried about using her speaking voice in such an unbuttoned way, concerned that low notes might be a particular problem for her high-placed voice. She translated Schoenberg's Preface, uncovering its familiar ambiguities, looked on the Internet for various references, and perused programme booklets from two contrasting recordings. Knowledge of the melodrama tradition of turn of the century Vienna was a useful starting point.

We began, at my suggestion with no. 9. *Gebet an Pierrot*. Alison studied the instructions conscientiously and analysed the text in detail, noting its Rondel form.

(She wondered if the reference to a black flag came from Greek mythology.) She found this movement touching: a cry for help to recover lost laughter. Rhythmic patterns going across barlines proved a little tricky at first.

She then tried nos 7 *Der Kranke Mond* and 20 *Heimfahrt*. The images of the texts appealed to her, and she loved the flow of the Barcarolle. She always hums pieces at pitch when learning them. (This is quite different to my own approach; I like to plunge right in and get a general idea of the whole task ahead, rather than worrying about total accuracy from the start.)

She quickly found that each movement has its own flavour and that the singer must create a specific sound world and mood for each, within the framework of the whole narrative. Her perception is that Schoenberg often creates mood by the direction of the phrases – happier music rises, and sad music falls.

Like many of us, Alison feels torn between her strong response to the words, and her awareness of Schoenberg's instruction not to dwell on their meaning. She feels strongly that the interpretation can vary according to the character and layout of the music; for instance, the close-knit patterns of the Barcarolle encourage a lively and natural delivery..

No.7 is, by contrast, more drawn-out, with its 6/4 signature, and the flute's tone suits the melancholy mood. The vocal line's plaintive falling pitches supports her view of the inherent expressiveness of the melodic contours.

She tackled nos 8 (*Nacht*) and 1. (*Mondestrunken*) next, finding the scope of the former awesome and rather terrifying. She reflected that Pierrot (or the Narrator) first

experiences the dreadful black moths as observer, reacting violently to them later. Light and dark are depicted graphically in the music; chromatic lines and block dynamics promote the air of mystery.

At this stage, Alison sought the advice of her singing teacher to help surmount some technical problems. Conserving breath was a major issue: initially she found that speaking used up air faster than 'normal' singing. It was decided to bring the sprechstimme a little nearer to singing for the time being, so as to sustain the longer phrases and help support soft, low-lying stretches.. Arpeggio exercises helped to encompass the sung low E flat in no. 8.. She took a while to get accustomed to using her lowest register.

She then embarked on the first 7 songs as a group. For a theatrical performance, she wondered if the vocalist might gaze skywards at the start of the work. She enjoyed the sounds of the text in the opening, but was puzzled by the 'wrong' word '*Mondstrahl*' at the end of no. 3. The fast changes, from sung to whispered to spoken, in *Der Dandy* were problematic at first..

Her observation on no. 4 (*Eine Blasse Wäscherin*) was that the vocal melody moves in semitone shifts at first, reminding one that large leaps are not possible in the dark. It then opens out a little at Bar 11, once the eye adjusts.

Alison saw a connection between the references to blood in movements 5 and 6: the pale drop of blood in '*Valse de Chopin*' is a 'life-force, faded and destructive – Pierrot is hooked and cannot escape.' She noticed that, as in some other movements, the dynamic range forms a perfect arc from soft to loud and then down again. She envisaged the waltz reverberating in Pierrot's head, and felt that consonants could be smoothed over a little, enhancing the rhythmic sway. The blood motif recurs in '*Madonna*' in a more religious context – it is, in fact, the work's first instance of religiosity, but not of the standard kind. Alison believes that Pierrot's petty worries are elevated to a higher level thereby. The low F vividly depicts the gaping wounds.

She felt impelled to learn the 'accompaniments' in the piano score, as this would make her feel greater physical involvement in the work, and would aid eventual memorising.

After some more time working independently, she came to me for a coaching session, on all of Part I with pianist Paul Webster. By now she had evolved a very good version of sprech-stimme, extremely accurate in both pitch and rhythm, but still needing a little more physical strength and support for the lower reaches. Confidence had grown considerably, and, as always, she was quick and responsive, able to implement technical tips speedily. She had put in a lot of work on the German. My suggestion of clipping notes shorter in order to create a clear syllabic pulse, was immediately taken on board successfully. No.1 benefited from this, especially in regard to tied notes. No, 2 (*Colombine*) suits her particularly well, and she achieved an excellent waltz lilt. No. 5 (*Valse de Chopin*) was impressive – the parodistic Viennese elements were especially striking. She needed a somewhat bolder approach to *Madonna* and was still a little tentative in those crucially soft dynamics, and somewhat wary of the syncopated rhythms of '*deines Sohnes Leiche*'.

