

## Oral Presentation Guidelines

The ability to talk clearly and comprehensibly about music (and music-making) is a skill every musician needs! A clear-cut discussion of a specific piece allows you to understand it better, appreciate its importance or its background, and often it helps you to like it more. An oral presentation about a particular individual often helps bring that person "to life." Use these presentations as an opportunity to 'teach' your peers. Don't go too fast, but keep the time limit in mind (which, by necessity, will be strictly enforced). What can you do to make your discussion memorable and meaningful? Speakers who make the effort to be expressive often improve their ability to become expressive musicians, so there are fringe benefits to this process!

A hole-punched handout will be distributed to the class with each presentation; the caliber of the handout will figure into your grade, as will the presentation's content, organization, and delivery. The best handouts are not *too* wordy (i.e., avoid paragraphs of prose in the main body of your handout), but do include all the essential information about your topic. Double-sided printing is encouraged; multiple sheets must be stapled.

Be prepared to answer questions; material from these presentations will magically appear on the exams. I am asking that you give me **ONE copy of your outline and TWO copies of your handout** BEFORE each presentation. Points will be assigned as follows:

<b>Presentation</b> (40 pts)	<b>Point Scale:</b>	A	50-45 points
Content (20)		B	44-40
Organization (10)		C	39-35
Delivery (10)		D	34-30
<b>Handout</b> (10 pts)			
Content (4)			
Clarity (3)			
Appearance (3)			
<b>Score Busters</b>			
Errors in grammar, punctuation, proofreading		=	-.25 pt. each
No <b>outline</b> at the time of presentation		=	-5 pts
Not ready to give presentation when assigned		=	failure of course

### **Individual Oral Presentation I (8 minutes)**

You will be assigned a Lied from Schoenberg's song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* ("Moon-struck Pierrot").

Additional background information about this expressionistic cycle appears later in this reader, and there is a detailed study by Jonathan Dunsby of *Pierrot Lunaire* on reserve for MU 432. **Be sure to read both sources of information!!** The other books on reserve also address this cycle and may contain illuminating information about *your* specific song.

During your eight-minute time allotment, you should introduce us to the compositional structure of your song along with its most important features. These features could be the instrumental ensemble, the harmonic or motivic language, the text setting or examples of word-painting, a particularly interesting melodic line or accompanimental figure, unexpected twists, etc., etc., etc. (You might consider the list of questions under item "C" of the paper assignment for inspiration.) You cannot talk about all these features in eight minutes, so you must use your own judgment (yikes!) about what to address. However, part of your grade will reflect your choices, so choose wisely. (Remember that, if necessary, your handout could include a few particulars that you won't have time to discuss.) Your time allotment does **not** include the time to play your piece. I expect you to pronounce the German title at least once during your presentation.

On your **handout**, please include:

- a side-by-side translation (German and English) for your song (the Appelbaum translation within our Dover score is perfectly fine; be sure to credit the translator of whatever version you use).
- your name fairly prominently at the top of your handout, along with
- the title of your song (with an English translation of the title) and
- the number of the song within the cycle, prominently displayed.  
(Typos and grammatical errors on the handout will cost you a quarter-point each; please proofread carefully—especially the German text. Yes, *all* diacritical marks need to be included.)
- **NOTE: your multiple handout copies and outline are all due on Tuesday of Week 4**

You will review your presentation in all its glory by watching the videotape made during class. The video will be placed on the MU 432 shelf in the Music Department office. There is a brief questionnaire at the end of this reader; it is due one week after your presentation. The questionnaire is ungraded, but a late submission will cost your presentation total one point per day, which will hurt your grade. A questionnaire which does not contain thorough, thoughtful responses will be returned for a "re-do."

### **Individual Oral Presentation II (20 minutes)**

The second presentation is your opportunity to teach us the piece you've analyzed and researched for your paper this quarter, so this is NOT A SPEECH but a guided examination of your composition—you are our teacher for these twenty minutes. Again, you might consider the list of questions under item "C" of the paper assignment for inspiration. However, you need to introduce us [VERY BRIEFLY] to the highlights concerning your composer, especially as his or her biography relates to this piece.

Most importantly, though, you need to TEACH YOUR PIECE. In other words, you must insure that we understand the key compositional principles underlying your composition, since your classmates will be responsible for recognizing and discussing your piece on the final exam. How can you make your teaching most effective and memorable? It is not a good idea to stand and read us your entire paper, but your paper outline may be very helpful to you in crafting this presentation. Again, your piece will be played *after* your 20-minute presentation.

