Libretto of The decision a chamber opera for five characters and mime and other works

Ann dePender Zeigler

The University of Montana

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LIBRETTO OF
"THE DECISION"
A CHAMBER OPERA
FOR FIVE CHARACTERS AND MIME
AND OTHER WORKS

By
Ann dePender Zeigler
B.A., Fort Wright College, 1969
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
1975
Approved By:

[Signatures]
Chairman, Board of Examiners
Dean, Graduate School
Date Aug 18, 1975
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"THE DECISION: A CHAMBER OPERA FOR FIVE CHARACTERS AND MIME"... 1

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THE DECISION

CHARACTERS

Aloysius J. Morton, Protector.........................Tenor
Jane..........................................................Mezzo-Soprano
Ron Everett.........................................................Baritone
Linda Everett.......................................................Soprano
Sammy Everett..............................................Boy Soprano
Mime..........................................................Mime

(NOTE: The Three Masked Figures are played by Jane,
Ron and Lin.)
**ORCHESTRA**

Oboe / English Horn

Clarinet in B\textsuperscript{b} / Bass Clarinet in B\textsuperscript{b}

Trumpet in C

Violin

Violoncello

Percussion: Suspended Cymbal

Triangle

Claves

Wood Block

Snare Drum

Three Adjustable Drums

Medium Bass Drum
CHARACTER SKETCHES

The Mime. Either male or female. Represents the audience onstage, merging with Sammy. An observer, interpreter, maker of temporal transitions. Dressed in the same style of jump-suit as Sammy.

Aloysius J. Morton, Protector. Rumpled, bumbling, self-satisfied. Speaks in a stylized pattern based on acronyms, citations and jargon. Vaguely confused by events. Non-empathetic, hiding behind regulations and forms to avoid dealing with human problems. Has the ability to use power but not to understand its use. A functionary with little self-awareness. A weak man forced by circumstances to face the impossible, deadly decision he has thrust onto others for so long.

Jane, the Alter Ego. Brash, humorous, a wench. Young and vibrantly alive. Witty but gently so. Very lyrical and capable of flights of imagistic metaphor. Responsive, delighting in contact with people and sympathetic to their problems. Can only stand just so much self-deception from Aloysius. In the end, she begins to show many of the personality traits earlier seen in Aloysius.

Ronald and Linda Everett, the Parents. Intelligent, articulate, humane. Closely involved in their child's outlook and life-
style. Psychologically well-balanced. Finally broken and with their creative visions destroyed, they are reduced to automa-
tons, mindless and without hope.

_Sammy, the Child._ Passive young victim. Absorbs the jargon of what is happening, with the implications of his own future self-destructive role.
SCENARIO

OPENING

The house lights are still up. The Mime, wearing a childlike costume, enters through the audience from the back of the theater. He stops at the first row and turns to survey the audience, then walks up onto the stage and takes a position facing upstage. Approximately a minute after the Mime is in position onstage, the house lights go down. (During the performance, visuals appear rear-projected on scrim, depicting environmental patterns and abstracts which develop into the parts of a bulldozer.)

PROLOG

The music begins. During the first four bars, lights come up on the Mime and Three Masked Figures in sharply creased yellow costumes. On the fifth bar, the Figures point at the Mime. They order him in mime to walk a narrow line in front of them. The Mime attempts to ignore or evade them. The lights go down. Visuals abstract confusion. Voices over from offstage shout, "There's one! Grab him! In blue! A Protector! Get him! Get the Protector!" At bar seventy, a loud crash as of a door slamming, is heard. A long pause. The music introduces Scene One.
SCENE ONE

Lights come up in the area where the Mime and Aloysius are standing. Aloysius, in crumpled blue, looks confused and dejected. He is on an intermediate level of the stage's various high and low platforms. He peers around, unaware of the Mime's presence. He tries to reassure himself that he hasn't died and gone to heaven. An amused soprano laugh is heard from a darkened part of the stage. Aloysius doesn't hear it. He goes on to scoff at the revolution by the Yellows as an outburst of excess energy, and suggests that it could all be taken care of by a new PuSecSer (Public Security Series) and PuRecSecs (Public Recreation Sections). The soprano voice makes comments, unnoticed by Aloysius. Aloysius seems to be a highly-placed bureaucrat with immense power and not a lot of sensitivity. His ranting about the revolution and its solution is interrupted suddenly when lights come up on Jane, who is lounging on a fairly high level across the stage. She introduces herself and him, and explains that she is his Alter Ego, his Other Self, for his lifetime. He doesn't believe. Jane says that she's waiting for his decision. He is anxious to get back to his office and decisions. Jane tells him that she doesn't mean other people's decisions about resecurity. She means his decision. He now has the same decision to make that he gave others—ressecurity or death.
Aloysius doesn't like to have it phrased quite that way. Jane asks if he has ever seen a resecurity clearance all the way through to the end. He is much too busy for such things. The Mime leads Aloysius into a darkened area as Jane reminds him about Ron and Lin Everett. Lights come up on Ron and Lin sitting on straight chairs facing a lectern. Jane fades out.

**FLASHBACK ONE**

Ron and Lin are racking their brains to find a reason for their summons to the office of a Protector. He is a scholar, and she is a painter. Aloysius enters with a large handful of forms and asks for their papers. He begins to cite regulations about their activities. The subject of the investigation turns out to be the way they are raising their young son, Sammy. Aloysius hands Ron and Lin voluminous forms. He charges them with teaching without a permit, being unregistered humanitarians, painting walls without a permit. He obviously is not listening to them as they try to explain. Ron and Lin become frantic trying to find out what the problem is. He says they must accept resecurity, or the other. Sammy is such a nice child to be orphaned so young. The decision is theirs. Aloysius exits abruptly to an unlit area. Ron and Lin are stunned. Lin is in a rage, Ron bewildered. Jane
and Aloysius re-appear in their former positions as Ron and Lin fade out.

**SCENE TWO**

Jane tells Aloysius time is running out for him. He must face the pain himself. He temporizes, saying that it's nothing personal about those people he dealt with. It's just his job, his life's work—that they must learn to live with the real world or be destroyed. Jane asks him if he ever dreams. He fades away as she begins to muse—a lyric image series. The Mime interprets as she sings, beginning freely but ending as if trapped and crushed. Aloysius comes in with his own wishes, for power and peace and quiet. Jane reminds him that he is running out of time to make his decision, that the revolution is waiting for him to decide. He says decisions are not his problem, he just does his job. Jane tells him he had better develop an interest in decisions. They fade out as Ron and Lin fade back in, in a living room scene.

**FLASHBACK TWO**

Ron and Lin have been going over and over the situation for hours. Sammy has put himself to bed, bored with his bulldozer and with nobody to talk to. Ron and Lin discuss with some heat what they are going to do. They must choose to lose
Sanmcr and their jobs and wait to be obliterated, or accept the mental obliteration of resecurity followed by re-education and a supervised life. They go over and over what they can do about the situation, finally realizing that they are caught. They feel trampled, humiliated and dehumanized. They feel as though years have passed since they got the summons. They begin to rationalize the various alternative futures. The Mime joins them as they fade out. Aloysius and Jane fade in again.

SCENE THREE

Jane asks Aloysius again to make his decision. He downgrades her sense of urgency, insisting again that he is a man of great importance, a highly valued man who has to consider these things very carefully. Jane points out that highly valued men can lose their value. She begins to use the phrases that Aloysius used in his interview with Ron and Lin. He insists that it is all a mistake, that she doesn't understand, that he must have time to think. Jane interrupts him abruptly, pointing out that the parents are waiting. Full lights come up, showing the parents still standing in their living room, with Sammy standing where the Mime had been standing with Ron and Lin.
FLASHBACK THREE

Sammy plays unconcernedly with the controls of a large toy bulldozer as Jane and Aloysius enter the living room area. The parents look silently at Aloysius, and he at them for a long moment. Aloysius tells them he has come for their decision. They sing in duet that they have signed the papers, their names and numbers, numbers and papers. They hand him the forms. He looks nervously through the papers and gives them back. He tells them that they must tell Sammy. Tenderly and quietly they say good-bye to Sammy. He continues to play with the bulldozer, oblivious. The parents slip away as Jane and Aloysius begin to argue about Aloysius's decision, standing one on each side of Sammy. Jane tells Aloysius that he has wasted his time and hers, that he is too stupid to save himself. He pleads with her to help him. He is becoming very agitated. She stamps out in a rage. There is a moment of silence as he stares after her. The lights begin to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy. Aloysius cries out to Jane to come back and help him, that she is his Alter Ego, his Self. No answer. He tries to get a grip on his fear, to tell himself that things will be all right. Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words "names, numbers, papers" as he plays. Aloysius begins to panic, trying to figure out how to make an impossible decision. The Three
Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to follow them away. Numbly he goes, realizing his time is up. The music comes up and drown Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer, and snaps into a blackout.
THE DECISION

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A Chamber Opera
For Five Characters and Mime

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Libretto By A.D. Zeigler
The house lights are still up. The Mime, wearing a childlike costume, enters through the audience from the back of the theater. He stops at the first row and turns to survey the audience, then walks up onto the stage and takes a position facing upstage. Approximately a minute after the Mime is in position onstage, the house lights go down. (During the performance, visuals appear rear-projected on scrim, depicting environmental patterns and abstracts which develop into the parts of a bulldozer.)
P R O L O G

The music begins. During the first four bars, lights come up on the Mime and Three Masked Figures in sharply creased yellow costumes. On the fifth bar, the Figures point at the Mime. They order him in mime to walk a narrow line in front of them. The Mime attempts to ignore or evade them. The lights go down. Visuals abstract confusion. Voices shout, "There's one! Grab him! In blue! A Protector! Get him! Get the Protector!" At bar seventy, a loud crash, as of a door slamming, is heard. A long pause. The music introduces Scene One.
SCENE ONE
Lights come up in the area where the Mime and Aloysius are standing. Aloysius, in crumpled blue, looks confused and dejected. He is on an intermediate stage level. He peers around.

ALOYSIUS
Here I am....
Where am I...?

At least
I'm still alive,
I think.

Or maybe they
killed me when I
wasn't looking....
Maybe I've died.
And gone to...
heaven????
ALOYSIUS

Is THIS heaven????

They can't kill me,
ME!

Aloysius J. Morton,
Protector.

It's not permitted.*

I'm a man of great impor-
tance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.

I can't be dead.

JANE

(A highly melodic laugh, offstage.)

* - lines which are rhythmically spoken
** - lines which are simply spoken
ALOYSIUS

I'm sure I would have noticed.

What a dumb revolution.
They're not following the guidelines.

This is the sloppiest revolution ever.
All those Yellows running around.

(Offstage) Yellow is an interesting color.
Reminds one of sunshine...

Just outrageous.

I can't believe it.
ALOYSIUS

Like children
out to have some fun.

Fun???

Fun!!!
That's it!
We can solve this
problem right now!
Some new PuRecSecs.

(Offstage) PuRecSecs??**

Public Recreation Sections.**

Six nights a week.

Ninety five minutes.
ALOYSIUS

Basketball...
volleyball,
football,
(begins to sing faster)
baseball,
handball!
Tetherball!!
Foosball!!

We'll have a new
PuSecSeer....

(Offstage) PuSecSeer?**
(pronounce: poo-sek-seer)

Public Security Series**
To remind everyone
to just love it!

JANE
(Offstage) Did you ever hear the one about the traveling revolutionary and the football coach?
Lots of nice correct fun. Just think what it will do to the family... The neighborhood. The school!
The... The problems you have aren't bad enough already???

Lights abruptly come up full on Jane, who is lounging on a fairly high level across the stage. She grins goodnaturedly and climbs down. Aloysius sees her, gawks in amazement. She pirouettes obligingly. He stares speechless for a moment.)

....
Who...
are you?
ALOYSIUS

I'm a man of great importance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.

No time to waste on....

JANE

Jane.

Who

are

you?

You
ALOYSIUS

JANE

Yes. ? **

I'm really not a religious person. Churches and altars and those things just aren't in my de-

Wrong kind of altar. Not church altar. Alter Ego.
ALOYSIUS

JANE

It means Other Self.

So I know all about you,
and I'm everything you're not.

You are??

I'm the reverse of you.
You're a he—I'm a she.
You're a powerful official.
I'm just here.
I'm young—you're....

And I can whistle,
ride a bike,
and stand on my head.

Opposite.
ALOYSIUS

Are you sure of that??**

JANE

Alter Ego.

For your lifetime.**

It doesn't seem very likely to me.

In fact I can't recall a single regulation about Alter Egos. I'm sure you would fall in Section Four Three Eight, Subsection A-Five, defining PerOcs.
Permitted Occupations.*

That's the one part**
I haven't got the**
hang of yet.**

What's that??**

The acronyms.**

The what??***

Acronyms.**

Abbreviation words.**

Oh.**

What are you doing here?

The same thing you are.

You are??

Yes. Waiting for
your decision.
ALOYSIUS

My decision.

WHAT decision???

I am a man of great importance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.
I've changed*
hundreds of lives.*

That's what your
decision's about.

WHAT??*

Your decision,
your decision,
is the same one
ALOYSIUS

JANE

you have given
all those other people.

About accepting

resecurity.

Nonsense. I know
all about resecurity.