Der Kranke Mond had really settled into the voice and had benefited from detailed scrutiny.

After another lengthy gap (from October to February) she was able to perform the rest of the work successfully (again with piano)..The piece had marinated slowly over this extended period, and the improvement in vocal focus and clarity was clearly apparent. Significantly, she was now much more confident in her lower range, and

generally more in control technically. This, as ever, confirms my view that working on Pierrot pays huge dividends in learning about one's own voice, and improving one's technique in unexpected ways.

After all the hard work, Alison felt able to relax and enjoy the work as a whole, and to reflect further on connections between certain movements.

Her comments were, from the start, perceptive and original, sensitive to subtle allusions and affinities, and affording new insights.

For instance, she sees how the lightness and freshness of mood exposed in *Colombine* is then destroyed in *Der Mondfleck*. She notes that the sad and beautiful song to the moon, No. 7, is totally unlike the lush version found in Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen*. 'Pierrot is like a nurse to the moon, whose illness is contagious, and Pierrot has now contracted this disease himself.' Alison believes the low pitches in this movement symbolise the descent to despair – another instance of the melodic shape affecting the mood of each song.

She sees No. 10, *Raub* as the mirror of no. 13 *Enthauptung*, in that the dramatic robbery, though envisaged, is not actually accomplished. The passage that swiftly alternates vocalised and whispered tone in *Raub* remains a challenge. My suggestion of inhaling loudly on the final syllable of 'Kumpanen' helps but audibility is a problem. She says that the low pitches of no. 11 *Rote Messe* mirror those of 'Nacht' (no.8) and are similarly taxing for her, but, as they undulate a little more, the lines lie more comfortably. She has begun to enjoy the swooping 'zerreißt' (in no.11), but with some caution, reflecting that Pierrot is now, disconcertingly, moving away from reality. *Galgenlied*, despite its brevity, is compelling, and repays slow practice to master the rapid speech rhythms. The throwaway final line expresses both the narrator's repulsion and the prostitute's worthlessness. Alison does not quite see how this possibly imaginary scene connects to the overall narrative.

Enthauptung (13) holds an unpleasant fascination. Alison makes the observation that the moon's crescent sword-shape is illustrated in the shape of the vocal melody at 'den blanken Türkenswert'. This alerts her to the fact that there must be many more such subtle details in the work.

Die Kreuze (no.14) sees Pierrot even further removed from reality and in the depths of despair. This could be a 'mirror' for *Rote Messe*. She describes both words and setting as 'tortuous', and perceives, in bar 4, a graphic portrayal of dismembered bodies in musical terms. No. 15 (*Heimweh*) comes as something of a relief, although the unstable tempi emphasise that home is still far away. Pierrot is taken out of his dramatic context, and, without it, he still veers towards the dark side of things. She enjoys the expressive text setting here, and the wide pitch range covered, including the low A sharp, which recalls the darker emotions of previous movements.

Gemeinheit (no.16) affords comic respite, and is much more firmly placed in the world of Commedia dell'arte. She notes the connection with the 'Turkish' element of no. 13., and also sees the melodic vocal shapes as similar to those in the preceding movement.

In no. 17 (*Parodie*) she relishes the ingenuity of the wickedly mocking imitative phrases, disjointed and fantastical. *Der Mondfleck* (no.18) works up to a frenzy, and features the fastest notes in the piece, except perhaps for those at the end of *Galgenlied*. She foresees that for No. 18 the vocalist has to convey the mood convincingly, using posture, eyes, or perhaps sharp intakes of breath. She loves the viola joke of no. 19, and muses on the sound that a bow would make scraping a bald

pate. Cassander is being paid back for his jealousy. . After the happy journey of *Heimfahrt* (no.20) , Pierrot finally reaches his longed-for destination at no. 21 (*O Alter Duft*). Alison sees that the melody here is less tortuous and rhythms more straightforward, so that the homecoming is blissful and sunny. Nevertheless it is her view that the shape of the last phrase (mirrored by the last phrase of no. 7. *Der Kranke Mond*, with its plunge down to a low F, still recalls an element of the narrative's darker side: 'scary and unpredictable to the last'.

