



# ROYAL BALLET & OPERA

## PIERROT LUNAIRE

A Visual Story for the Relaxed Performance



## **Contents:**

**Information about arriving at the theatre – 3**

**Information about the performance – 4**

**Information about the stage – 5**

**Information about the music – 6**

**Before Pierrot Lunaire starts – 7**

**The stage, set and characters – 8**

**Introduction to the characters – 9**

**The visual story of Pierrot Lunaire – 11**

**Information about sensory highlights – 18**

Visual Stories are intended to be used by everyone to help with their enjoyment and understanding of a Relaxed Performance. They contain details of the story, so if you don't want to know this information, please do not continue to read.

You can use this information for all performances of Pierrot Lunaire at the Royal Opera House, but some of the information will be more relevant to the Relaxed Performance.

Relaxed Performances can help to support neurodiverse audiences, those living with dementia and those who have learning disabilities or experience anxiety. These types of performances are also helpful if you are anxious about sitting in one place for a long time or need to access the bathrooms and exits quickly. Our usual House rules don't apply to Relaxed Performances, but this can mean it might feel busy or sound noisy in the theatre and building.

## Arriving at the theatre



You may have to wait in a queue to get into the theatre. Someone from the security team will ask to check inside your bags.



There will be members of staff or volunteers who can assist you with directions to all our spaces, including step-free routes and any other questions you may have. Some wear red lanyards and t-shirts, some wear lanyards and suits.



You will need to download your digital ticket onto your phone before you arrive and show this to Front of House staff when going into the theatre.



The accessible toilets are located on the ground floor by the café, in the Linbury Foyer on Level -1 and by the bar on Level 5. Our accessible toilets are gender neutral and have an alarm pull cord for emergencies.

**For the Relaxed Performance, there will be a quiet space in the Taylor Learning Room 2, which is located in the Linbury Foyer.**

There is step-free access down to the Linbury Foyer and the room will be signposted. Here, you can take a moment, relax and sit in the quiet if it becomes too overwhelming in the theatre or building.

## Information about the performance

The story of Pierrot Lunaire is told through ballet, music, singing and acting.

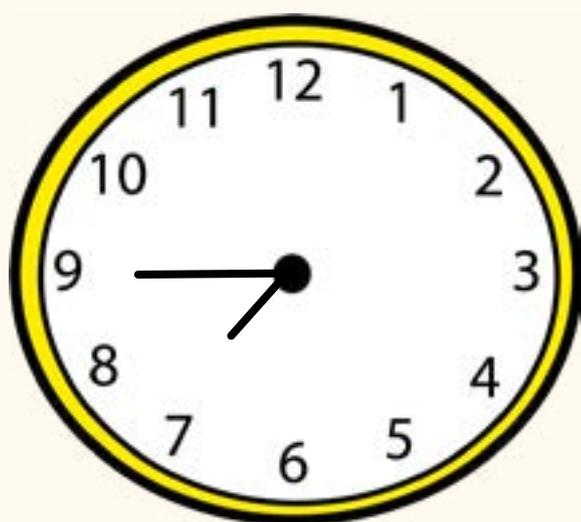
**Guidance:** Parental guidance recommended

This performance contains stylised depictions of stabbing, and scenes of a sexual nature.

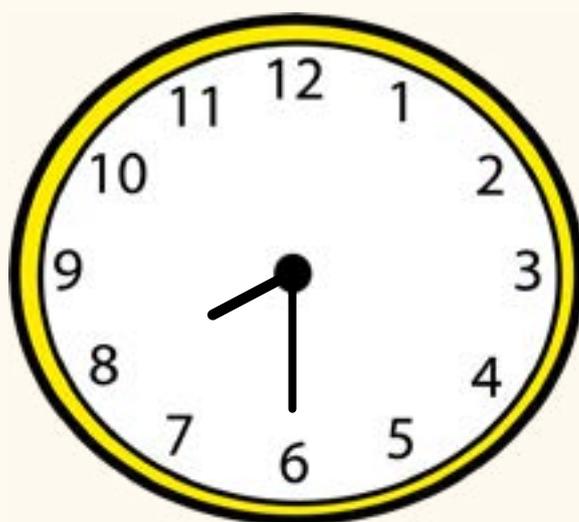
**Running times:** The performance lasts approximately 45 minutes. There are no intervals.

The Relaxed Performance will take place on 17 February 2026 at 7.45pm

**From 7.45pm**



**to 8.30pm**



## Information about the stage



This performance takes place in the Linbury Theatre, which has wooden walls and purple seats. You will have a seat number on your digital ticket and an usher can help you find your seat.

At the beginning of the performance, the lights over the seats will be dimmed.

At the end of the performance, all of the lights will come back on, and people will begin to leave the theatre. It might feel busy but please take your time – there is no rush.

## **Information about the music**

Pierrot Lunaire is a ballet choreographed by Glen Tetley and is performed by dancers on the stage. Musicians, which include an ensemble and a singer, will play the music that you will hear from a pit in front of the stage.