I'm a

Protector of the State.

As a matter of fact,
a PROTECTOR, class nine.

Class nine.

Personality

Re-adjustment

Officer

To

Enhance
Clearance for
Terminal
Official
Resecurity,

class
nine.
That's very high,**
you know.**

A person could get high**
just repeating**
a title like that.**

Pardon?**

Nothing, nothing.**

Anyway, these Yellows
just don't understand.
They don't appreciate
ALOYSIUS

the great skill

of a person like myself.

JANE

A person who

understands decisions.

Yes, yes.*

Exactly.*

Like the decision

you must make

now.

What's this decision

business?

You haven't even
told me which

regulation is

involved.

I must have order here.*

It's very simple.*
ALOYSIUS

JANE

No regulation applies.
The regulations are gone.
The revolution has
replaced them with

nothing.

You have been given
the same choice,
the same choice
you gave others—
accept resecurity
or be destroyed.
ALOYSIUS

That's not a very nice way to put it.

Resecurity is a very fine thing,
a necessary tool
for progress and order.
I've cleared a lot of people.

JANE

Have you ever seen one through,
to the end?

Certainly not.
I have a great many other things
to do, decisions to make.
(He fades out, led away by the Mime.)

(Sprechstimme)

Yes. Decisions to make like the one you offered to Ron and Lin Everett. You remember them. What do you think is going to happen?

And their little boy, Sammy. They came in on a Regulation Nine Seven Three.

No explanation. Just a summons.

(The Parents, Ron and Lin, are sitting on straight chairs, facing a lectern.)

I just can't think of anything we've done. Regulation Nine Seven Three means nothing to me. And all that jargon on the door.
JANE

Names and papers.
Fill in the blanks and sign.
Names and papers.

(She fades out.)

LIN

But this is a Protector's office, isn't it?

RON

They checked so thoroughly our names and papers.

There must be some mistake.
Don't you think?
They don't really care about painters and scholars, except to approve whatever we do.
LIN

It must be something
I did in a paper—
forgot a memo,
missed someone's title.
They never say anything
about paintings.
You haven't used
a wrong color
somehow?
Peach? Umber? Yellow?

No, no. I've
always been so careful.
About the width of lines,
and angles, too.

At your neighborhood
LIN
meeting?**

RON
Nothing.*
My name, my number.
Number and name.
Signed my work paper.
No, nothing.*

Mine was the same.*
My name, my number.
Numbers and papers
Papers and names.
Nothing.*

ALOYSIUS
(This entire speech is rhythmically

(Aloysius enters with a handful of papers.)
spoken.)

Names, numbers, papers, names. I'm a highly valued man, a very busy man. No time to waste on mixups and mistakes. You must have a name, you must have a number. Where are your papers? Summons! Ronald Everett. Linda Everett. Regulation Nine Seven Three. A serious charge. (Ron and Lin hand over their papers, which Aloysius examines and returns.)

We don't understand. We don't understand.
Aloysius

What is your answer?

How do you plead?

You must know the

laws.

The laws are

serious.

A serious charge.

The subject is Samuel,

same address,

same last name,

a child.

Lin

What does it mean?

Ron

It must be a mistake.

A mixup of papers.

Sammy!

You can't mean....

But he's just a child.

Our Sammy?

He's only a child.

We must remain calm.

Yes, yes.

It's a mistake.

Surely
ALOYSIUS

No comments allowed.
You must make a decision.
The law is clear.
The regulation is here.
You must fill in these forms.

Names and numbers.
The child is in question.
You must give a full account.
You must answer a serious question.
A serious charge.
Licensed teachers only are permitted to teach children.

LIN

we can....

RON

Easy, easy.

(Aloysius hands the Parents voluminous forms.)

We've always tried to give him things to make him want to know.
We've played with him. and walked with him.

And read to him.

Tried to teach him to understand this world.

We're just
ALOYSIUS

Regulation Four One Six.
The law is clear.
You must
know the law.
You must be registered.
Where are your papers?
Numbers and names.
Humanitarians must be registered.
Three Nine Seven.
The law is clear.
A regulation covers it.
Eight Four One
Painting walls is
not permitted.

LIN

...We're not
humanitarians.

...You see,
I'm a painter.
I don't paint walls.
I paint pictures.
I'm an artist,
with colors and brushes
on canvas.

RON

parents,
not teachers. Can't
you understand?

My field
is the
humanities....

We only care
about our child.
ALOYSIUS
You must answer the accusation.

You received the Summons.
How do you plead?
The choice is yours.

The law is clear.
Accept resecurity or the other.

A social readjustment in careful lessons, well reinforced, a positive approach.
You know the other.

LIN

The summons says nothing.
What is the choice?

RON
This is all a mistake.**

What accusation?
We don't understand.
ALOYSIUS

We wouldn't care to
have to use it.

Such a lovely child**
to be an orphan**
at so young an age.**
We'll send him home**
while you decide.**
The child is yours.*
The choice is yours.*
Sign the papers.*
Names and numbers.*
Numbers and papers.*
The choice is yours.*
The time is short.*
(He exits to a darkened
part of the stage.)

LIN

Where is our child?

RON

Where is our child?

He can't
SCENE TWO

(Aloysius and Jane reappear in their former positions.)

(sprechstimme)
You remember.
It's all a question of great decisions,
highly valued things.

ALOYSIUS

JANE

LIN

RON

hold my child
like bait!
A legal ransom!
Pan's one death or another!

My time is highly valued.
People don't appreciate all the training,
all that time.

(sings)
But time is running out,
ALOYSIUS

JANE
down, away.

You must
step into their shoes,
face their pain.

Pain is not my job.
You still don't understand.
Resecurity is
my business.
My life's work.

Nothing personal, of course,
about the people.
They value themselves
too much.

They should have realized
they couldn't live like that
and have it last.

They must face
the real world,
and learn to live
in it or die.

It's nothing personal.
It's just my job.
I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Dream? I sleep*
quite soundly,*

thank you.*

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
Well, of course,

one would always like...

a season ticket to the football games,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.
And perhaps from time to time a new decree to make life a little more interesting.

Perhaps just one new decree, a rule to be the end of rules if you're going to breathe,
ALOYSIUS

(He fades out)

JANE
don't make a habit of it.**

Oh, Aloysius,**

smile a bit.**

Let's pretend you have a heart.

We're all dreamers

in this place anyway.

For a moment

close your mind,

the closet full of numbers,

musty laws and tests,

things that never dream,

that never breathe or run.

Imagine romping horses

or old barns
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snow,
birch trees reaching quietly
along the river.
Rabbits here think
modest thoughts of lunch,
a crow drowses in a bush.
Here's the place
for real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people.
People's dreams are more
to them than jelly in a jar,
more consequential than
these traps of words.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
ALOTSIUS

JANE

I offer no child of yours
to bait decisive hooks,
just time,
beyond the catch of pow'r.
Your cant and ranting
just fade to numbers,
not faces.
No numbers needed.
The decision is yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.
Your time is near.

A little more time
to make all my
important decisions.

Fewer people
ALOYSIUS

whining at my desk.

Just have the papers.

Just have the laws.

A quiet sunny desk,
with no people's gripes.

Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.

Their dreams are hopeless.

Why should they bother me?

Just give me peace!

JANE

I haven't come here**
to cheer the revolution,**
just to tell the time.**
The time to think,**
ALOYSIUS

It'll all be over
in a day or two,
Then back to work.
We'll be so far behind.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.

JANE

the time to decide.##

But numbers and papers
can't be killed,
can't be made secure.
What will you say
when you enter your office
and meet a highly valued
man in yellow
sitting at your desk?

It couldn't come to that.

A man who remembers
the cries of pain,
the final silence
of those who must decide.

We never torture
anyone at all.
It's their choice.
Just my job.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
That's my only interest—*
Not decisions.*

You'll have to
get interested
in decisions.
Just as Ron
and Lin were
interested in

(Lights come up on a living room scene with Ron
and Lin. Aloysius and Jane begin to fade out.)
We should probably
eat something.
ALOYSIUS: their decision.

JANE: Very interested.

What decision?
Just take the paper,
sign their names.

Thinking
wastes time.

And you haven't got much
time. Less time than
Ron and Lin.

(Aloysius and Jane fade out entirely)

LIN: It's getting late.

RON: We've gone
over and over
this for hours.
I still don't
understand.
It can't be true.
They must mean
something else.

Where's Sammy? He was
in the other room
a while ago.

He went to bed.

Tired of playing
with his bulldozer,
LIN
and no one to
talk to.

RON
What do you think
they'll do with him?
He's just a boy.

(agitated and sarcastic)
Just a name.
Just a number.
At least he won't
have to decide.

Let's not start that
again. The Protector
will be here soon.
We have to decide.
We have no choice.
We have no time.
LIN

Decide!

What kind of decision
is it? Have our child,
our home,
our jobs taken.
Sit and wait
until they get
to our numbers.

RON

Or accept resecurity.
Have our minds wiped out.
New thoughts, new hopes,
new loyalties.
A supervised life.
Which will it be, my dear?
Which will it be?
A living death with Sammy
still alive somewhere,
Lin

Maybe it's not really*
a serious thing we did.*

Ron

or final death
and who knows what
for him.

The summons says*
he's a Protector.*

Maybe we'll just have*
to go to retraining*
every week.*

Retraining is police*
and caseworkers.*

It must be real.*

It feels like a dream.

It seems like years
a nightmare, running,
since we got the summons. running, voices laughing,
ALOYSIUS

JANE

LIN

RON

Just a few hours ago.
Just a few moments left.
What a wreck
our life's become
a shadow match with...
with nothing.
yelling,
"Decide! Decide!"
Safety gets
further away
the faster we run.
What to do—die or die.
Become a mindless number
or be removed.
If we sign the paper
we'll have each other.
If we don't, blackness
and maybe peace.
We must decide....
The time....

SCENE THREE

(Aloysius and Jane reappear.)

Names and numbers,**
numbers and papers.**

It still comes down**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALOYSIUS</th>
<th>JANE</th>
<th>LIN</th>
<th>RON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to time.**</td>
<td>Time to think.**</td>
<td>Time to decide.**</td>
<td>The time....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must decide.</td>
<td>They can't make your choice.</td>
<td>I can't make it for you.</td>
<td>The choice is yours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is short.</td>
<td>You must decide.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You're making this up.
It's not this bad.
They just don't realize.

Anyway,
it's not so simple.

I have so many things
to consider.
I'm a highly valued man.

But highly valued men
get tossed aside, you know.

The choice is yours.

We can't take this
lightly.
It's true there's the
matter of results.
Accepting resecurity
has certain results.
Highly valued results.

A serious charge.

How do you plead?
ALOYSIUS
The reduction
is total.
A final agreement,
no matter with what
(slowly)
I'm a man
of great
im-por-tance,
a highly
valued....

JANE
Your time is coming.
The time is soon.
What are your values?
The matter is time.
(rapidly)
The matter is choice.
The choice must be made.
What do you value?
The decision is yours.
The time...the time!

How can they do this??
It's all a mistake.**

I don't believe it.**

I'll have to think**
ALOYSIUS
about it. I must**: 
think about it....**

JANE

LIN
RON

FLASHBACK THREE

(Full lights come up. Ron and Lin are in the same positions as at the end of Flashback Two. Sammy stands with them, where the Mime had stood, playing with the controls of a large toy bulldozer. Ron and Lin look subdued and exhausted. A long moment of silence while they just look at Aloysius. He and Jane enter the living room area.)

The time is coming.
The forms are waiting.
The choice is yours.

....
....
....
Hello.

I must tell you.
Your time is up.
I have to ask you...
ALOYSIUS

your choice.

JANE

LIN

RON

We signed
the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

Names and numbers,
Numbers and papers.
Your names and numbers.
It's so much better.
We know you'll...
think it better.

(The Parents hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously at the forms and the parents, and hands the forms back.)
ALOYSIUS
You understand.
The choice
is better....

JANE
The little boy.
You'll have to
tell him.

SAMMY
you know
we love you.
you know we care.
But we must leave you.
We won't be back.
We won't see you
any more.

...SAMMY...SAMMY...
you know
we love you.
you know we care.
But we must leave you.
We won't be back.
We won't see you
any more.
ALOYSIUS

You will be with others.
You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to learn again.
Sammy...Sammy...
you know we love you.
Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
But now our time is up.
The choice is made.

JANE

You will be with others.
You must forget our ways, and learn again.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we love you.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
But now our time is up.
The choice is made.

LIN

RON

You will be with others.
You must forget our ways, and learn again.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we love you.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
But now our time is up.
The choice is made.
(Sammy simply plays with his toy bulldozer, oblivious. The Parents slip away quietly as Aloysius and Jane, one on either side of Sammy, begin to argue.)

Why do they look so,
so dead. Their eyes.
Like zombies.
I don't understand.
ALOYSIUS

Why do they
make me
feel this way?

JANE

That's what they all look like
when they've decided.
All of them.
What did you expect?

The boy.

Why does he just
play like that?
He should
say something.

What should he say?

I don't know....
It's not my job
ALOYSIUS
to know these things....
I have other skills.
I....

JANE
I think you talk too much.
Great decisions are made
in silence.