If your piece's compositional technique is complicated, it would be acceptable (and perhaps advisable) simply to include a biographical paragraph about your composer on your handout so that you can devote your full time allotment to explaining the work to your classmates.

On your **handout**, please include:

- a side-by-side translation (foreign language and English) if your piece has foreign-language text (be sure to credit the translator of whatever version you use).
- your name fairly prominently at the top of your handout, along with
- the title of your piece (with a translation of the title, if appropriate)
- a bibliography of useful sources for your topic

(Typos and grammatical errors on the handout will cost you a quarter-point each; please proofread carefully)

**Arnold Schoenberg - *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21**

Arnold Schoenberg composed his song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912, using 21 poems from a set of 50 by the symbolist poet Albert Giraud; the poems were translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben. Giraud used the stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte* as the personae for the poems. Pierrot, the leading character (known in other languages as Petrushka and Pagliacci), was customarily painted with heavy white make-up and dressed in a white costume—hence the image of him as a lunar, or moonstruck, clown. Giraud imagined Pierrot and the other *commedia* figures in various grotesque and satiric situations, which appealed to the taste of German cabaret audiences of the time. Recognizing the market for these poems, the German cabaret singer Albertine Zehme commissioned a musical setting from Schoenberg, expecting merely a piano accompaniment. Schoenberg gradually talked her into accepting additional instruments, one by one (her reluctance stemmed from the fact that she would have to pay for each additional performer). Zehme premiered the cycle, with Schoenberg conducting, on October 16, 1912—after some forty (!) rehearsals. The response was enthusiastic. (Yes, it really was!) The cycle is comprised of three sets of seven poems, and requires the five players in the ensemble to play eight different instruments: beside a cello and piano, the flutist doubles on piccolo, the clarinetist also plays bass clarinet, and at times the violin is expected to play the viola. Every song has a different combination of instruments, and only the final number uses all eight of the instruments in the course of the song. Each poem is in three stanzas, with the first two stanzas consisting of four lines, while the third stanza contains five lines. Moreover, the first, seventh, and thirteenth lines are always the same in each poem, producing a poetic rondo form: A B A C A. (The music, however, usually does not reflect this pattern.)

One could argue that this cycle is really a melodrama, since the vocal declamation is often half-spoken over the instrumental accompaniment, in a technique labeled "Sprechstimme" ("spoken song"). Schoenberg makes a careful distinction between sung notes—in the conventional sense—with notes to be performed as Sprechstimme; for both kinds of singing, he uses conventional rhythmic notation. In Schoenberg's view, the performer should perform the work only (and exactly) as the music indicates, not how the text might inspire them to "interpret" the pieces. The performers are also asked to produce various sound effects—tremolos, trills, flutter-tonguing, mutes, harmonics, col legno (with the wood of the bow), and so forth. The musical style is "expressionism," depicting the sense of alienation produced by the modern world, and it is seldom that the voice has a clear relationship to the accompanying instruments. Perhaps this is a subtle message that we each are alone in the world. The historian Eric Salzman suggests that this cycle represents a crisis of harmonic and melodic organization. Perhaps recognizing the potential difficulty in comprehending the songs, Schoenberg uses a series of brackets over various parts to indicate the "Hauptstimme"—the "head-melody," or main melodic line.

Although this is a song cycle, there are few clear musical links between the songs; the only large-scale repetition occurs when the beginning of song No. 7 returns as the postlude of song No. 13. Schoenberg explores a number of contrapuntal techniques within various songs, such as canon and double canon, fugue, retrograde motion, and so forth. He uses other familiar techniques as well: word-painting, imitation between voices, ostinato, etc.

The cycle is a challenge, even for listeners hearing it ninety-seven years after its composition. However, the impact of *Pierrot Lunaire* on subsequent composers of the modern era cannot be underestimated; even Stravinsky—seldom one to have a kind word for anything written by his rival Schoenberg—called this cycle "the solar plexus of the twentieth century."

Additional information about the background of *Pierrot Lunaire*, plus detailed studies of the individual songs, is available in Jonathan Dunsby's essay for Cambridge Music Handbooks (on reserve). Also, the additional books on reserve for MU 432 almost all contain information on this cycle, and several focus more closely on specific songs.