Alison now looks forward to the opportunity of performing Pierrot in public with the full ensemble. I am extremely grateful to her for taking part in this special exercise.

On 11 March 2008, Alison completed the questionnaire as far as she was able, not having yet performed the work publicly. Her extremely thoughtful answers are to be found in a separate document.

OTHER CASE STUDIES:

1. JULIAN JACOBSON.

Julian and I had already had a lengthy informal discussion about his approach to the vocal part. He has known and loved the work for many years, and has performed it often as both pianist and conductor. He aspired to savour the physical involvement of performing the vocal part, without delving too deeply into the more complex psychological issues arising from the text and its setting. No 10 (*Raub*) was his favourite movement to date. Pitching would not be a problem as Julian has the same 'freak aural disease' (his words!) as myself and others – namely, absolute pitch.

I have now attended two of his performances – his second and third attempts. Unfortunately I missed his debut in the work – brought forward by my own illness and sudden withdrawal from a performance at the Royal College of Music in January 2006, when he gallantly stepped in to save the day.

To generalise: Julian's voice is not that of a natural actor in weight and timbre. As an instrument it lacks a certain penetrating resonance and a distinctive range of colour, so he has to work extra hard to overcome this. He does of course need to be amplified.. Like most non-singers, he is happiest when the text moves at the speed of natural speech. He will be more at ease when he's memorised the piece.. His position on stage (to the far left of the conductor) was not perhaps ideally comfortable, since the awkward angle meant he had to swivel his head sideways, unable to see conductor and score at the same time, meanwhile aiming his voice at the microphone. This probably made it harder to concentrate on some of the smallest details in the score.

Performance on 23 April 2006.at the Old Market, Hove, with the Talkestra Ensemble, conducted and presented by Steve Dummer.

(A very good English translation of the text appeared, uncredited, in the programme.)

I made the following notes after the performance:-

Part I had a few small verbal slips, mainly involving word endings. Julian's soft-grained voice is inclined to fragment a little under pressure. Falsetto was used for higher lines, but the pitch was always down the octave from the female register.

Words were not absolutely clear, perhaps because some phrases had too much legato. No. 2. (*Colombine*), being a gentle piece, worked well when slightly 'sung'. The slur joining 'such-' to 'ich' was not observed. Like me, Julian had also overlooked that small crescendo on the final syllable of 'Seh-nen', The opening triplet of *Der Dandy* was too fast (at double speed). Breathing remained the main problem, as Julian has yet to acquire a singer's control of air. Breaths were mostly shallow, and a large intake at the start of phrases was often immediately used up, making it difficult to negotiate the details of 'hoch heiligen,' and the section beginning 'Pierrot mit wächsernem Antlitz,' without becoming stressed. A more cutting edge was employed here, but the last section of no. 3 seemed somewhat rushed. No.4 did not yet convey the feeling of an 'accompaniment' to the instruments, as stipulated in the score. This was perhaps because vowels were a little too prolonged. Sibilants needed more clarity. The 'a' vowel of 'blassen' (also of no. 5's 'blasser') should be kept as short as possible, to avoid confusion with 'blasen' (blowing). German-speaking listeners are inclined to remark on this. The final section of *Valse de Chopin* proved rather taxing. The strenuous *Madonna* which follows was given quite a light treatment. However, the consonants still needed more support – they should always remain loud even when dynamics are soft. The rhythm on 'rot und offen' was not quite accurate. Knowing the piece for a long while has possibly led to a few small errors becoming ingrained. Energy picked up very promisingly nearer the end of the movement. For no. 7 stronger consonants would have been helpful. Not surprisingly the very long low –ranging phrase in the centre was not yet spanned, meaning that breath had to be taken between the slurred 'stickt' and 'Du'.. However the notoriously difficult extended final syllable of 'Melodie' was well-managed. Vowels in small words such as 'den' need some attention, and the intricate details of those two matching phrases, beginning 'belustigt' etc. with their unusual liaisons and staccatos, were not all discernible. I liked the long 'groan' on the final trill!

Part II.