How do you plead?
Answer the
questions,
fill in the forms.
We must have order here.
You must make
your decision.
The choice is yours.
Do you have the courage?
Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.**
ALOYSIUS

You know I'm frightened.
I can't decide.
They'll come and get me.
It's like the darkness,
the cold winter nights,
with no one there.
What will I do?
Help me decide!

JANE

The choice is yours.
The time is up.
You've been too stupid.
You've been too slow.
Now I can't help you.
My time's been wasted.
I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.
ALOYSIUS: My time is up.

(She exits angrily. Aloysius looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.)

No,

no.

Wait.

Please.

Don't leave me now.

You don't understand.

I need you.
ALOYSIUS

You're my Alter Ego.
My self.

You HAVE to help me.

I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill me.

I'm of some value.

I must decide.

The time is coming.

(Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases, "names, numbers, papers," as he plays, oblivious, with the toy bulldozer.)
ALOYSIUS

I must make
my decision.
The time...the time.

Resecurity or death.
Help me, someone.
I must decide,
decide....

They're here.
The time is here.
The numbers, the papers.
The forms are waiting.
All those papers.
The time....

....
(Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the Three Masked Figures in yellow appear and beckon Aloysius to come away with them. Numbly Aloysius follows them off. The light shrinks to a spot on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer, and snaps into a blackout.)

N.B. The fully scored opera is available for inspection in the School of Music.
BUT WHERE ARE THE ELEPHANTS?

---Some Slightly Jaundiced Comments On Libretto Writing---

When I first began discussing the possibility of doing an opera with Composer Sherman Himelblau, it all seemed so simple. I would just whip off the scenario and libretto. He would just whip off the score. And presto! However, as George Gershwin has it, "It ain't necessarily so." The actual time from the start of serious discussions to the final fully-scored product was one year and seven months. It was not exactly the all-time land speed record, but on the other hand, we all lived to tell about it.

Much has been made by critics and music historians of the supposed bad feeling engendered between a composer and librettist by the writing of an opera. I can't imagine where they could get that opinion—unless it's from incidents such as the occasion in the Missoula House of Pancakes when I attempted to nail Sherman with a plate of strawberry crepes over some lead lines for a characterization. But what's a little fit of temperament between friends? If we weren't both under five feet tall, things might have been considerably worse during all three stages of the work.

During the scenario phase, the problems were ones of technical knowledge—Sherman's lack of expertise in language struc-
tures and poetry, and mine in contemporary musical composition. We've both had some experience in theater technique, so we proceeded merrily from there on the assumption that between the two of us, everything was well in hand. Put in a small chuckle in E above high C.

My first move was to immerse myself (me, the Bach freak) in twentieth-century music—Villa-Lobos, Stravinsky, Carter, Britten, Himelblau,—to get a grasp of the general types of phrasing I would be working with, and the kinds of instrumental qualities that would surround the singing characters. I concentrated on instruments with solo qualities which step from note to note as the singing voice steps from syllable to syllable. My education in contemporary libretto had also been sorely neglected until then, and if I never hear Menotti's "The Consul" again....

My background in film and contemporary drama and dance was not exactly suited to the $3 million, cast-of-thousands approach. So our first decision was to restrict ourselves to chamber-size opera. We stayed basically with Sherman's suggestion of four characters (Aloysius, the protagonist; Jane, his alter ego, the antagonist; and Ron and Lin, the parents and victims). We added young Sammy in person only for the final scene, and a Dancer/Mime to make some transitions.

The development of the basic plot was a schizophrenia-inducing experience. Writing an opera about power and the loss
thereof was thoroughly hair-raising when all the full glories of Watergate burst forth (or asunder) in the final revision period. Fortunately I was concerned with the psychology, not the politics, of decision-making, and on death and not votes as a psychological inhibitor. So we persevered.

Once we had the basic plot sketch of a science fiction society in the throes of a revolution, my main problems began. There were questions of scene progressions, tempo, characterization, and the constant need to balance the changing characters of Aloysius and Jane, the Alter Ego. (To say nothing of having to decide on names and titles—Aloysius was at various points The Educator, The Enlightener, and, finally, The Protector.) I also had to come up with some technical suggestions to make the opera performable, and if possible, relatively portable. What to do about the scenery situation? We decided that a judicious use of rear projection would eliminate the need for conventional sets, plus giving the singers room to move more easily around the stage. Since our original concept included the use of various "levels", concerns arose regarding singers moving, or even tarzanning, from one level to another. So we designated various areas with lighting, between which the action would move. This use of high and low levels would give visual emphasis to the reduction of Aloysius's self-image, without the need for large staging areas and scene breaks.
Finally the working scenario was essentially finished. I had some idea of Sherman's basic expectations in terms of language structures, and we had our first deadline—finish the scoring draft of the libretto before Sherman left for the Aspen Music Festival at the end of May.

So, in early spring, the first trial balloons for the opening scenes went up. And promptly got shot down by Sherman. Back to the drawing board. And back. And back.

By mid-April I had finished the first drafts of all six scenes of the libretto—the first full working draft of the real thing. Only four months' work.

Whereupon we entered the second phase. The painful part. For two months we worked the libretto over, making cuts. From an original first draft of eighty pages, we were down to fifty pages when Sherman and I parted in Aspen. Scene Three and Flashback Three were barely present. The Parents, Ron and Lin, were mere shadows of their former verbose selves, and I had made an enemy of the painter on whom Lin, the Mother, was originally based. All I heard in the ensuing four months was that Scene Two was no-go and that Sherman was getting married. That was nice, but hmmm....

Finally the problem of Scene Two was resolved by a complete rewrite of that part of the opera. By the middle of Scene Two
Aloysius had been onstage and singing continuously for twenty minutes. Something had to give, and it would most likely be Aloysius. So the wishing duet between Aloysius and Jane became a dreaming sequence by Jane, with interpretation by the Mime, to give Aloysius a chance to get off stage, have a sip of water and sit down for a few seconds. My first rewrite of the scene turned out in scoring to provide not much more than a few seconds. Back to the drawing board. Jane was left just sort of standing there singing to herself. Not terrifically dramatic, but it had possibilities. Hmmm.... Add on a little routine about the less appetizing aspects of brainwashing?

No, that would foul up the tempo of Flashback Two. Rant and rave about power in the hands of idiots. Too much like the daily news, and wouldn't go well with Scene Three. Hmmm.... I did a lot of hmmm....ing during this period, and finally decided to take the central imagery from a poem in my portfolio which wasn't doing too well on its own. With a little genteel re-arranging of the imagery at the end of Flashback Three, I had a sequence between Jane and the Mime which prefigured Aloysius ending lines, and gave Aloysius a full five seconds of sit-down time. (See Appendix "A".)

Which brought us to the third phase, final scoring of the libretto (not that Sherman hadn't been working on parts of it all along). During this part I mostly cried and pleaded in
vain. Some of my best lines were wiped out by an oboe and a snare drum. There was no way the final libretto could be confused with a play. The music took over for what had been entire pages of mood material and character interplay. Lighting and entrance/exit cues chopped out more. Two of my best jokes in Scene One were gone. Everything fell victim to the critical concern for keeping the performance time down to forty-five minutes. My original rotund babe was trimmed to well under dramatic fighting weight. Then, to make life interesting, someone wanted Jane brought back on at the end of the opera, after Aloysius's final exit. Impossible, I told them. Impossible, I told Sherman. Impossible, he stormed. Impossible, they wailed. Some people can't take a hint.

This is, of course, the phase during which we handed over the various scores to music copyists and typists. The music copyist turned out to never have done music copying before, and evidently never to have seen music before. This is not to be recommended. About every six pages in the performers' rehearsal scores something was left out, repeated, put in the wrong key or tempo, given to the wrong singer, etc., etc., ad nauseum. The vocal typist turned out to be me. (The regular typist had gone on vacation.) And of course the singers, directors, musicians, designers, technicians and cheering section all wanted their rehearsal scores immediately if not sooner.
And, just to keep its hand in, the scheduling office for the theater changed the dates—three times!—and the theater in which the performance would take place. Conflicts of scheduling, you know.

Since I was supposed to run interference with the people who were doing the rear-projected slide scenery, I didn't exactly endear the notion of opera to various photographers and darkroom technicians. And when I had to give them the word that due to the rehearsal schedule the whole thing was probably going to be done strictly with lighting.... Well, Fred may never speak to me again.

But as with any other circus, the show must go on, opening night coronaries no object.

So when Sherman asked me the other day if I wanted to write another opera this year, I did the only graceful thing I could think of—laughed right in his face.

And asked when the deadline was.

Viewing the process retrospectively, I suggest that my main concerns as a librettist, despite various incidental traumas, were the ones I consistently encounter as a poet—compression and accessibility.

Contemporary poetry makes various demands on language.
Compression rather than expansion of imagery is demanded. Contemporary music for opera use also makes demands for the excision of unnecessary words and phrases, for a more controlled non-metric syntax, coupled with a concentration on specific linguistic structures to create and reinforce imagery by use of sound patterns which the poet manipulates. The few carefully-chosen words must carry their own weight, not demanding excess baggage of verbal decoration. Combining the compression of language with the compressed nature of contemporary music, the librettist in a more demanding way than the poet must consider the accessibility of the material.

The playwright has the simplified task of presenting his work in spoken prose with action—the common currency of his audience. Various verbal liberties can be taken if the dramatist pleases, because the performed work can be slowed or various phrases interpreted with visual business or expressions of voice. The librettist's material will be controlled very strictly by the music, both vocal and instrumental. A singer cannot slow a song independently of the orchestra and other singers, for the sake of clarity. Further, since singers often do not have the acting training and experience of their prose-speaking colleagues, staging must be considered in new ways. Unrealistic demands on the singers can destroy a production. An actor may deliver lines standing on his head at the top of a ladder. A
soprano may well come after the librettist with a fire axe for the same piece of staging.

The matter of concentration is also of some concern to the librettist, in terms of the singers as well as of the audience. The repetition which makes the plot and characterization more accessible to the audience makes the work more difficult for the singer to learn. A highly complex piece of contemporary music makes great demands on the singer, and the dramatic demands of the libretto add to the need for clarity in order to aid the singer's concentration. Further, the general lack of exposure of musical audiences to the cutting edge of contemporary music makes a forty-five minute opera a significant demand on the audience's concentration. To the "what is going on" of the words and actions is added the "what is going on" of sophisticated orchestral and vocal music. Everything must be blended into a musical whole which is technically performable and capable of conveying the intentions of the composer and librettist as well as the interpretations of the performing personnel.

What does all this mean to the librettist? First and foremost it means an unrelenting demand for clarity, both of words and of narrative and psychological structures. It must involve simple diction, reduced vocabulary, careful manipulation of verbal temp and stage action, repetition, and a clear, straight-
forward narrative line in the plot. The librettist and composer must make their intentions clear to the musical personnel and the audience.

The poem must answer in spoken words and the pauses between them for whatever drama, lyricism, evocative impression, or rhythmic subtlety it is striving for. No one with a violin can bail out the poem. The libretto, on the other hand, must express itself plainly and evocatively as part of something more. A libretto is made of words which were written to be heard as they are sung, not to be read separately. What can be done more effectively with music should be taken out of the written libretto. It is obviously wasteful to demand mood-setting language to do double duty with mood-setting music, visuals, actions and lighting. These other elements are all more direct communicators of mood than words are. So they should be called upon by the librettist and composer to carry a share of the dramatic work.

Yet the librettist depends utterly on the composer to make his linguistic ambitions work. The composer must see clearly from the early drafts of the libretto what it is the librettist is driving at, and what can be done more forcefully and clearly in music and what more clearly in words and actions. For example, in the initial drafts of "The Decision" I had to write out in monolog and dialog a tremendous amount of the emotional "mood" of the last scene between Aloysius and Jane, so that Sherman
could see what kind of scene I was after. Eight pages of speech in the early drafts ended in three pages of the final libretto copied from the score of the opera. (See appendix "B".)

The poet's concerns are for imagery, timing and phrasing. These are also the concerns of the composer. The two artists cannot independently produce finished libretto and finished score. Each is dependent on the knowledge of the other's talents and inclinations. Each works under a double set of expectations—one's own and the other person's. The poet cannot expect to do everything in words, and the musician cannot expect to cover everything musically. In the early drafts of "The Decision", the parents' farewell to Sammy consisted of a few lines from each parent before the quiet slipping away. So Sherman took the lines and made them into something more dramatically interesting—a duet. This also made the ensuing dialog between Jane and Aloysius more powerful, emphasizing the distance between the couples. This musical treatment of the farewell made my point clear by changing its structure to a more musically structured form. (See Appendix "C".)

In the original scenario, or in the initial adaptation of a work in another genre, the librettist must experiment with saying things which will later be "said" in other ways. These early drafts are in the nature of an exploration of the basic materials of the opera and are open to a considerable freedom
of language and dramatic structure. Of course the librettist who is adapting a work from another genre has certain limitations on his basic narrative structure. Since "The Decision" was original as a scenario, and not adapted, I didn't have to deal with whatever technical problems are entailed by adaptation. "The Sentry", the opera on which I am currently working in the scenario stage, is an adaptation. However, it is adapted from a short story by me, so of course I have no compunctions about changing anything. A much handier situation than that faced by most librettists. I can survive with my ego very much intact after severe cutting of the piece since I don't have to defend my interpretation of someone else's work. The opera must in the end be a unified and independent work of itself, not a piece of accompanied drama.

