Bennington College Music Division

Presents

Pierrot Lunaire
Arnold Schoenberg

Thursday, December 6, 1990
8:15 p.m.
Greenwall Music Workshop
Poems from Albert Giraud, "Pierrot Lunaire"
German version by Otto Hartleben
English translation by Ingolf Dahl and Carl Beier
She's waiting in the arbor,
She loves Pierrot with aching heart —
Steel needles, twinkling brightly,
Stuck in her graying hair.

But suddenly—hark—a whisper!
A windpuff titters softly;
The moon, the cruel mocker,
Is aping with its bright rays
Steel needles' wink and blink.

**DER MONDFLECK / THE MOONSPOT)**

With a spot of white, of shining moonlight,
On the collar of his jet-black jacket.
So Pierrot goes walking in the evening,
Out to seek some joy and high adventure.

Suddenly, in his dress something disturbs him.
He examines it—and yes, he find there
A spot of white, of shining moonlight,
On the collar of his jet-black jacket.

Hang it, he thinks; another spot of whitewash!
Whisks and whisks, yet he cannot remove it.
So he goes on, full of spleen and fury,
Rubs and rubs until the early morning
A spot of white, of shining moonlight.

**SERENADE**

With a bow grotesque and monstrous,
Pierrot scrapes away at his viola.
Like a stork on only one leg,
Sadly plucks a pizzicato.

Pop, out comes Cassander,
Raging at the nightly virtuoso
With a bow grotesque and monstrous,
Pierrot scrapes away at his viola.

Now he throws down his viola:
With his delicate left hand
He grabs the baldpate by the collar—
Dreamily plays upon his tonsure
With a bow grotesque and monstrous.

**PART I**

1. **MONDESTRUNKEN / MOONDRUNK**
   
   The wine that only eyes may drink
   Pours from the moon in waves at nightfall,
   And like a springflood overwhelms
   The still horizon rim.

   Desires, shivering and sweet,
   Are swimming without number through the flood waters!
   The wine that only eyes may drink
   Pours from the moon in waves at nightfall.

   The poet by his ardor driven,
   Grown drunken with the holy drink
   To heaven he rapturously lifts
   His head and reeling slips and swallows
   The wine that only eyes may drink.

2. **COLUMBINE**
   
   The moonlight's palest blossoms,
   The whitest wonder-roses
   Bloom in the summer nightfall.
   O might I break just one!

   My anxious pain to soften
   I seek by darkest waters—
   The moonlight's palest blossoms,
   The whitest wonder-roses.

   Fulfilled would be my yearning
   Might I, as one enchanted,
   As one in sleep, unpetal
   Upon your auburn tresses
   The moonlight's palest blossoms.

3. **DER DANDY / THE DANDY**
   
   With lightbeams so weird and fantastic
   The luminous moon lights the glistening jars
   On the ebon high-holiest washstand
   Of the taciturn dandy from Bergamo.
4. EINE BLASSE WÄSCHERIN / A PALE WASHERWOMAN

A pale washerwoman
Washes nightly pallid kerchiefs,
Naked, silver whitest arms
Reaching downward to the waters.

Through the clearing steal the breezes
Gently stirring up the stream.
A pale washerwoman
Washes nightly pallid kerchiefs.

And the gentle Maid of Heaven,
By the branches softly fondled,
Spreads out on the darkling meadows
All her light-bewoven linen
A pale washerwoman.

5. VALSE DE CHOPIN / A CHOPIN WALTZ

As a faint red drop of blood
Stains the pale lips of one stricken,
So there sleeps within these tones
A morbid, soul-infecting lure.

Chords of savage lust disrupt
The icy dream of bleak despair
As a faint red drop of blood
Stains the pale lips of one stricken.

PART III

15. HEIMWEH / HOME SICKNESS

Sweetly plaintive a crystal sighing
From the old Italian pantomime
Rings across time: how Pierrot's grown awkward
In such sentimental modern fashion!

And it sounds through the wastes of his heart
Echoes softly through his senses also,
Sweetly plaintive - a crystal sighing
From the old Italian pantomime.

16. GEMEINHEIT! / VULGARITY

Into the bald pate of Cassander,
Who rends the air with screaming,
Blithe Pierrot, affecting airs so kind
And tender bores with a skull drill!

Then he plugs with his big thumb
His own genuine Turkish tobacco
Into the bald pate of Cassander.
Who rends the air with screaming.