For no. 8 the legato treatment proved more appropriate to the atmosphere. Leaning in to the microphone helped considerably, and the sung 'verschwiegen' was held impressively! This (my own most troublesome number) was one of Julian's best efforts, with a good change of timbre for the last line. *Gebet an Pierrot* was rather loud,(too sharp an intake of breath seemed to throw it off balance) and could do with more quirkiness, although Julian was by now beginning to relax and enjoy himself. An effective piece of onomatopoeia, re-iterating the vowel of the 'Lachen' worked extremely well. Julian's relish in performing *Raub* was evident. Attack and clarity were much improved, and the dramatic build-up excellent.

Rote Messe, though starting well, with good atmosphere, exposed a few stamina problems at the ends of the loudest phrases, but the drama was conveyed strongly.

The brief no.12, was clear and sprightly, although almost too steady and 'safe', with accelerandi barely noticeable. By *Enthauptung* consonants had more bite, and Julian seemed well warmed up. Unfortunately, Bar 16 came apart ensemble-wise. This is a well-known hazard for regular performers of the piece. However the microphone helped greatly in projecting the frenetic vocal climax, and this was a generally successful interpretation. The instrumental postlude will have been a welcome chance to rest the voice.

Die Kreuze, inevitably, brought breathing challenges, but the long opening phrase was achieved without a break. The male lung capacity ought ultimately to prove an

advantage. Julian sounded a little strained at ‘-schwärme’, but managed a good fortissimo. At the pause when the ensemble re-enters, the final syllable of ‘*blu-ten*’ seemed rather loud, and the rhythm of ‘*Tot das Haupt*’ onwards had a few shaky moments, slightly missing the syncopated bounce and clarity of this passage. This was a sterling effort in view of its special demands, although the intensity of the instrumental ensemble lapsed slightly at the very end..

Part III.

Heimweh, no.15, is the movement Julian finds the most difficult. This started well with a good interpretation of ‘*sentimental*’ and effective use of falsetto for the opening phrases and their repeat. The tricky vocal re-entry at ‘*Da vergisst*’ was safely accomplished, but thereafter things came a little adrift. Ensemble was somewhat insecure as the music soared to its climax, but after that the quiet ending was well-poised.

The notorious cello bridge passage into no. 16 had lacked a certain energy and conviction, but Julian managed to be amusingly characterful at the start of **Gemeinheit**. The ‘T’s of *Türk’schen*’ ‘*Tabak*’ could have done with more emphasis. The middle of the movement suffered from rhythmic insecurity, and at the end ‘*blanken Kopf*’ came out at double speed-(a possible memory lapse) No. 17 was engaging. Not all the detail was clear but ‘*liebt*’etc. worked particularly well in falsetto. **Der Mondfleck** suffered a little from less audible consonants, and needed closer amplification. Its last section improved in attack, but the final ‘*des hellen Mondes*’ was not snappy enough to co-ordinate with the instruments – always a tricky and exposing moment!

In No.19 **Serenade** the cello was less expressively soloistic than usual, so this movement came across as lightly ironic and witty. The enunciation of ‘*wütend*’ was excellent, though the *sf* on ‘*kratzt*’ was perhaps a little too much exaggerated! Julian’s crooning tone for the final ‘*waltz*’ phrases veered very close to singing. The Barcarolle (**Heimfahrt**) needed a touch more suppressed intensity to support and project consonants despite the soft dynamic. The tempo seemed a little rushed, especially on ‘*drauf fährt Pierrot*’. There was another vowel sound to watch on ‘*den*’. The rhythm rocked slightly around ‘*nach Bergamo*’ and the voice’s end phrases were drowned. At this point in the work, so near the end, there is often a danger of waning concentration, and I suspected this to be a factor. Julian almost sang the opening phrases of **O alter Duft** (no. 21) The tone was rather too light to maintain the feeling of physical involvement. I would personally prefer breath to be taken after ‘*Freuden*’ rather than after ‘*froh*’, as this suits the musical shape better and keeps the meaning clear.. At the closing section of this marathon achievement, there were a few word fluffs, no doubt caused by the combination of fatigue and impending relief. The ending was very moving.

I believe that Julian was, sensibly, saving his fullest and strongest tone for the centre of the work, and deliberately conserving energy in Part I. He obviously has the advantage of a mature overview of the work , and his performance will develop by leaps and bounds as he gains more experience of the physical side of it, and ‘*muscle memory*’ comes into play.