The poet is limited to communicating solely with the spoken word, heightening or depressing the mood or action by basically verbal means. The playwright adds physical action to his means of communicating. The librettist and composer add instrumental music, pure singing, chanting, sprechstimme, rhythmic speech and humming to say additionally some of what the early drafts had to say verbally.

Naturally, the librettist does not do all of this independently, nor does the composer. Each must assist the other at each step of the process. The librettist must be able to
defend his work and at the same time assist the composer in making some smooth transitions from verbal to non-verbal expressions. The composer may not have the verbal skills to smooth over or patch up a severely amputated scene, and must depend on the librettist to understand his musical intentions. The librettist who cannot read music (heaven forbid) would have to depend on the composer's compassion and gracious consideration (the composer's what???) during the various revisions, putting the burden on the composer to say exactly what he wants in the verbal element of the opera. The basic idea each of the artists has of the opera must be combined in some sort of graceful way. Cooperation certainly, but not of the master-and-slave variety. The composer may have the upper hand in controlling the final product, but he also must bow to skills in others. And the greater number of skills each artist has to bring to the relationship, the greater freedom the opera has to grow into a well-made independent creation.

As a case in point, the knowledge and experience of each artist in the technology of theater production can add ideas and insights into the basic thrust of the work and provide means of expressing the work in the most felicitous ways. The librettist has a freer hand with visual drama by the use of modern theater technology. The need for prolonged inter-
cludes for scene changes has been removed by the electronic fade-over of rear-projected scenery. If a break is wanted, it can be provided, but it needn't be dictated by the set. Action and visual elements of the production are necessary informational factors in sung drama, as Joseph Kerman¹ and Ronald E. Mitchell² point out, in terms of both the well-made composition and the well-made production. These can be enhanced by the judicious use of technological expertise by both the librettist and the composer.

Somehow the librettist must acknowledge all of these diverse and competing elements, and though embroiled in debate over the sibilance of "must" and the awkward "a" sound in "have to", he has to consider the overall consequences of a thousand points of poetic technique, musical composition technique, dramatic technique, lighting and staging technique, as well as the calls from photographers and copyists, and the rising price of antacids.

². *Opera—Dead Or Alive*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1970.
What else could
they expect.

They have to face
the real world
and learn to live
in it or die.

It's nothing personal.
It's just my job.

I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Do you ever dream?

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
Well, of course

one would always like...

perhaps a season ticket

a little larger house,

to the football games

some year,

a nicer desk,

a little more importance.

And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little

more interesting.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules:

if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

Oh, Aloysius,

Perhaps a season ticket

smile a bit.

The Dancer's dream song begins.
Let's just pretend

you have a heart.

We're all just dreamers

in this place anyway.

For a moment,

close your mind,

the closet full of numbers,

musty laws and tests

that never dream,

that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses,

or old barns

laid soft to rest

by time and weight of snows.

Does all this cant

and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable

A little more time by real people?
to make all my People's dreams
important decisions, are not just
fewer people jelly in a jar.
whining on my desk. You make a child
Oh, just to be rid a baited barb to kill the heart.
of people's gripes. Are you that little boy again,
Just have the papers a showing how much tougher
and the laws. you can be
A quiet sunny desk, than a starving puppy
a library, on a string.
an assistant. I have no child
No names, just numbers. to bait this hook,
Numbers and papers. just the dash of time
Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.
Their dreams are hopeless.
Why should they bother me.
Just give me peace!

This revolution stuff's
all nonsense anyway,
a lot of energy
and noise for nothing.

beyond the catch of power.
No numbers needed.
The decision's yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.
Your time is coming.

I haven't come here
to cheer the revolution,
just to tell the time.
The time to think,
the moment to decide.

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in as if from all sides, collapsing into a blackout. A moment of silence.

The time to think,
the moment to decide.
ALOYSIUS

I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

Well, of course
one would always like...
perhaps a season ticket
to the football games
some year,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance,
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

JANE

Aloysius?

Do you ever dream?

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
and plans.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules;
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

The Doctor's Dream Song begins.

Oh, Aloysius,

smile a bit.
Aloysius

Jane

Let's just pretend
you have a heart.
We're all just dreamers
in this place anyway.
For a moment,
close your mind,
the closet full of numbers,
musty laws and tests
that never dream,
that never breathe or run.
Imagine grassy-roaming horses,
or old barns
laid so it to rest
by time and weight of snows.
Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people?
People's dreams
are not just
jelly in a jar.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
Are you that little boy again,
showing how much tougher
you can be
than a starving puppy
on a string.
I offer no child
to bait this hook,
just the dash of time
beyond the catch of power.
No numbers needed.

The decision's yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.
Your time is coming.

A little more time,
to make all my
important decisions.

Fewer people
whining on my desk.
Oh, just to be rid
of people's gripes.
Just have the papers
and the laws.

A quiet sunny desk,
a library,
an assistant.
No names, just numbers.
Numbers and papers.
Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.
Their dreams are hopeless.
Why should they bother me?
Just give me peace!

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in
as if from all sides, collapsing into a
blackout. A moment of silence.

I haven't come here
(etc.)
scene two, rewrite, p. A

ALOYSIUS
I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

JANE
Aloysius?

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

Do you ever dream?

Well, of course
one would always like...
perhaps a season ticket
to the football games
some year,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
and plans.

Perhaps just one new rule;
a rule to be the end of rules;
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

The Dancer's Dream Song begins.

Oh, Aloysius,
smile a bit.
ALOYSIUS

JANE

Let's just pretend
you have a heart.
We're all just dreamers
in this place anyway.
For a moment,
close your mind,
the closet full of numbers,
musty laws and tests,
things that never dream,
that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses,
or old barns
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snows.
Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people?
People's dreams
are not just
jelly in a jar.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
Are you that little boy again,
showing how much tougher
Imagine roving horses
or old barns*
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snow,
birch trees reaching quietly
along the river.
Rabbits here think
modest thoughts of lunch,
a crows drowses in a bush.
Here's the place
for real plaid jackets
worn comfortable by
people, not children.

People's dreams are more
to them than jelly in a jar,
more consequential than
these traps of words.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
I offer no child of yours
to bait decisive hooks,
just time,
beyond the catch of power.
Your cant and ranting
just fade to numbers
not to faces.
No numbers needed.
You must face your choice.
You know the choice.
You know the time.
Your time is coming.

.....
A L O Y S I U S

A little more time,
to make all my
important decisions.

Fewer people
whining on my desk.

Oh, just to be rid
of people's gripes.

Just have the papers
and the laws.

A quiet sunny desk,
a library, an assistant.

J A N E

you can be
than a starving puppy
on a string.

I offer no child
to bait this hook,
j ust the dash of time
beyond the catch of power.

No numbers needed.
The decisions yours.

You know the choices.

You know the time.

Your time is coming.
Scene Two

ALOYSIUS

Enough of other people with their wishes, lies and hopes. Their dreams are hopeless. Why should they bother me? Just give me peace!

JANE

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in as if from all sides, collapsing into a blackout. A moment of silence.

I haven't come here

(etc.)
and learn to live

in it or die.

It's nothing personal.

It's just my job.

I'm highly skilled

Aloysiust

at things like this.

Do you ever dream?

Dream? I sleep

quite soundly, thank you.

I mean the wishes

of the secret heart,

the little hopes

and plans.
Well, of course,

one would always like

a little larger house,

a nicer desk,

a little more importance.

And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules:
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.
Oh, Aloysius,
smile a bit.

Perhaps a season ticket
to the football games
some year....

Let's just pretend
you have a heart.

We're all just dreamers
in this place anyway.

For a moment,
close your mind,
the closet full of numbers,
musty laws and tests
that never dream,
that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses,

A spot light comes up on the Dancer, and the dream song begins.
or old barns
laid soft to rest

A little nicer car....
by time and weight of snows.

Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable

A little more time
by real people?
to make all my
important decisions,

fewer people
jelly in a jar.
whining on my desk.
You make a child

Oh, just to be rid
a baited barb to kill the heart.
of people's gripes. Are you that little boy again.
Just to have the papers showing how much tougher
and the laws. you can be
A quiet sunny desk, than a starving puppy
a library, on a string.
an assistant, I have no child
No names, just numbers. to bait this hook,
Numbers and papers. just the dash of time
Enough of other people beyond the catch of power.
with their wishes, No numbers needed.
lies and hopes. The decision's yours.
Their dreams are hopeless. You know the choices.
Why should they bother me? You know the time.

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in as if from all
sides, collapsing into a blackout. A moment of silence.
ALOYSIUS

(Just give me peace.)

JANE

(Your time is coming.)

LIN

RON

I haven't come here

to cheer the revolution,

just to tell the time.

The time to think,

the moment to decide.

This revolution stuff's-

all nonsense anyway.

a lot of energy-

and noise for nothing.

It'll all be over

in a day or two,
last. They must face the real world and learn to live in it, or

It's nothing personal, it's just my job. I highly skil

Aloysisus, do you ever dream?

things like that. Dream?
I mean the wishes of the secret

I sleep quite soundly, thank you.
course, one would always like possibly a

season ticket to the football games, a nicer desk, etc.

a little more importance. And perhaps from time to time, a
Perhaps just one new decree; a rule to be the end of rules.
If you're going to breathe, don't make a habit of it. Oh, Aloysius, smile a bit. Let's pretend

new decree.

you have a heart. We're all dream-ers in this place any- way.

For a mo-ment close your mind. The clo- set
Must - y laws and tests

full of numbers.

things that ne - ver dream, that ne - ver breathe or run.

Im - a - gine romp - ing hor - ses, or
barns and weight of snow laid soft to rest by time and weight of snow.

Birch trees reaching quietly along the river.

Rabbits here think modest thoughts of lunch, a crow.
drow-ses in a bush. Here's the place for real plaid jack-ets worn com-for-ta-ble by
People's dreams are more to them than real people.
jelly in a jar, more consequential than these traps of words.

You make a child a baited barb to kill the heart.

I offer no child of yours to bait decisive
Your cant and hooks, just time be - yond the catch of pow'r.

Your cant and hooks, just time be - yond the catch of pow'r.

Your cant and hooks, just time be - yond the catch of pow'r.

Your cant and hooks, just time be - yond the catch of pow'r.

No numbers need-ed
the de - cision is yours. You know the choi - ces,

No numbers need-ed
the de - cision is yours. You know the choi - ces,

No numbers need-ed
the de - cision is yours. You know the choi - ces,

No numbers need-ed
the de - cision is yours. You know the choi - ces,
you know the time. Your time is near!

A little more time to make

all my important decisions. Fewer people

whining at my desk. Just have the papers, just have the laws.
Quiet sunny desk with no people's gripes. Enough of other people with their
wishes, lies and hopes. Their dreams are hopeless. Why should they bother
I haven't come to cheer-the-revelation. Just to tell the time; the time to think, the time to decide.
Just give me peace!
fill in the forms.

We must have order.

No time to waste.

You must make

the decision.

The question is clear.

Your future's the question.

The choice is yours.

Do you have the courage?

What are your values?

Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

A silly joke.

You know I'm frightened.

What will they do to me?

You know my weakness.
I need quiet,
not pushing faces,
not demands.

.....
The values
of the greater state,
the happiness or peace
of more than just one life.

You know my values.

They're very social.

They're very proper.

You know I'm frightened.

I can't decide.

They'll come and get me.

It's like the darkness,
the winter nights,
when no one's there.

What will I do?

Help me decide!

Why should I help you?

The choice is yours.

The time is up.

You've been too stupid.

You've been too slow.

Now I can't help you.

My time is up.

My time's been wasted.

You showed you're not worth worrying about any longer.

I have other jobs,

other concerns.
I'm not a babysitter.

I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.

It's not worth hearing.

My time is up.

Are you worth saving?

There are so many others,

so many better.

If I thought you'd use it,

I'd wish you luck.

Instead I'll just remind you

of your decision.

Accept the wiping out

of a security clearance.

Or wait for death.

I don't care which.
I No. No. Wait.

Please. Don't leave me now. You don't understand. I need you now. You're my Alter Ego, my self. You have to help me. I'm frightened.

I'm frightened. What will happen? I must decide. They couldn't kill me. I've of some value. I've worked with people.

I must decide. I've made decisions. They exit angrily. He looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.
The time is coming.

I must make my decision right away.

The most important decision—

dead or death.

Someone must help me.

I must decide.

decide.

I have some value.

I must think.

The time is coming.

Decide.

I must decide

about my future.

Sammy begins to sing a little nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases he has heard, as he plays with the toy bulldozer oblivious of Aloysius.
I'm a man of some importance, a highly valued man.
The time, the time.
Security or death.
Help me someone.

I must decide,
decide....

They're here.
The time is here.
The numbers and papers.
The forms are waiting.
All those papers.
The time is here....

Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the three Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to come with them. Numbly he follows them off. The light shrinks to a spotlight on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer and snaps into a blackout.
ALOYSIUS JANE

questions,

fill in the forms.

We must have order. Here.

No time to waste.

You must make your decision.

The question is clear.

Your future's the question.

The choice is yours.

Do you have the courage?

What are your values?

Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.
ALOYSIUS

A silly joke.

