Aletheia

(A music theater work for performance-artist and digital piano.)

William Osborne

Quiet and stately

(\( \lambda = \text{ca. 48} \))

Light slowly rises on Aletheia. She plays her instrument like a soft and distant fanfare.

Low drone and wind

Piano

0:10

0:20

0:29

High gliss

Piping

1:02

Didgeridoo

1:36

Piu veloce

(\( \lambda = 130 \))

She hangs her instrument back on the rack.

She turns to the audience.
She looks at the audience with energetic, excited anticipation.

Allegro ($\frac{3}{4} = 130$)

Then turns and gestures to an unseen window to her right.

This will of course be a party to remember.

The courtyard below will be teeming with guests.

She exuberantly extends her arms straight out through bars 3 and 4.

And I still can't believe they've asked me to sing for the patrons tonight.

She looks toward the window to her right, then sings while variously looking at it and the audience.

Moderato ($\frac{3}{4} = 120$)

Then turns and gestures to an unseen window to her right.
From my window I see that the lanterns are lit.

The cut crystal punch bowl blazes with lighting from
tangerine and blunt yellow a-
Laura Mercer? Or May-bell-line fire?

She turns to the basket on her left.

float in the night.

She turns to the basket on her left.

She rummages in the basket on her left by extending her left arm through bars 3 and 4 (mostly slightly lifting things to look under them) pulls out an eye-liner.

and "spikes" it into position in front of her on the last note of the phrase. She turns to the right basket...

rummages with her right arm extended through bars 3 and 4, takes another eye-liner and "spikes" it in front of her in a similar manner on the last note of the phrase.

The label on both pencils:
She contemplates the two pencils, then holds one up higher: This one should do it.

Exuberantly She touches up her brows with the pencil during the short interludes...

To night is my night to be - daz-zel...

I'll put on my ver-y best things.
She exuberantly extends her arms between bars 3&4 on each side of herself.

And my singing will shine like a radiant star.

But what will I sing for the party to-night?

She examines her face in the mirror, sudden consternation:

E-gad!

A pimple!
freezes a moment, then tosses the liner in the basket on the first note of the flourish.

She rummages in the basket on her left side with her left arm as before.

She turns, rummages on the other side with her right arm, and finds a bottle of covering cream.

She lifts it from the tray with a flourish and "spikes" it into position in front of her.

unscrews the lid, fully extends her arms through the bars on her left, and tosses the lid in the basket on the first note of the flourish.

As before \( \frac{\text{\textit{f}}}{\text{\textit{mf}}} \) \( \frac{\text{\textit{f}}}{} \) \( \frac{\text{\textit{mf}}}{} \) She turns back front and sings using the cream on the pimple during the interludes.

Like \( \text{\textit{f}} \) \( \text{\textit{mf}} \) \( \text{\textit{mp}} \) \( \text{\textit{mp}} \) \( \text{\textit{mf}} \) put-ty I use cer-tain words on my face.
Like ageless.

Like winsome.

She returns the cream to her right basket, setting it down on exactly the last note of the phrase.

To fill in the fissures defining lines of years.
She quickly wipes her fingers with a beige hanky from her right basket, turns to the left basket and searches for the cell phone which is set on speaker mode.

She extends her arm with it through the bars, and holds it in front of her in a reverie.

Moderato ($\lambda = 110$)

She waits for a response and reveals a sense of abandonment.

Slightly frustrated:

Check your computer my dear.
Pause as she waits again. After the last note of this phrase, she brings the phone inside the cage, closes it, turns and extends her arm through the bars on her left side, and tosses the phone into the basket on the first note of the flourish.

Subito più veloce e forte \( (\cdot \cdot \cdot = 150) \)

Oh well.

Subito più veloce e forte \( (\cdot \cdot \cdot = 150) \)

She exuberantly extends her arms through bars 3 and 4 on both sides of herself.

She turns to the basket on her right.

My songs will enchant them tonight.

She rummages in the left hand basket. but does not find what she is seeking.

She rummages in the basket on her left with one arm extended through bars 3 and 4, and finds a container of facial powder, spiking it into position on the last note of the phrase.

She turns to the basket on her right.
and rummages with one arm as before, lifting two or three objects before she finds a powder brush and "spikes" it in front of her on the last note of the phrase.

She studies the label on the container.

poco meno mosso

L'Or-é-al Daz-zel-ling Sun-light.

Mi-cro-nized ti-tan-ium di-ox-ide?

and sings, lightly conducting with the brush.

