



## Schoenberg's "Pierrot" opens new concert series



*Randall Scotting is the featured vocalist at Friday and Saturday's performance of "Pierrot Lunaire," by a new Boulder collective called FusionChamber.*

By [Wes Blomster](#)  
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Arnold Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" wasn't merely a major event in music history; premiered in Berlin in 1912, it was part of a veritable revolution in the arts.

Schoenberg, then the enfant terrible of new music, had abandoned tonality, the basis of Western music for three centuries, and was moving toward the 12-tone system that made him famous — if not infamous — a decade later.

For the work Schoenberg set 21 poems by fin-de-siecle Belgian poet Albert Giraud translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben.

At the time the composer was closely associated with Vassily Kandinsky, the pioneer of abstract painting. And in literature Kafka, Pound and Virginia Woolf were attracting wide attention. (Schoenberg published in Kandinsky's Blue Rider Almanach.)

"'Pierrot' is a landmark work of monumental importance," says University of Colorado faculty member Christopher Zemliauskas, who will conduct the work for voice and five instrumentalists at CU this week. "It changed the direction of classical music and it's as relevant today as it was when it was new almost a century ago."

The Friday and Saturday concerts — which combine music, theater, dance and media elements — is the debut of a new Boulder concert series dubbed FusionChamber.

Vocalist for the local performances is Randall Scotting, known locally as a top countertenor.

"This is something that I've wanted to do for a long time," says Scotting, last seen here in the CU spring production of Gluck's "Orfeo."

"And Margaret McDonald of the CU piano faculty was also interested in it. We really dug into it."

McDonald is pianist in the accompanying ensemble.

Scotting explains the "Sprechstimme" technique, Schoenberg's unique setting of the texts he chose, as "words with exact pitches that are spoken rather than sung."

As Europe moved toward World War I, artists were obsessed with Pierrot, the commedia del'arte clown, painted by Picasso, among others. And Petrouchka, sad hero of Stravinsky's 1914 ballet, is simply the Russian form of the name. Some may need to be reminded that Debussy's "Suite bergamasque" refers to Bergamo, the Italian hometown of moon-stricken Pierrot. Scotting and cohorts add a visual dimension to their staging with a troupe of four dancers, who — choreographed by Angie Yeowell — underscore the essence of Giraud's texts.

"The poems do not tell a story," Scotting says. "They are rather rich in images that offer very strong pictures of their content."

He sums them up as "strangely modern and confrontational, focusing on themes of alienation, insanity, lust, and control," poems that "tell the story of the sad and dejected, yet very real fool, Pierrot Lunaire."

FusionChamber, a collective of Boulder artists, hopes to continue its work with further performances next season.

Because of partial nudity, the performance is recommended for mature audiences only.