You know I'm frightened.

What will they do to me?

You know my weakness.

I need quiet,

not pushing faces,

not demands.

.....

The values

of the greater state,

the happiness or peace

of more than just one life.

You know my values.
They're very social.
They're very proper.

You know I'm frightened.

I can't decide.

They'll come and get me.

It's like the darkness,

the winter nights,

when no one's there.

What will I do?

Help me decide!

Why should I help you?

The choice is yours.

The time is up.
ALOYSIUS  JANE

You've been too stupid.

You've been too slow.

Now I can't help you.

My time is up.

My time's been wasted.

You showed you're not worth worrying about any longer.

I have other jobs, other concerns.

I'm not a babysitter.

I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.
ALOYSIUS

It's not worth hearing.

My time is up.

Are you worth saving?

There are so many others,

so many better.

If I thought you'd use it,

I'd wish you luck.

Instead I'll just remind you

of your decision.

Accept the wiping out

of a security clearance.

Or wait for death.

I don't care which.
Aloysius

my time is up

She exits angrily. He looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.

No, no. Wait.

Please.

Don't leave me now.

You don't understand.

I need you.

You're my Alter Ego.

my self.

You have to help me.
I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill me.

I'm of some value.

I've made decisions.

I've worked with people.

I must decide.

The time is coming.

I must make

my decision,

right away.

The most important

Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases he has heard, as he plays with the bulldozer, oblivious.
decision—

death or death.

Someone must help me.

I must decide,

decide,

I have some value.

I must think.

The time is coming.

Decide.

I must decide

about my future.

I'm a man of some

importance.
page seventy nine  flashback three

ALCYSIUS

a highly valued man.

The time, the time.

Security or death.

Help me someone.

I must decide,

decide.....

They're here.

The time is here.

The numbers and papers.

The forms are waiting.

All those papers.

The time is here.....

(尔斯 direct next 09)
Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the three Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to come with them. Numbly he follows them off. The light shrinks to a spot on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer and snaps into a blackout.
silence. How do you plead? Answer the questions, fill in the forms. We must have order here—. You must make your decision. The choice is yours. Do you have the courage? Your
Time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

You know I'm fright-ened. I can't de-

You know I'm fright-ened. I can't de-

cide. They'll come and get me. It's like the dark-ness, the
cold winter nights, with no one there. What will I do?

The choice is yours. The time is up. You've

Help me decide.

been too stupid, you've been too slow. Now I can't help you.
time's been wasted
I'm highly skilled.

My time is up!

choice is yours.
Don't leave me now. You don't understand. I need you. You're my Alter Ego, my Self.

You have to help me.
I'm frightened. What will happen? I must decide. They couldn't kill
Re-se-cu-ri-ty or

death. Help me, some-one! I must de-cide, de-cide!
They're here. The time is here.

The numbers, the papers, the forms are
waiting.

All those papers...
The time...

Crescendo poco a poco al fine.
Using given pitch limitations and pitch order, execute any rhythms and registers playing frantically until cued by conductor to play the final measure. The order (numbers in score) is given but the duration is to be determined by the conductor.
you know
we love you.

But
we have to go away.
We won't be back.
We won't see you
any more.
You'll
be with others.
You'll
have to forget,
to learn again.
You know we
love
you.
We'll try
to go quietly.

It will be better.

The time is up.

The choice is made.

You know we love you.

Try to...

forget us.

The time is up.

We had to decide.

decide.

Our names, numbers, papers.

It's really nothing.

You needn't worry.

It'll soon be over....
Numbers and papers:

Your names and numbers.

It's so much better.

We know you'll...

think it better.

You understand.

The choice is better...

( )

The little boy,

you'll have to

tell him.

( p.s. u.e.)

They hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously at the forms, and the parents, and hands the forms back.

Sammy... Sammy...

you know
we love you.

But-

You know we can't have to go away-

But we must leave you.

We won't be back.

We won't see you any more.

You'll be with others.

You'll have to forget our ways.

You'll have to learn again.

You know we love
ALOYSIUS

JANE

LIN

RON

You know we love you.

Try to...

forget us.

The time is up.

We had to decide,

The choice is made.

You know we love you.
Sammy simply plays with his toy, oblivious. The parents slip off quietly as Aloysius and Jane, one on either side of Sammy, begin to argue.

Why do they look so, so dead. Their eyes. Like zombies.

I don't understand.

Why do they stare?

I can't decide.

Why do they make me
Sammy, Sammy, you know we love you. Sammy, Sammy, you know we love you.
But care must leave you. You know we care. But we must leave you.

We won't be back. We won't be back... We won't.
I'm more. You will be with you nysee you a-ny more. You will be with you a-ny more. [10.5] You will be with our ways. You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to our ways. You must forget our ways, and
Sam-ny, Sam-ny, You know we
learn a - gain.
learn a - gain.
Sam-ny, Sam-ny, Sam-ny
You know we love you. Sammy.
Sammy, you know we love you.

You know we love you. Sammy.

Care.
But now -- our time is up,

You know we care. But now -- our time is up.
the choice is made.

Why do they look so, so dead? Their eyes like

Alphene Music Corp
Hollywood, Calif
THE POET RETURNS TO NAPLES, FORGOTTEN

For Dick Hugo

From a cellar of cracked plates
you have come twenty-five years
back to this Italian-ragged coastline.

Stranger again, your house is grey,
your children rejected. The sea explodes.
It is all you can see, homesick--
empty eyes stolen from young thieves,
the natives tired of your
picturesque life. Still

you catch the familiar sounds--
wet rocks crumbling to caves, old
women singing for a boat fifty years gone,
the sun forgetting to rise.

You came to lose your fears,
find instead the same gulls,
still grey, still farther than you can
reach.
WRITTEN WHILE WAITING FOR NEWS FROM THE EAST

I stand all night by the window
waiting to fly with the geese to Newfoundland—
leave the moon behind and set a course
by cloud shadows on the valley.

Butterflies cross the highway,
flow into the dawning gulf.
Snowbanks melt to grey moths.

Soon it will be high time.
ESCAPES

For My Mother

Is she dead yet? The blood keeps coming.
The silence, the silence--furniture gone
into limbo, dry flowers, the dust
around the carpets.

This vase
came from my grandmother's house. She waited
in a French convent for the Prussians to leave.
They were slower than love. Handkerchief
with strange initials,
yellowed sheets, tepid water.

Her hair is still black, her fingers still stronger
than mine. She wants to hear Ravel--pavane
for a dead princess. We are all dying young.
Only children of only children.
ON THE MOUNTAIN

This is the house the poets built,
three walls peeled logs,
the fourth an old trailer--
hide covered couch, a salamander
in the water pipes. We think it as we go,
lashing the poles til we dream a threshold.
Dutch doors on thong hinges, a candle
on a thong. The hillside here's
two degrees warmer, pines
in the lee of the mountain. We fill
the chinks with willow sticks,
tarps when the snow comes. Pounding the bottoms
of logs outward against rain, finding
under the floor rocks a cicada,
locust of seven years' luck.
Half way on a horsefly afternoon
my feet can only remind me
of the taste of green shade.
Minestrone on the fire won't fill
the holes carved by walking
through a waterfall. The same path
leads back, six miles over,
one mile down.
Behind the snow lake, true summit--
another half mile, sheer.
The creek we started from
survives, thin ribbon
on this barren pale bouquet.
Li Po fell drunk into the moon.
His yellow silk pillow is preserved in the pavillion.
He wanted to write seven syllables about the Great Way
and the meeting of the North and South Winds.

In the darkness plum blossoms are falling
and a single boatman is on the river.
Shall I sing you a song about a feather
falling into the grass?
You said you would take me to the Li Po Bar
across the alley in the Tokyo Hilton,
the poet above plum velvet bottles.
Serene smile hides the Great Way.

And here we are, across the alley
in the best-lit bar in Missoula, Montana.
The regulars hang on the walls.

Li Po could never fall into the moon here,
could he?
ANNIVERSARY

A hundred miles away last year
I still heard the scratch of gravel
when frail Kate went under a deeper sky.
Now I work that night she made,
keeping the sky green for her pale bones'
admiration. I sight from the bottom of a grave
to the mausoleum roof,
waiting to see that other sky turn green.
INCANTATION FOR THE VERNAL EQUINOX

In the crescent of a long spring
the moon calls my eye to madness, the true
name of things, glass owls through an iron fence.
I wait
by locked doors to become swift and dark,
run behind the shadows, stay close to the river.
My head fills with static from Siberia,
a prisoner. And here, in the mountains,
our attendants lock themselves in,
safe from dark creatures, owls, the spring moon.
PRAYER FOR THE HILL GYPSIES

We bring our shawls and wagons finally to the sea,
bow in bright skirts, ring the fire
with gold bangles to keep the sea out.

Albatross attack in long flights from unknown islands.

I think there is no need for such grim birds.
The tide is already turning into night.
ROLE CALL

It's not the birth certificate that proves I'm here,
but what I write on the back--
strange grey marks to remember myself,
names I've never heard before.

Two or three years difference doesn't matter
as long as you really believe
in the chinese order of things,
a road map with the final inch missing.

The real story: '
that I always answer pagan sounds,
approve initials I couldn't own,
dream myself some unknown seer's wife.
Like saints or children I wait to hear my name called,
and wonder who will answer, shouting.
EVERY POEM SHOULD HAVE A TITLE

Night climbs up to a pale horizon
as birches pull down the moon--
fireworks through black lace curtain.

Your voice is filled with the river fog,
blue shadows have followed you out of the forest.
Limp on the jagged shore, I dream of mountain sides,
poets making music with their hands,
firesingers between the ritual and the hills.

A third eye awakens dry bones.
Slowly we dance the circle inward.
SHORT SCENE IN WHITE

Trees gone harsh with winter
become their own judges. White jade lions
wait for thoughts of color,
the old mustaches of lonely men
for an end to silence. A white arc,
four seconds,
the blast.
Out of reach of time,
the balance is kept.
"FROM MOUNTAIN BELL, THE TIME IS 7:45"

I find the darkness softer here, 
far from gulls and riptide— 
a wider night of stars turns past 
this attic window. Why should I 
wait for magicians, live on rye? 
A new music haunts my eyes.. 
a slower rhythm paces coming spring. 
Walking the rooftrees, I can 
listen to a wren breathe.
POEM FOR MY STUDENT FROM MARYLAND

I.
I hated to give you that Indian,
startle the fancy in your grey eyes.
You wanted Montana, a red man
from the hills, a horse. Poised
at the edge of your chair, you wait
for that first high scream.

II.
Behind the fear, squaws dance with slow feet.
They offer us such graceful pitchers and baskets,
warm furs, fringed dresses. The dogs
are all around, snuffling at our feet, baying. They
vanish past the fire at the sound
of horses coming. Hard earth breaks under hooves.
Here are red men,
noble. They give us broken arrows,
a soft-eyed colt. Everyone is smiling.
The pleasure is ours,
they say. We smile. This horse is very gentle.
Over the long crest of the hill
they come, gentle ponies
bringing death. Each night
we win that war again, again.
The Big Hole is a battle
field. Rocky Boy a reservation.
Short-lived men in cattle trucks.
Children starving, smiling, slowly.

This Indian smiles. He has the eyes
of a Trojan. He brings us news
from Wounded Knee Creek,
the Cherokee Republic.
He wrote the book on Plato
and the teepee, living communions.

Safe again, away from open land, you can't believe.

An Indian...I saw a real Indian....

But in the corners of your eyes I can see the dance
slowing, feet closer to bare ground,
a drumbeat
ROCK PAINTING FOR A PEOPLE WITHOUT DREAMS

Strange, the things we leave behind,
stick men painted on the rocks,
red ochre sprinkled over bones.
The Indian has a word for it,
the hoop that brings time back,
flooding like a wind-tide
onto the snow, chipping years
from our hands to silt dreams to stone.

What remains--fingerbones of children,
a painted deer with calm gaze.
THE DECISION

A CHAMBER OPERA FOR FINE CHARACTERS AND MIME

LIBRETTO:
A.D. Zeigler

MUSIC:
SHERMAN H. HIMELBLAU

MFA Thesis 1975
"THE DECISION"

CHARACTERS:

Aloysius J. Morton ............... tenor
Jane ..................................... mezzo soprano
Ron Everett ......................... baritone
Lin Everett ........................... soprano
Sammy Everett ...................... boy soprano
The Mime

ORCHESTRA:

Oboe/English Horn
Clarinet in B flat/Bass Clarinet in B flat
Trumpet in C
Violin
Violincello
Percussion:

Woodblock
Claves
Triangle
Suspended Cymbal
Snare Drum
Three Adjustable Drums
Medium Bass Drum
THE DECISION

A CHAMBER OPERA FOR FINE CHARACTERS AND MIME

Libretto:
A.D. Zeigler

Music:
Sherman H. Himelblau

Slow (1:64)

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There's one! In blue! Get him! Crack Him! A Protector! Get the Protector!

Using the given pitch limitations and pitch sequence, execute any rhythms and registers moving to a frantic climax.
Here I am.

Where am I?

At least I'm still alive.
I think.

Or maybe they

be I've died, and gone to ... heaven.

killed me when I wasn't looking. May
Is this heaven? They can't kill me. ME!
It's not permitted.