I attended a further performance at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, in July 2007. This time Julian was costumed as Idi Amin, in military uniform. During the instrumental postlude to no. 13 he went offstage, and re-emerged hastily with make-up and peaked hat removed, just in time for *Die Kreuze*. This was a little distracting to the peaceful atmosphere of the interlude, but meant that from then on, a more spiritual mood could prevail. His stage position still seemed problematic, for the reasons described above. Quite a number of the verbal and musical discrepancies already mentioned were repeated, but other moments of rhythmic insecurity had been tidied up, and the whole performance had gained in confidence and projection. I noted a vast improvement in Julian's breathing technique, with a resultant benefit to tonal resonance, support and stamina. In terms of intensity, the performance described a convincing and cohesive arc, starting gently, with the central movements carrying the most weight. More work is still needed on the timing and release of consonants, as this will tighten up the rhythms and make it all more disciplined. I greatly admire Julian's artistic integrity and fearlessly adventurous spirit, and look forward to following more of his exciting journey as he polishes and perfects his Pierrot. He continues to perform the work, gaining in vocal confidence all the time, and plans to do it from memory in the near future. He has recently been applying his vivid imagination still further, in devising a more overtly dramatic staging which incorporates gesture and movement (and additional small costume changes) to illustrate the mood swings inherent in the text. He is kind enough to give me regular updates on his evolving interpretation.

Now: a summary of the results of QUESTIONNAIRES, kindly filled in by professional colleagues:-

LINDA HIRST: (mezzo-soprano with enormous experience in contemporary repertoire).

Linda has performed PIERROT LUNAIRE a great many times, starting in 1980, often in a ballet context, including at the Royal Opera House with Richard Bernas. Her first performance was at London's City University, with Lontano, conducted by John Carewe. It took a month to learn it, and there were 4 or 5 rehearsals. She did not need coaching, but had help with the practicalities of conserving the voice.

That first tour involved 18 performances but 'hardly scratched the surface'. Linda had already heard the work 'live' and found Erika Sziklay's recorded version under Andreas Milhahy exceptionally impressive. She did not perform from memory initially. Of other conductors, she mentions Diego Masson's special sensitivity to the poetry, and also found the Opera House experience a joy.

Her platform position was between the clarinet and violin/viola. She wore a lurex striped suit. She did not at first use movement, but added a few gestures later on..

Linda gives priority to rhythmic accuracy over pitch. She studied and read the texts before singing each movement, and then combined the two elements. She is at home in the German, but has also performed PIERROT in two leading English translations, by Cecil Gray and Andrew Porter (giving the premiere of the latter) Linda has also performed the work without conductor. She sees Expressionism in the texts, but believes this does not preclude irony. She feels the work combines many emotional

elements but is never merely humorous. However, she does not see it as a dramatic declamation, and is resistant to the idea of a contemporary makeover.

For her, the most difficult movements are: *Enthauptung* (musically), *Heimweh* vocally), *Parodie* and *Der Mondfleck* (balance-wise). The whole of Part III is a test of stamina, and *Parodie* poses a particular interpretative problem. Linda makes no conscious attempt to differentiate vocal timbres but finds this developing naturally over the years. She greatly enjoys the interaction with the instruments.

Her particular favourites are: No. 1 *Mondestrunken* – entering the magical moon-world; no. 4 for the unusual experience of not being the ‘*hauptstimme*’, the ‘*lament*’ of *Der Kranke Mond* , and, especially the final two movements: the dancing boat in the *Barcarolle* and the compelling depiction of recaptured nostalgia in *O Alter Duft*.

Linda is a very much concerned with preserving the youthful quality at the top of her voice, and is always pondering over what Schoenberg really wanted..

She acknowledges that PIERROT has had a tremendous impact on her work in general: ‘as an observer of visual art, as listener, as actress, singer, speaker, reader – to prevent narrowness of outlook, to refine musical judgement and to sharpen ears and precision of intonation, onset and exit of vocalisation.’ She believes it has heightened her understanding of expression and its truthfulness.

Linda has performed FAÇADE and ENOCH ARDEN, but feels that ‘nothing compares’. She is confident of her performance now, but knows it can never be taken for granted.

MARY KING (another highly experienced mezzo. At a recent South Bank symposium we enjoyed comparing notes.)

She has given almost 100 performances to date,. Many of them have been with the Ballet Rambert, but she has also performed the work in concert internationally, from Paris to South America. I regret very much that I have never heard her performance.. Like me, she has given workshops on PIERROT, and feels that this enhances familiarity and promotes an analytical approach.