Then screwing his cherry pipestem
Deep into the polished baldpate.
Quite at ease he puffs and draws
His own genuine Turkish tobacco
Out of the bald pate of Cassander!

17. PARODIE / PARODY

Steel needles, twinkling brightly,
Stuck in her graying hair,
Sits the duenna, murmuring,
In her knee length scarlet skirt.
ENTHAUPTUNG / BEHEADING
The moon, glistening scimitar
Set on a black and silken cushion.
Unearthly huge, it threatens downward
Through sorrow-stricken night.
Pierrot wanders so restlessly,
Lifts up his eyes in deathly fright
To the moon, a glistening scimitar
Set on a black and silken cushion.
His knees are shaking with fright,
Fainting, he suddenly collapses.
He thinks that on his sinful neck
Comes whistling down with brutal force
The moon, the glistening scimitar.

DIE KREUZE / THE CROSSES
Holy crosses are the verses
On which poets, mute, are bleeding.
Blindly beaten by the vultures,
Fluttering swarms of ghostly phantoms.
In their bodies daggers revelled.
Blazoned on the blood of scarlet!
Holy crosses are the verses
On which poets, mute, are bleeding.
Reft of life—the locks rigid—
Lo, the rabble's noise is fading.
Slowly sinks the sun in glory,
Like a crimson Emperor's crown.
Holy crosses are the verses.

Warm and joyous, sweet and yearning.
Melancholy somber waltzes
Haunt me ever through my senses,
Cling in my imagination
As a faint red drop of blood.

MADONNA
Rise, O Mother of All Sorrows,
On the altar of my verses!
Blood from your poor, shrunken breasts
By the sword's cold rage was spilled.
Your deep wounds forever open
Seem like eyes, so red and staring.
Rise, O Mother of All Sorrows,
On the altar of my verses.

In your thin and wasted arms
You hold up your Son's broken body
To reveal it to all mankind—
Yet the eyes of men avoid your grief,
O Mother of All Sorrows.

DER Kranke Mond / The Sick Moon
You somber, deathly-stricken moon,
There on the heaven's darkest couch,
Your gaze, so feverishly swollen,
Charms me like a strange enchanted air.
Of insatiable love-pangs
You die, die, by yearning overwhelmed,
You somber, deathly-stricken moon,
There on the heaven's darkest couch.
The lover who, with rapturous heart,
Without a care to his mistress goes
Is happy in your play of light,
In your pale and tormented blood,
You somber, deathly-stricken moon.
PART II

8. NACHT / NIGHT

Somber, shadowy, giant mothwings
Killed the splendid shine of sun.
An unopened magic-book,
The dark horizon lies in silence.
The dank fumes of lower darkness
Give off vapor stifling memory!
Somber, shadowy, giant mothwings
Killed the splendid shine of sun.
And from heaven down to earth
Sink, with heavy, swinging motion
Monsters huge, an unseen terror
On all mankind's hearts now falling
Somber, shadowy, giant mothwings.

9. GEBET AN PIERROT / PRAYER TO PIERROT

Pierrot! My laughter
I have forgot!
The image of splendor
Dissolved, dissolved.
Black waves my banner
Now from my mast.
Pierrot! My laughter
I have forgot!

O give me once more,
Horse-doctor of souls,
Snowman of lyrics.
Moon's maharajah,
Pierrot my laughter!

10. RAUB / THEFT

Princely, luminous red rubies,
Bloody drops of ancient glory,
Slumber in the dead men's coffins
Below, in the catacombs.

Nights, with his boon companions,
Pierrot creeps down to plunder
Princely, luminous red rubies,
Bloody drops of ancient glory.
But look their hair stands straight up
Pale with fright they stand rooted.
Through the fearsome gloom like eyeballs
Staring from the dead men's coffins,
Princely, luminous red rubies.

11. ROTE MESSE / RED MASS

For evil's dread communion
In blinding golden glitter,
In candleshine-and-shudder,
Mounts the altar—Pierrot!

His hand, the consecrated,
Tears off the priestly vestments
For evil's dread communion
In blinding glitter.

With sign-of-cross and blessing gestures
He shows to trembling, trembling souls
The Host all red and dripping
His heart in bloody fingers
For evil's dread communion.

12. GALGENLIED / GALLOWS SONG

The haggard harlot
With scrawny neck
Will be the last
Of his mistresses.

In his brain there
Sticks like a sharp nail
The haggard harlot
With scrawny neck.

Thin as a pine tree,
With hanging pigtail.
Lustily she will
Embrace the rascal,
The haggard harlot!