I'm a man of great im-

Morton, Protector!

Alpheus Music Corp
I make great decisions ev'
'ry day.

I can't be dead.
I'm sure I would have noticed.

What a dumb re-volution.

They're not following the guidelines.
This is the slop-pest yellows running around.

re-volution ever.

All those yellows running around.
In-ter-rest-ing co-lor.

minds one of sun-shine, or

Just out-ra-geous.
fire!

I can't be-

lieve it: like children out to have some

fun.

FUN?
FUN! That's it! We can solve this problem right now! Some new * Pu-rec-secs!

*pronounced poo-rek-sex.
Public Recreation Sections.

Six nights a week. Ninety-five minutes.

Basket-ball. Volley-ball.
Football, baseball, hand-ball, tether-ball,

foos-ball. We'll have a

new *Purseaser!

*pronounced poo-sek-seer.
Public Security Series!
To re-

mind ev'-ry-one to just love it.

They will have fun; lots of
Did you ever hear the nice, correct fun. Just think

one about the traveling revolutionary

what it will do

[Music notation]
and the football to the family,

coach? The

the neighborhood, the school and the...
problems you have aren't bad enough already?
Who are you? I'm a man of great importance, a

Jane.

Who are you? I'm a

man of great importance, a
I make great decisions every day.

highly valued man.
No time to waste on...

Who are you?

You are A-loyd-sius J.
I am Jane, your Alter Ego.
I'm really not a religious person.

Churches and altars and all those things just wrong altar. Not church altar, aren't in my de-
Al-ter E-go; it means other self. So I know all about you, and I'm ev'-ry-thing you're
I'm the reverse of you.

(SPOKEN) You are?

You're a he, I'm a she.

You're a power-full official, I'm just here.
I'm young, you're...

I can whistle,

ride a bike and stand on my head!
Opposite, Alter Ego,

Jane.

Are you sure of that?
For your lifetime.

It doesn't seem very likely to me.

In fact,
I can't recall a single regulation about

Alter Egos. I'm sure you would fall in section

four three eight, subsection "A" - five defining
I

S a:
P e r - f o c s.

P e r - o c s?

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Hollywo0d, Calif.

V-40

Aplheus Music Corp

Hollywood, Calif.
Oh. What are you doing here?

The same thing you are. Yes.

You are?
Waiting for your decision.

My decision.

What decision?!
I'm a man of great importance, a highly valued man. I make great decisions every day. (spoken) I've changed hundreds of lives.
That's what your decision's about.

What?

Your decision, your decision is the same one you have given all those other people;
a-bout ac-cept-ing re-se-cu-rity.

Non-sense! I

know all a-bout re-se-cu-rity. I'm a Pro-
As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State. Protector of the State. As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State.

Class nine. Protector, Class nine. Personality Readjustment.

Officer To Enhance Clearance for
Terminal Official Reseurity, Class

A person could get high just repeating a title like that. Nothing, nothing.

That's very high, you know. Pardon?
Anyway, these Yellows just don't understand.

They don't appreciate the great skill of a person like my

A person who understands decisions.

self.

Yes, yes exactly.
Like the decision you must make now.

What's this decision bus'ness? You haven't even told me

which regulation is involved. I must have order here.
It's very simple. No regulation applies.

The regulations are gone. The revolution has replaced them with nothing. You have been
Given the same choice, the same choice you gave others: accept re-secuity or be destroyed.

That is not a very nice way to put it.
Re-se-cu-ri-ty's a ve-ry fine thing;
a ne-ces-sary tool for pro-gress and or-der.
I've cleared a lot of peo-ple.
Have you ever seen one through,
to the end?

Certainly not! (Not in chalice) I have a
great many other things to do, decisions to make.
Yes, decisions to make one you offered like the

Ron and Lin Everett. You remember them.

What do you think is going to happen?
And their little boy, Sammy. They came in on a

I just can't think of any-thing we've

Regula-tion nine se-v-en three
done. Regu-la-tion nine se-ven
No explanation,
three means nothing to me.
just a summons.
and all that jargon on the
Names and papers, papers and names.

door.

Fill in the blanks and sign.

They checked so thoroughly our names and papers.
Names and papers.

But this is a Protector's office,

isn't it?

There must be some mistake,

don't you think? They don't really care about painters and scholars,
except to approve whatever we do

It must be something I did in a

paper, forgot a memo, missed someone's title.
They never say anything about paintings.

You haven't used a wrong color somehow: Peach,

Umber, Yellow?
No, No. I've always been so careful a-

bout the width of lines, and angles too At your neighbor-hood

meeting?

No-thing. My name, my num-ber.
Number and name. Signed my work paper.

Mine was the same. My

No, nothing.

name, my number. Numbers and papers, papers and
Nothing.

Names. Numbers.

Papers. Names. I'm a highly valued man, a very busy man.
No time to waste on mix-ups or mistakes. You must have a name, you must have a number. Where are your papers?

Summons! Ronald Everett, Linda Everett. Regulation
Nine Seven Three. A serious charge.

We don't

What is your answer?

understand.

understand.
How do you plead? You must know the laws. The laws are serious.

What does it mean?

It must be a mistake.
charge. The subject is Samuel:

Sammy:

Our Sammy:

Can't mean.

But he's just a child.

He couldn't.... He's only a child.
We must remain calm. Don't get upset.

Yes, yes. It's a mis-

No comments al-

take.

Surely we can......

Please let us explain.
I loved. You must make a decision. The law is clear, the regulation's here.

Easy, easy.

Nine Seven Three. You must fill in these forms. Names and numbers. The

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Hollywood, Calif.

V-4
child is in question. You must give a full account. You must always tried to give him things that would make him want to know.

We've played with him, and walked with him, and tried to teach him to understand this world.

Licensed teachers only are to.

read to him.
mitted to teach children. Regulation Four One Six. The law is clear. You must know the law. You must be registered. Where are your papers?

We're just parents, not teachers. Can't you understand?
Numbers and names. Humanitarians must be registered. Regulation

We're

manities.

Three Nine Seven Van. The law is clear, a

not humanitarians.

We only care about our
You see I'm a painter.

child.

I don't paint walls, I paint pictures. I'm an artist. With colors and brushes on canvas.

This is all a mistake.
answer the accusation.

What accusation? We

You received the summons. How do you plead? The choice is yours.

don't understand. The summons says nothing. What is the
You know the o-ther. We wouldn't care to use it.

Where is our child?!

Such a lovely child to be an orphan at so young an age. We'll send him home while you decide.

The child is yours, the choice is yours. Sign the papers. Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers. The choice is yours. The time is short.

He can't hold my child like bait, it's a legal ransom! It's
The law is clear. Accept security, or the other.

A choice.

Social readjustment in careful lessons, well reinforced, a positive approach.
drowses in a bush.

Here's the place for

real plaids jackets worn comfortable by
real people.

People's dreams are more to them than
it's all a question of great decisions, highly valued things.

one death or another.

I guess we'll have to

My time is highly valued. People don't appreciate it.

think about it.
But time is running out, down, away
all the training, all that time.

You must step into their shoes, face their pain.

Pain is not my job. You still don't understand. Security is
bus'ness, my life's work.

Nothing

A.

personal, of course, about the people. They value themselves too much. They should have realized they couldn't live like that, and have it
last. They must face the real world and learn to live in it, or
die. It's no-thing person-al, it's just my job. I high-ly skil-

A- lo- y-sius, do you e-ver dream?

things like that. Dream?

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Hollywood, Cal.  V-3
I mean the wishes of the secret
I sleep quite soundly, thank you.

heart. The little hopes and plans.

Well, of
course, one would always like perhaps a

season ticket to the football games, a nicer desk, a

little more importance. And perhaps from time to time, a
Perhaps, just one new decree, a rule to be
the end of rules. If you're going to
breathe, don't
make a habit of it. Oh, Aloysius,
smile a bit. Let's pretend

To make life
a little more
interesting.

new decree.

you have a heart. We're all dream-ers in this place an-y-
way.

For a mo-ment close your mind. The clo-
set.
Must - y laws and ten things that ne - ver dream, that ne - ver breathe or run.

Imagine romp - ing horses, or
old barns laid soft to rest by time and weight of snow.

Birch trees reaching quietly along the river.

Rabbits here think modest thoughts of lunch, a crow
Jelly in a jar, more consequential than these traps of words.

You make a child a baited barb to kill the heart.

I offer no child of yours to bait decisive
books, just time be-yond the catch of pow'r. Your cant and
crant-ing just fade to numbers not faces.

No numbers need-ed the de-ci-sion is yours. You know the choi-ces,
you know the time. Your time is near!

A little more time to make

all my important decisions. Fewer people

whining at my desk. Just have the papers, just have the laws. A
Quit sunny desk with no people's gripes. Enough of other people with their

wishes, lies and hopes. Their dreams are hope-less. Why should they bother

I haven't come to cheer the revolution, just to tell the time; the time to think, the time to decide.

Just give me peace.
It'll all be over in a day or two, then back to work.

Names and numbers, numbers and numbers.

But numbers and papers can't be killed, can't be made secure.

papers.
What will you say when you enter your office

and meet a highly valued man...lin yellow

sitting at your desk? A man who remembers the

It couldn't come to that.
cries of pain, the final silence of those who must destroy.

We never torture anyone at all. It's their choice, just my job.
You'll have to get interested in decisions. Just as

That's my only interest, not decisions.
Ron and Lin were interested in their decision.

We should probably eat something. It's getting late.

We've gone over and over this for

What decision?
It's still don't understand. It
Just take the paper, sign their names.

And you haven't got much time.
can't be true. They must mean something else.

Why think it over? Thinking wastes time.
Less time than Ron and Lin.

Where's Sammy? He was in the other room.

He went to bed. Tired of playing with his...
bull-dozer, and no-one to talk to.

What do you think they'll do to him?

Just a name, just a number!

He's just a boy.
At least he won't have to decide.

Let's not start that again.

The Protector will be here soon. We have to decide.
We have no choice, we have no time.

Have our child, our home, our jobs taken...

Sit and wait until they get to our
Or accept Re-se-cur-i-ty; have our minds wiped out. New thoughts,

new hopes, new loy-al-ties. A su-per-vised life.
Which will it be, my dear, which will it be? A living death with

Sammy still alive somewhere, or final death and

Maybe it's not really who knows what for him.

*N.B.: These speeches are not to be in rhythm, but must be completed by the close of bar # 894.*
ly a serious thing we did. Maybe we'll just

The summons says he's a Protector.

have to go to re-training every week.

Retraining is police and case workers. It must be re-
It seems like a dream, a nightmare.

Just a few hours

years since we got the summons.
Just a few moments left.

Voices laughing, yelling—Des:icide!

What a wreck our life's become. A shadow.

Des:icide! Safety gets further away the...
match with, with nothing.

faster we run.

What to do, die or die. But
come a mind-less num-ber or be re-moved.
we sign the pa-per we'll have each o-ther.
If we don't, black-ness, and may-be
Names and numbers. Numbers and papers.

It still comes down to time. Time to think, time to decide.
You must decide. You must decide. They can't make your choice.

I can't make it for you. The choice is yours. Time is short.

You're making this up. It's...
not this bad. They just don't realize.

Anyway. It's not so simple.

I have so many things to consider. I'm a
But highly valued men get tossed a-

highly valued man.

side, you know. The choice is yours.
The choice is yours.

We can't take this lightly. It's

A serious charge.

true there's the matter of results.
How do you accepting security has certain results.

plead? Your

Highly valued results.
time is coming, the time is soon. What are your values?
The reduction is total. A final agreement, no
The matter is time.
matter with what.

The matter is choice.
The choice must be made.
what do you value?

The decision is yours. The time, the time.

Highly valued...
How can they do this? It's all a mistake.

I don't believe it.

I'll have to think about it. I must think about it.
The time is coming. The forms are waiting. The choice is yours.
Come in.

Hello.

I must tell you, your time is up.
I have to ask you your choice.

We signed the papers, our

Triangle
Numbers and names, Names and numbers, papers, our numbers and names, Names and numbers and papers, We signed the papers, our numbers, numbers and papers. We signed the
Names and numbers,

Numbers and names.

Numbers and papers, your names and
numbers. It's so much better. We know you'll think it better. You understand. The choice is better.
The little boy, you'll have to tell him.
Sam- my, Sam- my, you know we love you.

Sam- my, Sam- my, you know we love you.
I Z I.

Lin

R

ong care. m u st leave you.

You know we care. But we — must leave — you.

Ron

L:,

"R#"

i

r f e  won't b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e won’t b e

1050

1050

1050

A lpheus Music Corp
You will be with others. You must forget our ways, and

You will be with others. You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to
learn again.

learn again.

Sam-my, Sam-my, You know we

Sam-my, Sam-my
love you.  Sammy,  Sammy, You know we
You know we love you.  Sammy,  Sammy.
care.  But now -- our time is up,
You know we care. But now -- our time is up.

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Hollywood Calif.  V.40
the choice is made.

Why do they look so, so dead? Their eyes like

Sam-.my.

Sam- my.
I don't understand. Why do they make me feel this way?

That's what they all look like when they've felt this way?
J: What should he say? I don't know. It's not my job to know these things; I have other skills.

A: I think you talk too much. Great decisions are made in
ci-ded. All of them. What did you ex-pect?