The music was composed by Arnold Schoenberg and is based on poems by Albert Giraud. It combines singing with spoken word which changes throughout the performance making it sound a little like a nursery rhyme, adding to the surreal nature of the production. The poems are sung in German and you will be able to see translations on the surtitle screen at the top of the stage and from screens at the side of the stage. The lyrics might help you understand Pierrot's feelings as they are connected to what he is experiencing throughout the performance. You can also find [the translated lyrics](#) on the [RBO website](#).

You might not be able to see all the musicians from your seat, but you will hear the music. The music can be loud at points, with overlapping sounds from different instruments, singing, speaking and sound effects. The music can evoke different feelings, so sometimes it might sound tense and uncomfortable, sometimes it might sound fast and twinkling while other times it might become low sounding and dark.

For this Relaxed Performance the sound will be adapted so it is not as loud as other performances.

The audience may cheer or clap throughout and this can be unpredictable. In Relaxed Performances, there are no rules around being completely quiet so you might hear other people moving or talking around you.

You can wear ear defenders and Front of House staff can lend you some if you require them. They are sterilised between performances.

## **Before Pierrot Lunaire begins**

A member of the production team will come onto the stage to introduce themselves and tell you about the performance. They might talk about the different characters; any adaptations made to sound or lighting for this Relaxed Performance or provide information about the set.

Pierrot Lunaire is a piece of surrealism, which means it takes the feelings, emotions, sensations and histories of human life and finds unusual ways of exploring them through dreams, symbols or subconscious thoughts. You may not entirely understand what is happening in the story at points because this type of art is more about feelings.

In Pierrot Lunaire, Pierrot is dealing with a series of complex thoughts and feelings about his relationship to people and the world around him. He does so under the moonlight, which he frequently looks up to for understanding. He is both aroused and frightened by the way he feels about the two other characters in the performance, Brighella and Columbine. He is drawn to Columbine's beauty and sensuality, but he is also drawn to Brighella's mischievous and dangerous personality.

## **The stage, set and characters**

At the start of the performance the black curtain will be closed and a black and white photograph of the choreographer Glen Tetley will be projected onto the curtain. The musicians are in front and below the stage in the pit. They may be tuning and practicing.

The curtain will open at the start of the performance.

The stage is simply set with a well-lit backdrop that changes colour throughout – purple at the beginning and ending in green. In the centre of the stage is a white metal scaffold made with bars and shelves which the characters climb, lean and dangle from, sometimes precariously, throughout the performance. The performers are safe climbing on the scaffold and have rehearsed how to move around safely.

## The characters in Pierrot Lunaire

This visual story contains images from the production where different performers play the same role. They will look different, but the costumes are the same.

You can use the cast sheets available to find out which dancers are performing on the night you attend.



### **Pierrot**

Pierrot is a naive and innocent clown. He wears a white costume and white hat for most of the performance. He is experiencing a wide range of emotions in this performance from hope, to lust, to fear. He is in love with Columbine.



### **Brighella**

Brighella is a dark and mischievous clown who instils fear and excitement in Pierrot. He wears a green leotard with black tape taped across.



## **Columbine**

Columbine is the object of Pierrot's affections as she is beautiful, sensual and unobtainable. She performs around him, getting cross at his affection while enjoying the attention of Brighella. She wears three different costumes: a white costume with black hat, a white cloak with big bow and a red tasselled dress with long, red curly hair.



## **The Moon**

You won't see the moon throughout this performance; it is alluded to by the characters looking upwards. It might look like they are looking at the audience, but they are acting as though they are looking at the moon.

## The story of Pierrot Lunaire



Pierrot is dangling from the scaffold in the middle of the stage. He comes off the scaffold and dances around the stage. He looks up and stretches his arms upwards as though he is trying to grab at something in the sky – he's motioning grabbing at the moon, which you won't see.



Columbine dances onto the stage. She is wearing all white with a cage skirt and a black headdress. Her face is painted white. She dances around Pierrot and he looks on, curiously. They dance together but she seems uninterested in him.



Columbine looks up towards the moon and pretends to swim as though she's swimming in the moonlight. Pierrot watches her from the scaffold, he is visibly interested and aroused by her.



Columbine leaves the stage and returns with a clothesline with white clothes pinned to it. Pierrot gets in the way and becomes entangled in it. She ties it to the scaffold.



Pierrot and Columbine dance together. Pierrot touches her breast and she becomes angry, enacting slapping him across the face. She angrily unties the washing line and walks off the stage in a stomping motion. Both actions are part of the story, rehearsed and safe for the dancers.

Pierrot lies on the floor, rolling around as though having a tantrum. He gets up and stares longingly at the moon as though it can save him from the embarrassment and shame.



Columbine comes back onto the stage, this time wearing a long cape tied with a big bow.



Pierrot falls to the floor in front of her and she grabs his legs and drags him around the stage. She tries to raise her arms towards the moon, but Pierrot grabs her for an embrace, longingly. They both dance together looking up at the moon.



