Rockaby

(A setting of Samuel Beckett's play for woman's voice, four trombones, and piano.)

William Osborne
Notes

Light
Subdued on chair. Rest of stage dark. Subdued spot on face constant throughout, unaffected by successive fades. Either wide enough to include narrow limits of rock or concentrated on face when s till or at mid-rock. Then throughout speech face slightly swaying in and out of light.

W
Prematurely old. Unkempt gray hair. Huge eyes in white expressionless face. White hands hold ends of armrests.

Eyes
Now closed, now open in unblinking gaze. About equal proportions section 1, increasingly closed 2 and 3, close good halfway through 4.

Costume
Black lacy high-necked evening gown. Long sleeves. Jet sequins to glitter when rocking. Incongruous frivolous headdress set askew with extravagant trimmings to catch light when rocking.

Attitude
Completely still till fade-out of chair. Then in light of spot head slowly inclined.

Chair
Pale wood highly polished to gleam when rocking. Footrest. Vertical back. Rounded inward curving arms to suggest embrace.

Rock
Slight. Slow. Controlled mechanically without assistance from W.

Voice
Lines in italics spoken by W with V a little softer each time.
W’s “More” a little softer each time. Towards end of section 4, say from “saying to herself” on, voice gradually softer.

Composer’s notes
1. Follow the author’s notes explicitly.
2. Every note is preceded by an accidental except repeated notes or patterns.
3. The music and V should be recorded multi-channel and remixed stereo with the piano subdued and the trombones very soft, reverberated, distant, and ephemeral.
4. The voice sounds one octave lower than written. It should sound authentic and untrained, sometimes more spoken than sung.
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Fade up on W in rocking chair facing front downstage slightly off center audience left.

Woman in chair. V=Her recorded voice.

Effimero e lontano (*ca. 42*)

Fade in.

Fade out.

Till in the end came the close of the long day when she said to herself whom else time she stopped going to and from all eyes all sides high and low for another ano other like her self another creature like her self.

More.

(Semplice e non troppo cantabile)

Rock and voice together.

When she said to herself whom else time she stopped going to and from all eyes all sides high and low for another ano other like her self another creature like her self.

Rockaby

William Osborne
a little like going to and fro all eyes all sides high and low for another
till in the end close of a long day to herself whom else time she stopped
go ing to and fro all eyes all sides high and low for another and
another living soul one another living soul going to and fro all eyes like herself all sides high and low for another another like herself
a little like going to and fro
till in the end close of a long day
to herself whom else

time she stopped going to and fro
time she stopped
time she stopped

Lontano

Lontano

close of a long day
to herself whom else
so in the end close of a long day went back in the end saying to her self whom else time she stopped going to and fro time she went and sat at her windows quiet at her windows facing other windows so in the end

close of a long day in the end went back in and sat at her window let up the blind and sat quiet at her window only window facing other windows other only windows all
eyes all sides high and low for another

at her window another like herself a little like another living

soul one other living soul

at her window gone in like herself gone back in the end

close of a long

say-ing to her-self whom else time she stopped
time she stopped going to and fro time she went and sat at her window quiet at her window only window facing other windows other on - ly windows

Non men - mo mosso Together: echo of "living soul", coming to rest of rock, faint fade of light.

all eyes all sides high and lows for an - oth - er an - oth - er like her - self a lit - tle like an - oth - er living soul one oth - er liv - ing soul
long day sitting at her window quiet at her window only window facing other windows other only windows all blinds down

molto rallantando

never one up hers alone up
till the day came in the end came close of a long day

molto rallantando

sitting at her window quiet at her window all eyes all sides high and low for a blind up one blind up

no more
never mind a face behind the pane famished eyes like hers to see be seen no blind up like hers a little like

one blind up no more another creature some where there be hind the pane another living soul one another living soul.

till the day came in the end came close of a long day when she said to her self whom else
time she stopped time she stopped sitting at her window quiet at her window only window facing other windows other only windows all

sides all eyes high and low time she stopped time she stopped

Together: echo of "time she stopped", coming to rest of rock, faint fade of light.
close of a long day went down in the end went down the steep stair let down the blind and down right down in to the old rock-er moth-er rock-er where moth-er sat all the years all in black best black sat and rocked...
rocked till her end came in the end came off her head they said gone of her head but harm less no harm in her dead one day no might dead one night.

in the rock er in her best black head fal len and the rock er rock ing rock ing a way so in the end close of a long day went down in the end went down down the steep stair let down the blind and down
right down in to the old rock-er those arms at last and rocked with closed eyes clos-ing eyes she so long all eyes fam-ished eyes

all sides high and low

to and fro as her win-dow to see be seen till in the end close of a long day to her-self whom else time she stopped

let down the blind and stopped time she went down down the steep stair time she went right down was her own oth-er own oth-er liv-ing soul so in the end close of a long day went down down the steep stair
let down the blind and down... down in to the old roc-er... rocked... rocked... say-ing to her-self... no... done with that the rock-er... those arms at last... say-ing to the rock-er... rock her off... stop her eyes... fuck life... stop her eyes... rock her off... rock her off...

Kleinhöhenrain, Herbst 1985