

“A chance rediscovery of Debussy’s *La Serenade Interrompue* was the starting point for this work...and an obvious association of ideas led easily to thoughts of *Pierrot*. A fortuitous coincidence, since the characters in the story are three and this work was to be a trio! By chance, the clarinetist in the Verdehr Trio is a woman, and I quickly decided that was the correct instrument to represent Columbine!

The form of the work follows the story quite closely and there are thus eight short sections.

- I. *Pierrot: Andante espressivo* (Pierrot alone on stage is sad and introspective.)
- II. *Columbine: Con frivolezza*. (Columbine, frivolous and superficial, enters. Pierrot starts to make a passionate declaration of love to her; she eventually consents to listen.)
- III. *Pierrot’s serenade: Spettrale* (In the moonlight, Pierrot serenades Columbine. The piano imitates the strumming of Pierrot’s guitar.)
- IV. *Harlequin: Con energia* (Harlequin enters with his usual overwhelming energy and self-absorption. Pierrot and Columbine conceal themselves and at first Harlequin does not notice them.)
- V. *Harlequin attacks Pierrot: Furioso* (Harlequin furiously attacks Pierrot who confronts Harlequin with all his strength. But Pierrot is no match for him.)
- VI. *Columbine rejects Pierrot: Molto meno mosso* (Pierrot turns to Columbine. She now cruelly rejects him and gives her attention to Harlequin.)
- VII. *Harlequin’s serenade: Sensuale* ((Harlequin successfully courts Columbine despite Pierrot’s interruptions.)
- VIII. *Pierrot: Andante espressivo* (As at the beginning, Pierrot is alone, but now even in greater despair.)

There are several musical links with the Debussy prelude. As in the Debussy, the two serenades are in keys a major third apart (here a minor and D-flat major; in the Debussy, b-flat minor and D major). However, in *Pierrot*, both serenades are interrupted: Harlequin successfully interrupts Pierrot’s serenade, and Pierrot tries unsuccessfully to interrupt Harlequin’s. Two other short motives from the Debussy prelude can easily be discovered.

Throughout, the violin represents Pierrot; the clarinet, Columbine; and the piano, Harlequin; though the instruments also have some accompaniment function.

The work was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and Michigan State University.

—Thea Musgrave

The world premiere of *Pierrot* was on April 13, 1986 was at Beyaz Kosk, Emirgan Parki, Istanbul, Turkey.

Thea Musgrave (born 1928, Edinburgh, Scotland) received her education at the University of Edinburgh and in Paris as a pupil of Nadia Boulanger. In 1958, she attended the Tanglewood Festival and studied with Aaron Copland. She has lived in the United States since 1972.

Musgrave is best known for her more than a dozen operas and other theatre works, many of which take a historical figure as a central character: *Mary Queen of Scots*, *Harriet*, *the Woman Called Moses* (Harriet Tubman), *Simon Bolivar*, and *Pontalba*. Musgrave describes her musical forms as “dramatic-abstract” with the intention of bringing the drama of the theatre to the concert hall.

Musgrave has also written many orchestra, chamber, and choral works. Her music has been widely performed with prestigious orchestras and ensembles in the United States and abroad, very often with the composer as conductor. Coinciding with her ninetieth birthday in 2018, her compositions were performed in the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms.

Musgrave’s work has been recognized with a Koussevitsky award, two Guggenheim fellowships, and five honorary degrees. In 2017, she was awarded the Queen’s Medal for Music.

In 1970, Musgrave became a Guest Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It was there she met her husband, violist and conductor, Peter Mark. From 1987–2002, she was Distinguished Professor at Queens College in New York.

Additional information is available at www.theamusgrave.com.