The tempo of the music changes and becomes sinister and dark. The stage is darker and another character enters but only their shadowy outline is visible.



It is Brighella, another clown, who is wearing a green leotard and a black coat with long train. He is also wearing a black eye mask. Pierrot climbs onto the scaffold and watches on, both afraid and curious.



Brighella removes his cloak revealing a sword in his belt loop. The sword is a wooden prop sword. He climbs up the scaffold to Pierrot and strokes his face. They both climb down and dance together with their movements synchronised.



Brighella turns mischievous and starts scaring Pierrot, stopping him from climbing onto the scaffold to get away from him and taunting him with the sword. He then places the sword in Pierrot's hand and tries to teach him how to use it with Pierrot playing along but looking scared.



Brighella stabs Pierrot with the sword and he clutches at his chest and falls to the floor. Brighella triumphantly puts his sword back into the belt loop and swaggers off the stage. Pierrot lies on the floor for some moments before rising up, checking his body to see if he's ok. He looks up at the moon, appearing scared. No performer is harmed in this action – it is part of the performance, rehearsed and is safe.



Brighella returns to the stage covered in tall white netted fabric. He slowly reveals Columbine is below the fabric, sat on his shoulders. Her long red, curly hair drapes down her shoulder and she is wearing a different costume of a red tasselled dress. Brighella places her on the scaffold and the white fabric drapes down in an ominous ghost-like shape. Pierrot looks under the fabric.



Brighella and Columbine dance together and she moves towards Pierrot, dancing provocatively around him. They dance together with Pierrot becoming excited and touching her breast once more, she appears bored and pushes him away from her and moves towards Brighella. Pierrot watches Columbine and Brighella together, looking dejected. They both draw Pierrot towards him, seductively.



Brighella and Columbine take some white ties that are attached to the scaffold and tie them to Pierrot's arms and legs, so he appears like a puppet. They use the ties to move his body, laughing as he flails around. The strings snap and Pierrot falls backwards. Bored, Brighella and Columbine throw the strings off the side of the stage and they move towards Pierrot who looks defeated. The fall is safe and the performer playing Pierrot isn't really injured.



Pierrot lies unresponsive on the floor and Brighella removes his jacket and trousers, putting them on himself. Columbine takes Pierrot's hat and passes it to Brighella as they run around the stage chasing one another. They climb onto the scaffold and dangle precariously.



Pierrot stands and looks up to the moon. He climbs up to the scaffold and places himself between Brighella and Columbine. Brighella gives him his hat and he throws it away. Pierrot climbs onto both Brighella and Columbine, defeated.

The three performers safely get down from the scaffold and bow to the audience.

## **Sensory Highlights**

The information below aims to highlight moments of sound, lighting and action that may be surprising. Sound and lighting can be used to help evoke emotions and is part of the performance.

### **Sound:**

The music in *Pierrot Lunaire* varies throughout the performance with loud, overlapping sounds made up of different instruments, such as strings, wind instruments and a soprano who sings throughout. The music is atonal and dissonant and the soprano music is fast, moving through high and low notes. There are moments when the singing moves to spoken word.

Sometimes the music changes in tone to accompany the story, giving more of a sense of what is going on. For example, when Brighella comes onto the stage for the first time, the music changes to something slower tempo and sounds more sinister.

### **Lighting:**

The stage is lit simply with a backlight. There are no surprising moments.

### **Action:**

*Pierrot Lunaire* is based on 'commedia dell'arte', a form of 16th-century Italian theatre based on archetypes, which means examples of a 'type' of person. In *Pierrot Lunaire*, Pierrot plays the role of an innocent clown / boy who is both aroused and afraid of his own desire for Columbine as well as his curiosity about the dark, mischievous clown Brighella. Columbine plays the role of a seductive, but complex, love interest and Brighella performs the role of the powerful and domineering masculine presence.

Pierrot Lunaire explores the complicated relationship between these archetypes – Pierrot Lunaire explores the complicated relationship between these archetypes. Pierrot is attracted to Columbine and touches her inappropriately. Columbine is angry with Pierrot and slaps him. Brighella stabs Pierrot but also tries to impress Columbine by swaggering around and putting the sword between his legs. These moments are there to make you consider the complexities of human existence.

Pierrot experiences a range of emotions throughout – wonder, arousal, shame, embarrassment, fear, pain, among others. At some points he appears frightened and other points he appears excited.

When Pierrot is stabbed by Brighella with the wooden prop sword, he enacts being in severe pain, clutching his stomach and falling to the floor, but this is temporary as he wakes up shortly after.

Columbine slaps Pierrot when he touches her breast. While the action in the story is non-consensual, both actors do consent to performing this action. Neither of them are harmed in the process.

All three performers climb, swing from and dance on the scaffold in the centre of the stage. Pierrot is pushed off the scaffold by Brighella and Columbine towards the end of the performance and he falls.

All these actions are part of the story, have been rehearsed and are safe for the cast and crew.

**Image credits for Pierrot Lunaire:**

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