Ohio Impromptu

(A setting of the play by Samuel Beckett for tenor, actor, and piano.)

William Osborne
L = Listener.
R = Reader.
As alike in appearance as possible.

Light on table mid stage. Rest of stage in darkness.
Plain white deal table, say 8’x4’.
Two plain armless white deal chairs.

L seated at table facing front towards end of long side audience right.
Bowed head propped on right hand. Face hidden. Left hand on table.
Long black coat. Long white hair.

R seated at table in profile center of short side audience right.
Bowed head propped on right hand. Left hand on table. Book on table
Before him open at last pages. Long black coat. Long white hair.

Black wide-brimmed hat at center of table.
lo stesso tempo (≈ ca. 108)

L knocks with left hand on table

R reads:
In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the down-stream extremity of the Isle of Swans.
Relief he hoped with full flow from un-

Familiarity Unfamiliar room Unfa-

Familiar scene Out to where nothing ever shared.

Back to where nothing ever shared. From this he had once half hoped
some measure of relief might flow.

Day after day

he could be seen slowly pacing the island.

Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather
and old world Latin Quarter

At the tip he would al-

ways pause to dwell on the receding stream.

How in joyous sal-

its two arms con-flowed and flowed united on. Then turn and his slow steps re-trace.
In his dreams, in his dreams, turn and his slow steps retreat.

Più cantabile ma non più lento

In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort.
youth.

Could he not...

Seem the dear face and heard the unspoken words, stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.

Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they
were once so long a - long to - geth - er.

A - lone to - ge - er

Come sopra

so much shared. No. What he had done a - lone could not be un - done.

Nothing he had ev - er done a - lone could ev -

or be un - done. By him a - lone.
Come sopra

In this extremity his soul

terror of night laid hold on him again.

After so long a lapse that as if never been.

Yes, after so long a lapse that as if never been.
Now with redoubled force the fearful symptoms described at length page forty

Subito come sopra

paragraph four. Fortissimo

white nights now again his portion.

As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till dawn.

of day.
Little is left to tell.

One night...

Little is left to tell.

One night as he sat trembling head in hands from head to foot a man appeared to him and said, "I have been sent by..."
and here he named the dear name, to comfort you. Then drawing a worn volume from the pocket of his long black coat he sat and read till dawn. Then disappeared without a word.

Some time later he appeared again at the same hour with the same volume.
and this time with-out pre-am-ble
sat and read it through a-gain the long night through.
Then dis - ap -
peard with-out a word.
So from time to time un-her-ald-ed he
would ap-pear to read the sad tale though a-gain.
And the long night a-way
Then disappearance was a word.

Più animato

With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one.

Till the night came last when having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat without a word.
Finally he said, I have had a word from... and here be named the dear name... that I shall not come a-gain. I saw the dear face and heard the un-spoken words, no need to go to him a-gain, even were it in your pow-er.
No need to go to him again, even were it in your power.

So the sad tale a last time

told they sat on as though turned to stone.

Through the single window dawn shed no light. From the street no sound of reaction
Sospeso; quasi lontano; meno mosso (₃ – ca. 54)

Who knows what thoughts they paid no heed? To light of day

To sound of re-awakening. What thoughts who knows. Thoughts, no, no thoughts. Profounds of mind.
Buried in who knows what pro-‘ounds of mind.

Of mind-ness, With-er no light can reach—No sound.

So sat on as though turned to stone.
The sad tale a last time told.

Nothing is left to tell.