Come sopra (\( \delta = 150 \))

Tell me the words that will keep me for -
And then powders between the words.

ev-er young.

Like lovel-y.

Like god-ess.

My sweet love.
With the brush in one hand and the powder in the other, she extends both arms through the bars on each side, and tosses the brush and powder into the baskets on the last two notes of this phrase.

She reaches up and touches the mask.

Quieto e misterioso ($\lambda = 80$)

She sings to the mask while continuing to touch it. As she sings, a small light slowly illuminates the front of the mask, and then a small light behind the mask causes its eyes to be ringed with light. The effect should make the mask seem as if it is coming to life.

She lowers her arm from the mask and faces forward.

Flowing like wind ($\lambda = 90$)

She takes some opera glasses from her right basket and observes the gala attendees through the window.
When she sings, she turns toward the stage front, but during the interludes she turns to the window and uses the glasses to observe the party.

al-read-y stand-ing a-round look-ing for me,

chat-ting at tab-les with bot-tles of wine,

and care-fly se-lect-ed hor d'oeurves.
They could be cows quietly moo-ing, moving toward bales at the fence,

but satin and gabardine cover their torsos, and the hungry have hidden their horns.
Everywhere echoes the frivolous banter,

pleasant-tries timidly filling the air.

She returns the glasses to the right basket, rummages in the basket on her left, slowly and reflectively takes her cell phone from it near the end of the phrase, and holds it with her arm extended in front of her through the bars.

She looks at the phone reflectively, waits for an answer. When none comes, she asks:

Like a reverie (♩ = 110)

Jeremy, are you
She again watches and listens with a slight sense of abandonment when Jeremy does not answer.

there yet?

She speaks to the unanswered phone.

To-night will be a night to re-member.

Let my breasts rise in your hands a-gain.

then takes a hair brush from her left tray with her right hand, holds it slightly above her head like a conductor's baton, and begins lightly conducting with it as she sings.

With enthusiasm \( (J = 150) \)

It's my words that will keep me for-ev-er young. young.

She pauses a moment in reflection, snaps the phone shut, extends her left arm through the bars, and tosses the phone in the basket.

Phone toss on first note of this florish.
She then brushes her hair during the interludes. Like healing mud.

Like cucumbers.

She returns the brush to the basket, briefly pauses in thought, reaches up and touches the mask as if she were entering another world, and sings to it while continuing to touch it. The mask goes through the same stages of lighting as before. Like mayonnaise.
She lowers her arm in unison with the howl sound at the end of the phrase, briefly looks for the panty hose in her right basket, finds them hanging on the horizontal brace behind it.

She whips the panty hose around in front of her when this phrase begins, and examines them.

Subito molto più mosso e animato ($\frac{\text{mmm}}{\text{mmp}}$ = 150)

She sees a huge hole in seat.

Sticks her hand through it.
turns to her right and raises them above her head. She turns back front. and tosses them away.

She notices the wind from the window, turns toward it, and touches her face with both hands as she feels the breeze upon it.

Legato, flowing and billowing like the wind ($\lambda = 150$)

Quietly aware ($\lambda = 75$)

Gentle breeze, swirling from the window. Carry my words in your peaceful arms.
She raises her arms through the bars and sways in the breeze.

Legato, flowing and billowing like the wind ($\dot{b} = 150$)

Raise my voice to the sky.
She turns front, puts her hands on the bars, pauses in thought. After the end of the phrase, she turns to her left basket using the howl sound as a cue.

She rummages in her left basket with one hand as before, (e = 150)

Come sopra (\(\text{e} = 150\))

and takes a small bottle of mouthwash.

Animated (\(\text{e} = 150\)) Removes lid.

puts it back in the left basket, swigs off last amount.
She then turns front, looks at the empty bottle, turns to the right side of her cage, raises the bottle above her head on the florish below, aims, and tosses it over the top brace. She turns back front and contemplates her bars while touching them with her hands.

...turns to her left, and spits.
After the cascando is completed, she takes her phone from her left basket and holds it in front of her with her arm extended and resting on the cross brace. She pauses reflectively looking at the phone.

She addresses the phone and asks Jeremy if he is there, then again more insistently.

She sings in a quiet, confidential tone as if speaking to Jeremy:

She sings in a quiet, confidential tone as if speaking to Jeremy:

Quietly and confidential \((j = 60)\)

Realizing he is not there, she slowly closes the phone, but continues singing the story in a quiet, confidential tone anyway.