Her first PIERROT was at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under the late Buxton Orr (an incomplete performance of 2 parts – she had to step in at the last moment for one extra part.). One wonders why it is not more often performed by dividing the sections between performers. This is a good idea for students in particular, enabling more of them to know the work from the inside.

Mary had heard an (unnamed) early recorded version while studying it for A level. After that she listened to as many recordings as possible, including the contrasting versions of Cleo Laine and my own.

When learning it, she worked ‘little and often’ over about a month. There were very few proper rehearsals. Since then she has performed it with and without conductor and score. Many different platform positions have been tried, but she has never been amplified. She likes to employ a few small movements and gestures but has never done a fully staged performance. Lighting has often been used for dramatic effect. Her favourite costume is a special ‘Harlequin’ dress. Audience reactions have ranged from bemused and horrified, to ecstatic .

Mary is insistent on total adherence to the score in every respect. She began by mastering the exact rhythms, then the pitches, and then practised speaking the texts,

finally blending all ingredients. During the learning process she kept the speaking and singing separate. She did some obsessive background reading in German, and made her own translation for a Final Year show with students (26 girls, 2 boys). She finds that the texts represent all emotions in varying combinations.. She sees the work as Expressionist, but with moments of pure fun. Black humour predominates, along with a sexy, wistful nostalgia. She does not favour emphasis on fin de siècle decadence, but sees the piece as a 'surreal narrative', as well as a dramatic declamation. She is sympathetic to the idea of a modern 'makeover' and much enjoyed a company 'relay' version. She finds all of Part II the most taxing on stamina. However three ballet performances per day bolstered her strength. Mary characterises the movements individually. Each one has been a favourite at some time. She sees the work as a 'magnificent theatrical journey, each moment cherished in rehearsal and set free in performance'. She especially enjoys the relationship with the cello, in nos. 5, 11 and 19. Every performance exposes a new challenge. PIERROT was the first work that absorbed her totally . She found performing FAÇADE ' a froth in comparison' and has also sung works influenced by PIERROT by Boulez, Berio , Ligeti and others. Mary did not need special coaching or vocal teaching when preparing PIERROT, but found Buxton Orr's guidance invaluable at the beginning. She advocates drinking water to avoid dehydration when working on the piece. She says: 'I have PIERROT LUNAIRE to thank for understanding that there's no limit to the different vocal effects/styles/colours one can/should achieve. ...it has a long-lasting profound effect on the way I prepare everything I sing'.

SIMON BUTTERISS – Actor/singer (tenor).

Simon has exceptional verbal panache as demonstrated in the Gilbert and Sullivan patter roles for which he is much admired, but he also possesses a trained voice and a natural musicality.

He has performed PIERROT LUNAIRE only once, at Aldeburgh Festival in 2002. He had never heard a live performance but had listened to two contrasting recordings: Schoenberg's own, and Boulez/Schäfer.

He prepared it over four months while on tour. Unable to go to a coach or teacher, he learnt it with the aid of a recording of the piano reduction.

There were only two rehearsals, with conductor and Simon used the score. He stood to the left of the conductor, in front of the ensemble. There was no amplification. It was a concert performance, not staged, and largely without movement or gesture.

A wide-ranging audience in the Jubilee Hall responded with great interest and enthusiasm.

Simon's priority was for absolute rhythmic accuracy, ' brushing' the pitches before moving off them. He favoured a speaking rather than a singing delivery, except for the few marked '*gesungen*' moments.

Though aware of Schoenberg's views, he did study the text carefully, and did not need help with the German. He sees the work as a blend of Expressionism and ironic satire, and as an example of fin de siècle post-romantic decadence, but would want to guard against too much exaggeration in cabaret style or any re-invention .He believes the performer should serve the music, and not use it as a personal vehicle.

Somewhat surprisingly, Simon found no. 9 *Gebet an Pierrot* the most difficult musically (perhaps because of the syncopations – I think this piece is one of the easiest once one relaxes and all three participants listen to one another – but this level of familiarity would not be possible with so few rehearsals.) By Part III Simon experienced the familiar stamina problem, having never had a complete run-through till the performance. He believes that in balance, colour and pitch (especially the very low ‘sung’ ‘*verschwiegen*’ in no.8) a man’s voice has a positive advantage. He used as wide a variety of timbres as possible but didn’t necessarily assign different ones to particular movements. His favourite moments tended to be the quieter ones, where he could relish the interplay with the instruments. (describing this as ‘sensuous’).

