

Franziska Brunner

University of Georgia, United States
ziskabru@uga.edu**Tierisch Unmittelbarer Ausdruck: Analyzing Timbre in Schoenberg's *Sprechmelodie*****ABSTRACT****Background**

Arnold Schoenberg shows a specific interest in tone color in his *Harmonielehre* (1910) and *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1937–48). In the first text, he refers to the 'Tiefe' of chords that is, to *depth* created by adding dissonances whose absence results in a cold, dry, expressionless affect. In the second text, he notes expressive differences between high, middle, and low vocal registers (e.g. he considers the highest register 'vulnerable', the middle register as incapable of extreme expression, and the lowest as a middle-ground between the other two). His exploration of *Sprechstimme* as a means of expression in his melodramas significantly parallels these writings. Even early in his career, Schoenberg was aware of timbre as a compositional tool, but he also recognized, that listeners might not engage with this facet of music. He emphasized the importance of moving away from the constructed elements in music (e.g. theme, harmony, form), in favor of direct artistic expression by more abstract means. During the same period, he ended *Harmonielehre* by reiterating the importance of timbre, without offering solutions for hearing or analyzing timbre. Rather, he challenged readers with the now famous question *Wer wagt hier Theorie zu fordern*, 'Who dares to put forth [a] theory here?'

Aims and repertoire studied

Since the first decades of the 20th century, scholars have increasingly noted the lack of tools for conducting timbral analyses. Most recently, new possibilities for critically engaging with timbre have evolved from areas including gender studies, music cognition, voice analysis, and culture studies. This research addresses works for solo *Sprechstimme* throughout Schoenberg's career by using some of these strategies. Examples will consist of written and recorded melodrama excerpts from 'Herr Gänsefuß, Frau Gänsekraut' from *Gurrelieder*, as well as from *Pierrot lunaire*, *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, and *A Survivor in Warsaw*.

Methods

Essays from the diverse areas mentioned above are connected through the field of voice studies and offer a methodological basis for timbral analysis, which will be applied to the previously listed melodramas. Freya Jarman's monograph *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* and Yvon Bonenfant's article 'Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres' position ways of considering the voice as a 'third space', between the producer and the receiver. Following the publication of his article, Bonenfant developed an app called Voice Bubbles, which visually represents the voice as a sort of speech bubble. The app allows users to record their voices in rounded shapes whose features (e.g. color, shape, size, patterns, et al.) are generated based on the recorded vocal characteristics, and which can then be manipulated by the user. Cornelia Fales's article 'The Paradox of Timbre' foregrounds tim-

bre instead of melody in vocal music and suggests that listeners who are accustomed to attending primarily to melody tend to suffer from 'timbre deafness'. She observes timbre as a feature which necessarily depends on the perception of sound by listeners, which is both pre-cognitive and malleable. Freya Jarman's aforementioned book and Miriama Young's article 'Latent Body-Plastic, Malleable, Inscribed: The Human Voice, the Body and the Sound of Its Transformation through Technology' both explore the transformation of voices and vocal timbres through the recording and production process, while Eliezer Rapoport's article 'Schoenberg-Hartleben's Pierrot Lunaire: Speech—poem—melody—vocal Performance' isolates linguistic features of recordings and analyses Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) spectrograms to address timbre. Jody Kreiman and Bruce R. Gerratt identify inconsistencies in traditional scientific analyses of voice by rating scale measures, and suggest reliable means for evaluating and documenting vocal perception in their article 'Validity of rating scale measures of voice quality.' Finally, the second section of Richard Kurth's tripartite essay 'Pierrot Lunaire: Persona, Voice, and the Fabric of Allusion' considers changes to subjectivity and expression resulting from Schoenberg's use of *Sprechstimme*. These essays will be considered alongside primary source study and existing Schoenberg scholarship, including Ulrich Krämer's work on notational changes to the *Sprechmelodien* (vocal lines made up of *Sprechstimmen*) throughout Schoenberg's career.

Implications

My work augments insight from traditional types of formal and harmonic analysis, and creates new critical perspectives by drawing on both historical- and ethnomusicological methods. It elevates the collaborative influence of performers, prompts careful re-evaluation of existing recordings, and allows potential for sound to act as a carrier of meaning. As a result of my work, the structural and expressive functions of timbre in Schoenberg's *Sprechmelodien* continue to emerge. This approach not only develops understanding of familiar works in the classical canon and Western popular music, but it also provides another point of engagement for perhaps less familiar music (e.g. non-Western-, modern-, electronic-, and early music).

Keywords

Contemporary music, FFT analysis, melodrama, melody, musical perception, music cognition, queer listening, timbre, timbre analysis, Second Viennese School, *Sprechstimme*, *Sprechmelodie*, 20th c., vocal music, vocality, voice, voice studies.

REFERENCES

- Bonenfant, Yvon. 2010. 'Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres', *Performance Research* 15/3: 74–80.
Fales, Cornelia. 2002. 'The Paradox of Timbre', *Ethnomusicology* 46/1: 56–95.

- Jarman, Freya. 2011. *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*. Palgrave Macmillan's Critical Studies in Gender, Sexuality, and Culture. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kreiman, Jody, and Bruce R. Gerratt. 1998. 'Validity of rating scale measures of voice quality', *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 104/3: 1598–1608.
- Krämer, Ulrich. 2001. 'Zur Notation der Sprechstimme bei Schönberg', in H.-K. Metzger and R. Riehn (eds.), *Schönberg und der Sprechgesang, Musik-Konzepte* 112/113: 6-32.
- Kurth, Richard B. 2010. 'Pierrot Lunaire: Persona, Voice, and the Fabric of Allusion', in Jennifer Shaw and Joseph Auner (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg*, 124-128. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmidt, Christian Martin. 2004. 'Das Problem Sprechgesang bei Arnold Schönberg', in *Pierrot Lunaire: Albert Giraud, Otto Erich Hartleben, Arnold Schoenberg—Une collection d'études musico-littéraires/A collection of musicological and literary studies/Eine Sammlung musik-und literaturwissenschaftlicher Beiträge*, La république des lettres 20: 77-84.
- Rapoport, Eliezer. 2004. 'Schoenberg-Hartleben's Pierrot Lunaire: Speech—poem—melody—vocal Performance', *Journal of New Music Research* 33/1: 71–111.
- Young, Miriama. 2006. 'Latent Body-Plastic, Malleable, Inscribed: The Human Voice, the Body and the Sound of Its Transformation through Technology', *Contemporary Music Review* 25/1–2: 81–92.