Yesterday a lady complained about tonight's benefit.
She was concerned about the la-tee-da guest-list.

As if revealing inside information:

Almost whispered:

It's a party for most-ly... you know... really rich people.

She returns the phone to her left basket, rummages in it, brings out a bottle of perfume and spikes it into position in front of her on the last note of the following phrase:

Come sopra (− 150)
She turns to her right basket, rummages and brings out another bottle of perfume.

She looks at both,  
Animated (\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\( j \)}}} = 150 \))

returns the bottle in her left hand to the left basket,

vigorously rubs the label clean on the remaining bottle,

returns the hanky to her right basket.

takes the other bottle out of her left basket.

and examines each bottle, first the one in her left hand,

then the one in her right.
Which one is me? Ghost Mist or Angel Innocent?

She pauses a moment in thought while looking at the bottles. She extends her arm through the bars, turns her left basket, tosses the bottle in her left hand back in the basket, turns back front, sprays the perfume in the air with an upward sweeping gesture, and lets it cascade down on her. Delicately, like falling rain.

Spoken: Ah perfume, how it sweetens the wind--she sniffs the bottle--the vibrant breath of song, awakener of dreams. Put it with words and music, and maybe they'll make me young again.

She takes the opera glasses, variously looking through them out the window and turning front to sing to the public.

Flowing like the wind (\(\frac{3}{4}\) = 90)
What will they think when I sing for them?

Will they turn from their friends and listen to me?

Or is this merely a social event?
Their mouths smeared scarlet or lined with manicured hair, open and shut like fish sped up in a film.

She momentarily becomes more reflective.
Come sopra

time to go down to the court-yard and sing for the pa-trons,

during their lives, to brigh-ten their lives with some mu-sic.

She becomes clearly doubtful.

So why am I hav-ing this prob-lem with go-ing?

(Use the end of the howl sound as a cue for the next entrance.)
She exchanges glances between the public and the courtyard while gesturing as if holding a knife.

**Quasi Maestoso** ($\lambda = 90$)

- Shall I arrive with a grandiose entrance and dance with the man with the knife?
- To-mor-row ov-er cof-fee

- hands prop-ping o-ver stuffed heads
- would they e-ven re-mem-ber if I were not there.

**Ominously** ($\lambda = 78$)

- She takes an artist's small drawing mannequin from her left basket and holds it in her left hand.

**Dearm-like, molto rubato**

- She reaches up and touches the mask with her right hand.
Still touching the mask.

Our ballads dream us into being.

She reaches upward through the front bars with her right arm to an imaginary scene before her eyes.

each word etching a scene.

She raises one arm of the mannequin to match the position she had when reaching to her imaginary scene.

Then raises the mannequin with her right arm into the imaginary scene.

and into another.

Then I fall out of a dream and into another.

Still touching the mask.
She puts the mannequin in her left hand, touches the mask.

Deep in water a gash-toothed shark

Deep in water a gash-toothed shark

With her right arm she makes a slow gesture as if tearing open her chest.

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With her right arm, she raises the mannequin back into the imaginary scene, gently moving it as if it were an actor in it.

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As I watch fading into death,
li - quid smoke of my own screams,
screams, rus - ty red, gar-land-ing all a-

round me.

She puts the mannequin back in the left basket,

I see each word, stick-y and red-dish.

he-mo-glo-bin gram-mar.

and examines her bars as before.

With a syncopated feel \( (L=75) \)

Lively \( (L=95) \)

So what is the prob - lem here?
I mean really.

The people? The music? My lack of courage?

She continues to lightly test the bars.

I've drawn my face for the party, but my eyes, and my words, really.
fuse to remain in their alman-dine bound-ar-ies.

She examines the bars as before.

Pensive (\( \dot{\text{e}} = 60 \)) Looking at the public, but also glancing toward the window.

Music it seems has come a bit hard of hear-ing, it shuf-fles a-round like a ghost in an old op'-ra house.
She returns to testing her bars.

She takes her instruments, looks it over, silently tests it.

Brooding ($\approx 95$)

Suddenly lively ($\approx 150$)
She plays her instrument.

**Lively** (\( \frac{4}{4} = 140 \))  The trombone in this section should not be too loud, but rather stylish and not overshadowing the piano.
Yes, indeed. this could be

something for op-pu-lent pa-trons with noth-ing am-big-u-ous in their lives...

cept of course, their fi-nancial trans-aotions,

correct bass part in seq.
She plays her instrument.

She pauses in reflection.