If Simon has the chance to perform PIERROT again, he would hope for much more rehearsal time and would aim to memorise it, which he feels would make a huge difference, but he would still be resistant to too much movement. He did indeed find it exhausting vocally but recovered quickly, being well-used to strenuous schedules. He found that his experience with the G & S patter roles was an asset, as those also exploit the relationship between speaking and singing.

Having worked on this demanding piece, he has been less scared of contemporary music. Other works he has performed include FAÇADE, Strauss’s melodrama ENOCH ARDEN and Busoni’s ARLECCHINO, and these were easy in comparison with PIERROT. He has subsequently compiled a cabaret entertainment exploring the connection between PIERROT LUNAIRE and FACADE, and the varied reactions that both works have inspired.

SALLY BURGESS.(experienced operatic mezzo who has performed PIERROT for quite a long time.)

Her first performance was in 1975 while at the Royal College of Music. She had listened to several recordings, including my own. She recalls that it took a long while to learn .She did eventually perform it from memory.

A recent London performance at the Almeida Theatre (which I was unable to attend) sought to re-create the original performance, with conductor and ensemble behind a screen, but the conductor was visible on a monitor screen. There was no amplification.It was fully staged, and there were 3 weeks of rehearsal. The costume was a grey/black clown outfit, and there was a full lighting programme for the performance. Props included a chair and a cane, and the moon was represented by a spotlight. Sally acted out the role with plenty of movement and gesture. The Almeida festival audience, well used to contemporary art, gave a standing ovation.

Sally aims for as much pitch accuracy as possible, but feels that the drama matters most. When learning and practising it, she used a combination of speaking and singing. She read the texts carefully but would have liked a little more coaching on the German. She finds the words a combination of all the elements specified in the questionnaire, as well as expressionistic and satirical, and feels that this is why the work gives such joy. She does not believe it should be taken too seriously. However she does not see it as a cabaret- more as an exploration of wackiness and the unusual – spooky as well as being hugely entertaining. ‘Each song should be a lovely scary surprise’. Sally likes to alter her vocal timbre to suit each poem. She finds the gentle

last movement *O Alter Duft* a challenge vocally, after so much strenuous activity. At the Almeida there were no balance problems because of the instrumental placing and she found that her stamina increased with experience and familiarity. To avoid fatigue, Sally used her voice like an extension of speaking rather than shouting, carrying the sounds on the breath at all times. *Heimweh* (no. 15) is the movement that always needs the most thought, interpretatively. Her favourite movements are nos. 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 but she admits to loving them all, and relishes the interplay with the instruments throughout. She says that performing PIERROT has been of enormous benefit to every aspect of her work. She did not work with a voice teacher, but had help in preparing the work from the pianist, director and conductor of the recent project. She is very keen to have the chance to repeat that very special production, (of which all reports were warmly enthusiastic.).

SUE ANDERSON.(Mezzo) is an excellent pianist, and has perfect pitch.

She has performed PIERROT LUNAIRE five times to date, the first being a ballet performance in Wales in 1988.. At that time she had heard no other performances, but had worked with me on a few sections at Dartington some years before. She was filling in for another singer so had to learn the work in about 3 weeks, and there were only 3 rehearsals. It was conducted and she sang from the score. In the orchestra pit, she stood within the circle of instruments, and was not amplified. She began by attempting complete accuracy of pitch and rhythm and then moved towards a more spoken delivery, keeping pitches shorter, and consonants stronger. At first she learnt the pieces by singing them, and had little time to prepare the German. She did not need coaching as such, but voice teacher David Mason was a great help. She does not remember any problems of vocal fatigue.

Sue sees the texts as poignant and ironic, and the whole work as an Expressionist/satirical mixture- a sophisticated type of cabaret. Being familiar with Schoenberg's piano works she relishes the connecting references in the musical language. She finds it difficult to recall particular hazards, but cites *Der Dandy* (no.3) as challenging.. At the time she made no attempt to characterise the movements individually. The rhythms were her main preoccupation, because of the discipline of the dancers' steps. Despite the rushed schedule, she felt quite confident, perhaps because she was at the time unfamiliar with others' efforts, and unaware of the many layers of aesthetic sensibility that continue to be unpeeled when studying the work in detail over a long period. Sue has yet to perform PIERROT in a concert environment.

NATALIE RAYBOULD(Soprano).

Natalie was so eloquent and enthusiastic that I am, with her kind permission, supplying a slightly edited version of her completed questionnaire.