The boy. Why does he just play like that?

He should say something.
silence.

How do you plead? Answer the questions,

fill in the forms. We must have order here... You must

make your decision. The choice is yours. Do you have the courage? Your
Time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

You know I'm frightened. I can't decide. They'll come and get me. It's like the darkness, the
cold winter nights, with no one there. What will I do?

The choice is yours. The time is up. You've been too stupid, you've been too slow. Now I can't help you. My
time's been wasted I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.

My time is up!

No. No. Wait. Please.
Don't leave me now. You don't understand. I need you. You're my Alter Ego, my Self.
You have to help me.
I'm frightened. What will happen? I must decide. They couldn't kill
I'm of some value. I must decide! The time is coming. I must make my decision. The
3? Re- se- cu- ri - ty the timetim e.

Help me, some-one! death must de- cide, de- cide!
They're here. The time is here.

The numbers, the papers the forms are
I loo... All those papers... The time waiting. Alph* Music Corp

Alph< Music Corp
Using given pitch limitations and pitch order, execute any rhythms and registers playing frantically until cued by conductor to play the final measure. The order (numbers in score) is given but the duration is to be determined by the conductor.
LIBRETTO OF
"THE DECISION"
A CHAMBER OPERA
FOR FIVE CHARACTERS AND MIME
AND OTHER WORKS

By
Ann dePender Zeigler
B.A., Fort Wright College, 1969
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
1975

Approved By:

[Signatures]
Chairman, Board of Examiners
Dean, Graduate School
Date Aug 19, 1975
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THE DECISION

CHARACTERS

Aloysius J. Morton, Protector.......................Tenor
Jane.........................................................Mezzo-Soprano
Ron Everett.................................................Baritone
Linda Everett..............................................Soprano
Sammy Everett..........................................Boy Soprano
Mime............................................................Mime

(NOTE: The Three Masked Figures are played by Jane,
Ron and Lin.)
ORCHESTRA

Oboe / English Horn
Clarinet in B^b / Bass Clarinet in B^b
Trumpet in C
Violin
Violoncello

Percussion: Suspended Cymbal
          Triangle
          Claves
          Wood Block
          Snare Drum
          Three Adjustable Drums
          Medium Bass Drum
CHARACTER SKETCHES

The Mime. Either male or female. Represents the audience onstage, merging with Sammy. An observer, interpreter, maker of temporal transitions. Dressed in the same style of jump-suit as Sammy.

Aloysius J. Morton, Protector. Rumpled, bumbling, self-satisfied. Speaks in a stylized pattern based on acronyms, citations and jargon. Vaguely confused by events. Non-empathetic, hiding behind regulations and forms to avoid dealing with human problems. Has the ability to use power but not to understand its use. A functionary with little self-awareness. A weak man forced by circumstances to face the impossible, deadly decision he has thrust onto others for so long.

Jane, the Alter Ego. Brash, humorous, a wench. Young and vibrantly alive. Witty but gently so. Very lyrical and capable of flights of imagistic metaphor. Responsive, delighting in contact with people and sympathetic to their problems. Can only stand just so much self-deception from Aloysius. In the end, she begins to show many of the personality traits earlier seen in Aloysius.

Ronald and Linda Everett, the Parents. Intelligent, articulate, humane. Closely involved in their child's outlook and life-
style. Psychologically well-balanced. Finally broken and with their creative visions destroyed, they are reduced to automa­tons, mindless and without hope.

**Sammy, the Child.** Passive young victim. Absorbs the jargon of what is happening, with the implications of his own future self-destructive role.
The house lights are still up. The Mime, wearing a childlike costume, enters through the audience from the back of the theater. He stops at the first row and turns to survey the audience, then walks up onto the stage and takes a position facing upstage. Approximately a minute after the Mime is in position onstage, the house lights go down. (During the performance, visuals appear rear-projected on scrim, depicting environmental patterns and abstracts which develop into the parts of a bulldozer.)

The music begins. During the first four bars, lights come up on the Mime and Three Masked Figures in sharply creased yellow costumes. On the fifth bar, the Figures point at the Mime. They order him in mime to walk a narrow line in front of them. The Mime attempts to ignore or evade them. The lights go down. Visuals abstract confusion. Voices over from offstage shout, "There's one! Grab him! In blue! A Protector! Get him! Get the Protector!" At bar seventy, a loud crash as of a door slamming, is heard. A long pause. The music introduces Scene One.
SCENE ONE

Lights come up in the area where the Mime and Aloysius are standing. Aloysius, in crumpled blue, looks confused and dejected. He is on an intermediate level of the stage's various high and low platforms. He peers around, unaware of the Mime's presence. He tries to reassure himself that he hasn't died and gone to heaven. An amused soprano laugh is heard from a darkened part of the stage. Aloysius doesn't hear it. He goes on to scoff at the revolution by the Yellows as an outburst of excess energy, and suggests that it could all be taken care of by a new PuSecSer (Public Security Series) and PuRecSecs (Public Recreation Sections). The soprano voice makes comments, unnoticed by Aloysius. Aloysius seems to be a highly-placed bureaucrat with immense power and not a lot of sensitivity. His ranting about the revolution and its solution is interrupted suddenly when lights come up on Jane, who is lounging on a fairly high level across the stage. She introduces herself and him, and explains that she is his Alter Ego, his Other Self, for his lifetime. He doesn't believe. Jane says that she's waiting for his decision. He is anxious to get back to his office and decisions. Jane tells him that she doesn't mean other people's decisions about resecurity. She means his decision. He now has the same decision to make that he gave others—resecurity or death.
Aloysius doesn't like to have it phrased quite that way. Jane asks if he has ever seen a resecurity clearance all the way through to the end. He is much too busy for such things. The Mime leads Aloysius into a darkened area as Jane reminds him about Ron and Lin Everett. Lights come up on Ron and Lin sitting on straight chairs facing a lectern. Jane fades out.

**FLASHBACK ONE**

Ron and Lin are racking their brains to find a reason for their summons to the office of a Protector. He is a scholar, and she is a painter. Aloysius enters with a large handful of forms and asks for their papers. He begins to cite regulations about their activities. The subject of the investigation turns out to be the way they are raising their young son, Sammy. Aloysius hands Ron and Lin voluminous forms. He charges them with teaching without a permit, being unregistered humanitarians, painting walls without a permit. He obviously is not listening to them as they try to explain. Ron and Lin become frantic trying to find out what the problem is. He says they must accept resecurity, or the other. Sammy is such a nice child to be orphaned so young. The decision is theirs. Aloysius exits abruptly to an unlit area. Ron and Lin are stunned. Lin is in a rage, Ron bewildered. Jane
and Aloysius re-appear in their former positions as Ron and Lin fade out.

**SCENE TWO**

Jane tells Aloysius time is running out for him. He must face the pain himself. He temporizes, saying that it's nothing personal about those people he dealt with. It's just his job, his life's work—that they must learn to live with the real world or be destroyed. Jane asks him if he ever dreams. He fades away as she begins to muse—a lyric image series. The Mime interprets as she sings, beginning freely but ending as if trapped and crushed. Aloysius comes in with his own wishes, for power and peace and quiet. Jane reminds him that he is running out of time to make his decision, that the revolution is waiting for him to decide. He says decisions are not his problem, he just does his job. Jane tells him he had better develop an interest in decisions. They fade out as Ron and Lin fade back in, in a living room scene.

**FLASHBACK TWO**

Ron and Lin have been going over and over the situation for hours. Sammy has put himself to bed, bored with his bulldozer and with nobody to talk to. Ron and Lin discuss with some heat what they are going to do. They must choose to lose
Sammy and their jobs and wait to be obliterated, or accept the mental obliteration of resecurity followed by re-education and a supervised life. They go over and over what they can do about the situation, finally realizing that they are caught. They feel trampled, humiliated and dehumanized. They feel as though years have passed since they got the summons. They begin to rationalize the various alternative futures. The Mime joins them as they fade out. Aloysius and Jane fade in again.

**SCENE THREE**

Jane asks Aloysius again to make his decision. He downgrades her sense of urgency, insisting again that he is a man of great importance, a highly valued man who has to consider these things very carefully. Jane points out that highly valued men can lose their value. She begins to use the phrases that Aloysius used in his interview with Ron and Lin. He insists that it is all a mistake, that she doesn't understand, that he must have time to think. Jane interrupts him abruptly, pointing out that the parents are waiting. Full lights come up, showing the parents still standing in their living room, with Sammy standing where the Mime had been standing with Ron and Lin.
Sammy plays unconcernedly with the controls of a large toy bulldozer as Jane and Aloysius enter the living room area. The parents look silently at Aloysius, and he at them for a long moment. Aloysius tells them he has come for their decision. They sing in duet that they have signed the papers, their names and numbers, numbers and papers. They hand him the forms. He looks nervously through the papers and gives them back. He tells them that they must tell Sammy. Tenderly and quietly they say good-bye to Sammy. He continues to play with the bulldozer, oblivious. The parents slip away as Jane and Aloysius begin to argue about Aloysius's decision, standing one on each side of Sammy. Jane tells Aloysius that he has wasted his time and hers, that he is too stupid to save himself. He pleads with her to help him. He is becoming very agitated. She stamps out in a rage. There is a moment of silence as he stares after her. The lights begin to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy. Aloysius cries out to Jane to come back and help him, that she is his Alter Ego, his Self. No answer. He tries to get a grip on his fear, to tell himself that things will be all right. Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words "names, numbers, papers" as he plays. Aloysius begins to panic, trying to figure out how to make an impossible decision. The Three
Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to follow them away.
Numbly he goes, realizing his time is up. The music comes up and drown Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer, and snaps into a blackout.
THE DECISION

---

A Chamber Opera
For Five Characters and

---

Libretto By A.D. Zeigler
**OPENING**

The house lights are still up. The Mime, wearing a childlike costume, enters through the audience from the back of the theater. He stops at the first row and turns to survey the audience, then walks up onto the stage and takes a position facing upstage. Approximately a minute after the Mime is in position onstage, the house lights go down. (During the performance, visuals appear rear-projected on scrim, depicting environmental patterns and abstracts which develop into the parts of a bulldozer.)
P R O L O G

The music begins. During the first four bars, lights come up on the Mime and Three Masked Figures in sharply creased yellow costumes. On the fifth bar, the Figures point at the Mime. They order him in mime to walk a narrow line in front of them. The Mime attempts to ignore or evade them. The lights go down. Visuals abstract confusion. Voices shout, "There's one! Grab him! In blue! A Protector! Get him! Get the Protector!" At bar seventy, a loud crash, as of a door slamming, is heard. A long pause. The music introduces Scene One.
SCENE ONE

Lights come up in the area where the Mime and Aloysius are standing. Aloysius, in crumpled blue, looks confused and dejected. He is on an intermediate stage level. He peers around.

ALOYSIUS

Here I am....
Where am I...?

JANE

At least
I'm still alive,
I think.

Or maybe they
killed me when I
wasn't looking....
Maybe I've died.
And gone to...
heaven????
ALOYSIUS

Is THIS heaven????

They can't kill me,
ME!
Aloysius J. Morton,
Protector.
It's not permitted.*

I'm a man of great impor-
tance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.
I can't be dead.

JANE

(A highly melodic
laugh, offstage.)

* - lines which are rhythmically spoken
** - lines which are simply spoken
ALOYSIUS
I'm sure I would
have noticed.

JANE
What a dumb revolution.
They're not
following the guidelines.

This is the sloppiest
revolution ever.
All those Yellows
running around.
(Offstage) Yellow is
an interesting color.
Reminds one of
sunshine...

Just outrageous.

Or fire.

I can't believe it.
ALOYSIUS

Like children
out to have some fun.

JANE

Fun???

Fun!!!
That's it!
We can solve this
problem right now!
Some new PuRecSecs.

(Offstage) PuRecSecs??**

Public Recreation Sections.**

Six nights a week.

Ninety five minutes.
ALOYSIUS

Basketball...
volleyball,
football,
(begins to sing faster)
baseball,
handball!
Tetherball!!
Foosball!!!

We'll have a new
PuSecSeer....

(Offstage) PuSecSeer?**
(pronounce: poo-sek-seer)

Public Security Series**
To remind everyone
to just love it!
(Offstage) Did you ever hear the one about the traveling revolutionary and the football coach?

They will have fun! Lots of nice correct fun. Just think what it will do to the family... The neighborhood. The school!
The...

The problems you have aren't bad enough already???

Lights abruptly come up full on Jane, who is lounging on a fairly high level across the stage. She grins goodnaturedly and climbs down. Aloysius sees her, gawks in amazement. She pirouettes obligingly. He stares speechless for a moment.)

....

Who...

are you?
ALOYSIUS

I'm a man of great importance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.

No time to waste on....

JANE

Jane.

Who

are

you?
ALOYSIUS

are
Aloysius J. Morton,
Protector.

Yes. ? **

I
am Jane.

Your Alter Ego.**

JANE

I'm really not a
religious person.

Churches
and altars and
those things
just aren't in
my de-

Wrong kind of altar.

Not church altar.

Alter Ego.
You are??

ALOYSIUS

It means Other Self.

So I know all about you,

and I'm everything you're not.

JANE

I'm the reverse of you.

You're a he—I'm a she.