Dream-like, reflective (\( \cdot 140 \))

She pauses in reflection.

Start slower and accelerate to tempo
And then I fall out of a dream.

Come sopra ($\lambda=140$) She returns to her upbeat tone.

Now isn't that interesting? I hope they'll catch the meaning of that.

We're

wear-y of meaningless blather, but what can we say in a world so completely unhinged?

Quiet and reflective.

_meno mosso_
Rhythmic, syncopated, Poco più mosso  \( (\approx 140) \)

She plays her instrument.

Elegant, but ironic, lo stesso tempo

She plays her instrument.
Come sopra

So I'll continue with something abstract, with
nar-y a word of pro-test,
Or they'll take our fund-ing a-way.

Come sopra
She plays her instrument.
Growing more frenetic

wide vibrato on last note
Dream-like ($\frac{\eta}{\eta}=80$) (She put her instrument back on its rack.)

Plaintively, glancing toward the window while singing toward the public, she comments on her musical effort.

Here down-town in the opera house, paid for by the patrons of rot, the patrons of neglect.

She turns her focus to her front.

Più mosso, flowing ($\frac{\eta}{\eta}=140$)

I will rise up again,
I will open my mouth and sing unscripted truths.

I will hallow this very room my song.

When I arrived in Detroit,
I went out and looked for this old ghost of an opera house.

I enquired with a ragged old baroness languishing on the curb.

The
shabby old woman just looked at me then started to laugh and said:

mf There it is, the ruin where people used to sing. As she beheld the urbanecarcass of our old opera house,

it seemed like a giant had picked it up to see what treasure might fall out.

mf She extends her right arm to point to a ruin in the same place as the earlier imaginary scene.

There it is, the ruin where people
After the last word, she looks up and touches the mask, and hears a soft, distant memory of opera. She slowly lowers her arm and face about halfway through the opera excerpt.

Then re-placed it in the

ru-in of mid De-troit

ru-in of mid De-troit

Stage planks rot-ten, plas-ter fal-len, in the cor-ner lies a crip-pled chan-da-lier. pet-ri-fied with

Plaintive (\(\dot{\text{e}}=120\)) Again extending her arm to point to the imaginary opera house.
de-cades of dust, a bombed church of hopes. And then the old lady sang, How will my heart live?

She again points to the opera house in her mind’s eye.

She lowers her arm, looks forward, and hears the dying music of a badly broken piano.

My voice is full of dust.

Electronic sound)

(Enter echoing the melody in the accompaniment.)
Cantabile (\( \text{\( \frac{3}{4} \) = 90} \))

She takes the mannequin and holds it in her left hand, then extends her right arm upward to the imaginary scene.

She lowers her arm.

shapes unbolting

In languid

skies.
She shapes the puppet into a dance-like pose, then lifts it into the imaginary scene and lightly sways it as if it were dancing.

She lowers the puppet.

Hand him a banjo and hear how he cavorts on the banjo.
strings.

With you he will sing:

A tempo, non troppo lento (♩=80)

Is there a serum against the flower crushers?

Can you dance a jig in a flack jacket?

Sospesso ma non troppo lento

Can you disarm the grammar?
The grammar of the grim rappers?

Ephemeral \( (\mathfrak{f} = 80) \)
She takes the phone and holds it before her as before.

And you, Jeremy? Have you vanished too?
She begins sing to the phone, but her focus gradually shifts away from it.

In to the splash less pool of silent losses

your fine hands.
Sound less ly sing ing, dream ing,

heart strung ges - tures. Key - board howls.

She looks toward the window. A chorus softly answers.

Quasi lontano (\( \text{\texttt{ tremolo}} = 70 \))

The choir left and so I sing a lone. How could I not have no - ticed? They must have grabbed their coats. How did I miss their
shuf-le toward the gate?

She looks forward into the distance.

We'll be in the limelight beyond this world.

She looks up, touches the mask, and sings to it.
She slowly lowers her arm and looks forward.

Singing is transcendence. What will save us if not song?

She looks to the window.

Meno mosso (\( \dot{z} = 75 \))

You are the expanse, the star of life in the heart of sky.

She turns back front.

Come sopra (\( \dot{z} = 110 \))

Why do my feet refuse to move.

She looks to the window.
She pleads to the phone.

Meno mosso, suspended

Liv-ing like con-dors, snow le-pards, you and I.

She looks toward the window and gestures to it.

Ancora agitato (\(\tilde{\nu}=110\))

She turns front.

Come sopra (\(\tilde{\nu}=110\))

The par-ty is lost to me now.
She looks at the phone and pleads:

Talk to me.

She looks toward the front.

Meno mosso (\(\frac{4}{4}=55\))

Wind, sand and water flow over me, unwavering in a desert place.

She turns to the window and then sings.

The night is getting late.

Meno mosso (\(\frac{4}{4}=80\))

The night is getting late.
You will sing without your robe, no way to shut your eyes... A glistering body in the night.
She pleads to the phone.

She brings both her hands together.
She puts the phone away.

Cantabile e poco misterioso ($\pi = 86$)

Start softly and falteringly and then build to tempo.

That
cantabile e poco misterioso

night I dreamt I heard voices,

That conjured hand-worked lace

and fat bespatted tycoons,
She again hears distant memories of opera, looks toward the mask, and passionately mimicks singing the soprano's voice.

She extends her right arm to gesture to the imaginary scene.

On its side, in a pile of rubble an old wreck of a grand piano plays, a beached whale with broken teeth twitching out the sad aria of our last night on earth.

She lowers her arm and listens to the broken piano.

Triste, reflective (\(\dot{=}90\))
When I awoke the faint smell of coal smoke and honey suckle lingered in the gone echo.

She raises her arm to the imaginary scene.

of the soprano's high "C."

She tentatively looks at the mannequin, then takes it.

Beginning tentatively (\(=120\)) then takes it.

She looks up and touches the mask.
Holding the mannequin by its base and with it facing the public, she slowly adjusts it into various positions as if planning her own choreography:

As I walk the ways of

blood.

Il lum mine my face for the kiss,

or the slap of the glove.
She gestures to the room, extending both arms through the bars.

She lowers her arms.

With the mannequin facing the public, she extends its right arm upward.

Time to inhale the fetid air and sing.
She raises her right arm into a position similar to the mannequin's.

Time to gesture my love for those with the cheapest seats.
She lowers her arm and choreographs the mannequin, leaving it again with its right arm raised.

As I sing the air of being.

Follow me my light

She extends her arm through the bars and gestures to the imaginary scene.

Lead my light
feet beyond
That which I am seeing.

She turns to the window.

Più rubato ma lo stesso tempo

The night is getting late.
Soon they'll all be gone.
Dignified but forceful (\( \dot{\text{c}} = 86 \))

She turns back front, raises her right arm to match the positioning of the mannequin.

Time to bear my breast to eternity, all around carried by my voice.

Come sopra

Follow me my light

As I walk the ways of blood.

She touches her face.

Il lumine my face...
During the long drone, she touches the mask, then alternates between testing her bars and looking at the puppet in her left hand.

She turns to the window and sings, imitating a man slashing with a knife using a slow motion, horizontal sweeping gesture.

She then turns to the front and sings.

I'll dance with the man with the knife. I'll sing a song they'll remember.
Dignified but forceful (\( \dot{q} = 94 \))

She extends her right arm through the bars and gestures to the imaginary scene. The mannequin in her left hand should have the same pose.

Born in the fol-low spot that il-lumes only in-no-cence.

only uncrush-able love.

A lost war with no shots
fired,

She continues to gesture toward the imaginary scene.

Here down-town in the opera house, paid for by the patricons of rot, the patrons of ne-

glect.
She slowly lowers her arm.

She returns the mannequin to her left tray, takes her instrument and plays.

Moderate, other worldly

Vb indicates a very wide, varied, expressive slide vibrato

glissing wall

Buzz saw & scream

like an incantation

Digeridoo
She returns the instrument to its rack.

Sing. Sing away the rust-tint cities. Fill them with song's edgeless dreams. Rise on this gentle breeze.

She sings with responses from a pre-recorded antiphonal choir.

Moderately (\textit{L} = 80)

Breezeblow fool of my soul

Blow fool

My coldblown soul
Bilowing like the wind

Bear my song into blue

Migrant resitive skin of earth
Building

Move me with your edge-less force

Play me as your cloud-less horn
Pull me, sweep me into flight

Billowing, poco meno mosso

 accel. e cres.
Gradually building

House my heart in your thrall

Float me on your unseen back

Clear my eyes with your streams

Fil me with your soft powers

Blow my arms into wings
Quieto e sospeso = 90)

Breeze blow fool of my soul

Blow over me
Enter near end of gull sounds.

Raise me in the wind.

The light slowly fades to black on Aletheia but remains on the mask.

Slow fade to black on mask.