You're a powerful official.

I'm just here.

I'm young—you're....

And I can whistle,

ride a bike,

and stand on my head.

Opposite.
Aloysius

Alter Ego.

Jane.**

Are you sure of that??**

For your lifetime.**

It doesn't seem very likely to me.

In fact I can't recall a single regulation about Alter Egos.

I'm sure you would fall in Section Four Three Eight, Subsection A-Five, defining PerOcs.
ALOYSIUS

Permitted Occupations.

What's that?

The what?

What are you doing here?

You are?

JANE

PerOcs?

That's the one part

I haven't got the

hang of yet.

The acronyms.

Acronyms.

Abbreviation words.

Oh.

The same thing you are.

Yes. Waiting for

your decision.
ALOYSIUS

My decision.

WHAT decision???

I am a man of great importance,
a highly valued man.
I make great decisions
every day.
I've changed*
hundreds of lives.*

That's what your
decision's about.

WHAT??*

Your decision,
your decision,
is the same one
ALOYSIUS

you have given
all those other people.
About accepting
resecurity.

JANE

Nonsense. I know
all about resecurity.
I'm a
Protector of the State.
As a matter of fact,
a PROTECTOR, class nine.

Personality
Re-adjustment
Officer
To
Enhance
ALOYSIUS

Clearance for
Terminal
Official
Resecurity,

class
nine.
That's very high,**
you know.**

JANE

class
nine.

A person could get high**
just repeating**
a title like that.**

Pardon?**

Nothing, nothing.**

Anyway, these Yellows
just don't understand.
They don't appreciate
ALOYSIUS  
the great skill
of a person like myself.

JANE
A person who
understands decisions.

Yes, yes.*
Exactly.*

Like the decision
you must make
now.

What's this decision
business?
You haven't even
told me which
regulation is
involved.
I must have order here.*

It's very simple.*
ALOYSIUS

No regulation applies.
The regulations are gone.
The revolution has
replaced them with

nothing.

You have been given
the same choice,
the same choice
you gave others—
accept resecurity
or be destroyed.
ALOYSIUS

That's not a very nice way to put it.

Resecurity is
a very fine thing,
a necessary tool
for progress and order.
I've cleared a lot of people.

Have you ever seen one
through,
to the end?

Certainly not.
I have a
great many other things
to do, decisions
to make.
ALOYSIUS
(He fades out, led
away by the Mime.)

JANE

LIN

RON

(Sprechstimme)
Yes. Decisions to make
like the one you offered
to Ron and Lin Everett.
You remember them.
What do you think
is going to happen?
And their little boy, Sammy.
They came in on a
Regulation Nine
Seven Three.

No explanation.
Just a summons.

FLASHBACK ONE
(The Parents, Ron and Lin, are sitting on
straight chairs, facing a lectern.)

I
just can't think
of anything we've done.
Regulation Nine
Seven Three
means nothing to
me.
And all that jargon
on the door.
JANE
Names and papers.
Fill in the blanks and sign.
Names and papers.

(She fades out.)

LIN

But this is
a Protector's office,

isn't it?

RON

They checked so
thoroughly our names and papers.

There must be some mistake.
Don't you think?
They don't really care about painters and scholars, except to approve whatever we do.
LIN

It must be something
I did in a paper—
forgot a memo,
missed someone's title.
They never say anything
about paintings.
You haven't used
a wrong color
somehow?
Peach? Umber? Yellow?

RCON

No, no. I've
always been so careful.
About the width of lines,
and angles, too.

At your neighborhood
UN meeting?"*

It was the same.*

To you number.

Number and name.

Nothing.*

RON

Nothing.*

My name, my number.

Number and name.

Signed my work paper.

No, nothing.*

Mine was the same.*

My name, my number.

Numbers and papers

Papers and names.

Nothing.*

ALOYSIUS

(This entire speech is rhythmically

(Aloysius enters with a handful of papers.)
Names, numbers, papers, names.
I'm a highly valued man, a very busy man.
No time to waste on mix-ups and mistakes.
You must have a name, you must have a number.
Where are your papers?
Summons!
Ronald Everett.
Linda Everett.
Regulation Nine Seven Three.
A serious charge.

We don't understand. We don't understand.
Aloysius
What is your answer?
How do you plead?
You must know the
laws.
The laws are
serious.
A serious charge.
The subject is Samuel,
same address,
same last name,
a child.

Lin
What does it
mean?

Ron
It must
be a
mistake.

A mixup of papers.

Sammy!
You can't mean....
But he's just
a child.

Our Sammy?
He's only
a child.

We must remain calm.

Yes, yes.
It's a mistake.
Surely

Don't get
upset. Let us
explain.
ALOYSIUS

No comments allowed.
You must make a decision.
The law is clear.
The regulation is here.
You must fill in these forms.

Names and numbers.
The child is in question.
You must give a full account.
You must answer a serious question.
A serious charge.
Licensed teachers only are permitted to teach children.

LIN

we can....

RON

Easy, easy.

We've always tried to give him things to make him want to know. And read to him.
We've played with him. and walked with him.

(Aloysius hands the Parents voluminous forms.)

We're just
ALOYSIUS

Regulation Four One Six.
The law is clear.
You must
know the law.
You must be registered.
Where are your papers?
Numbers and names.
Humanitarians must be registered.
Three Nine Seven.
The law is clear.
A regulation covers it.
Eight Four One
Painting walls is
not permitted.

LIN

...We're not
humanitarians.

...You see,
I'm a painter.
I don't paint walls.**
I paint pictures.**
I'm an artist,**
with colors and brushes**
on canvas.**

RON

parents,
not teachers. Can't
you understand?

My field
is the
humanities....

We only care
about our child.
ALOYSIUS
You must answer the accusation.

You received the Summons.
How do you plead?
The choice is yours.

The law is clear.
Accept resecurity or the other.

A social readjustment in careful lessons, well reinforced, a positive approach.
You know the other.

LIN

RON
This is all a mistake.**

What accusation?
We don't understand.

The summons says nothing.
What is the choice?
ALOYSIUS
We wouldn't care to have to use it.
Such a lovely child to be an orphan at so young an age. We'll send him home while you decide. The child is yours. The choice is yours.
Sign the papers.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
The choice is yours.
The time is short.
(He exits to a darkened part of the stage.)

LIN
Where is our child?
RON
Where is our child?
He can't
SCENE TWO

(Aloysius and Jane reappear in their former positions.)

(A legal ransom!)

(sprechstimme)

You remember.

It's all a question of great decisions,

highly valued things.

My time is highly valued.

People don't appreciate all the training,

all that time.

(sings)

But time is running out,

I guess we'll have to think about it.

(Ron and Lin fade out.)
ALOYSIUS  

JANE  

down, away.

You must  
step into their shoes,  
face their pain.

Pain is not my job.  
You still don't understand.  
Resecurity is  
my business.  
My life's work.

Nothing personal, of course,  
about the people.  
They value themselves  
too much.

They should have realized
they couldn't live like that
and have it last.
They must face
the real world,
and learn to live
in it or die.
It's nothing personal.
It's just my job.
I'm highly skilled
at things like this.  Aloysius?
Dream? I sleep*
quite soundly,*
thank you.*

Do you ever dream?

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
ALOYSIUS

and plans.

Well, of course,

one would always like...

a season ticket to...
the football games,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little**
more interesting.**

Perhaps just one new decree,**
a rule to be the end of rules:**
if you're going to breathe,**
ALOYSIUS

(He fades out)

JANE

don't make a habit of it.**

Oh, Aloysius,**

smile a bit.***

Let's pretend

you have a heart.

We're all dreamers

in this place anyway.

For a moment

close your mind,

the closet full of numbers,

musty laws and tests,

things that never dream,

that never breathe or run.

Imagine romping horses

or old barns
ALOYSIUS

JANE

laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snow,
birch trees reaching quietly
along the river.
Rabbits here think
modest thoughts of lunch,
a crow drowses in a bush.
Here's the place
for real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people.
People's dreams are more
to them than jelly in a jar,
more consequential than
these traps of words.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
ALOYSIUS

I offer no child of yours
to bait decisive hooks,
just time,
beyond the catch of pow'r.
Your cant and ranting
just fade to numbers,
not faces.
No numbers needed.
The decision is yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.
Your time is near.

A little more time
to make all my
important decisions.
Fewer people
ALOYSIUS

whining at my desk.

Just have the papers.
Just have the laws.

A quiet sunny desk,
with no people's gripes.

Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.

Their dreams are hopeless.

Why should they bother me?

Just give me peace!

I haven't come here

to cheer the revolution,

just to tell the time.

The time to think,
ALOYSIUS

It'll all be over
in a day or two,
Then back to work.
We'll be so far behind.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.

But numbers and papers
can't be killed,
can't be made secure.
What will you say
when you enter your office
and meet a highly valued
man in yellow
sitting at your desk?

It couldn't come to that.

A man who remembers

JANE

the time to decide.**
the cries of pain,
the final silence
of those who must decide.

We never torture
anyone at all.
It's their choice.
Just my job.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
That's my only interest—*
Not decisions.*

You'll have to
get interested
in decisions.
Just as Ron
and Lin were
interested in

FLASHBACK TWO
(Lights come up on a living room scene with Ron
and Lin. Aloysius and Jane begin to fade out.)

We should probably
eat something.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ALOYSIUS</strong></th>
<th><strong>JANE</strong></th>
<th><strong>LIN</strong></th>
<th><strong>RON</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>their decision.</td>
<td>Very interested.</td>
<td>It's getting late.</td>
<td>We've gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What decision?</td>
<td></td>
<td>over and over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just take the paper,</td>
<td></td>
<td>this for hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sign their names.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I still don't</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wastes time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>It can't be true.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And you haven't got much</td>
<td></td>
<td>They must mean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time. Less time than</td>
<td></td>
<td>something else.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron and Lin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Aloysius and Jane fade out entirely)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He went to bed.
Tired of playing
with his bulldozer,

Where's Sammy? He was in the other room
a while ago.
LIN
and no one to
talk to.

RON

What do you think
they'll do with him?
He's just a boy.

(agitated and sarcastic)
Just a name.
Just a number.
At least he won't
have to decide.

Let's not start that
again. The Protector
will be here soon.
We have to decide.
We have no choice.
We have no time.
LIN

Decide!
What kind of decision
is it? Have our child,
our home,
our jobs taken.
Sit and wait
until they get
to our numbers.

RON

Or accept resecurity.
Have our minds wiped out.
New thoughts, new hopes,
new loyalties.
A supervised life.
Which will it be, my dear?
Which will it be?
A living death with Sammy
still alive somewhere,
LIN

Maybe it's not really*
a serious thing we did.*

RON

or final death
and who knows what
for him.

The summons says*
he's a Protector.*

Maybe we'll just have*
to go to retraining*
every week.*

Retraining is police*
and caseworkers.*

It must be real.*

It feels like a dream.

It seems like years
a nightmare, running,

since we got the summons. running, voices laughing,
ALOYSIUS

JANE

LIN

RON

Just a few hours ago.

Just a few moments left.

What a wreck

our life's become

a shadow match with...

with nothing.

yelling,

"Decide! Decide!"

Safety gets

further away

the faster we run.

What to do—die or die.

Become a mindless number

or be removed.

If we sign the paper

we'll have each other.

If we don't, blackness

and maybe peace.

We must decide....

The time....

SCENE THREE

(Aloysius and Jane reappear.)

Names and numbers,**

numbers and papers.**

It still comes down**
ALOYSIUS

time.**

JANE

time.**

Time to think.**

Time to decide.**

You must decide.

They can't make your choice.

I can't make it for you.

The choice is yours.

Time is short.

You must decide.

You're making this up.

It's not this bad.

They just don't realize.

Anyway,
it's not so simple.

I have so many things to consider.
I'm a highly valued man.

But highly valued men get tossed aside, you know.

The choice is yours.

We can't take this lightly.

It's true there's the matter of results.

Accepting resecurity has certain results.

Highly valued results.

A serious charge.

How do you plead?
ALOYSIUS

The reduction is total.
A final agreement, no matter with what (slowly)
I'm a man of great im-por-tance, a highly valued....

JANE

Your time is coming.
The time is soon.
What are your values? The matter is time.
(rapidly)
The matter is choice.
The choice must be made.
What do you value? The decision is yours.
The time...the time!

How can they do this?**
It's all a mistake.**

I don't believe it.**

I'll have to think**
ALOYSIUS

about it. I must**

think about it....**

JANE

The time is coming.

The forms are waiting.

The choice

is yours.

....

LIN

FLASBACK THREE

(Ron and Lin are in the same positions as at the end of Flashback Two. Sammy stands with them, where the Mime had stood, playing with the controls of a large toy bulldozer. Ron and Lin look subdued and exhausted. A long moment of silence while they just look at Aloysius. He and Jane enter the living room area.)

....

RON

Hello.

Come in.

I must tell you.

Your time is up.

I have to ask you...
Aloysius

your choice.

Jane

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

Lin

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

Ron

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

(The Parents hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously at the forms and the parents, and hands the forms back.)

ALOYSIUS

your choice.

JANE

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

LIN

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

RON

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
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Numbers and names.

LIN

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our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

RON

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

(The Parents hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously at the forms and the parents, and hands the forms back.)

ALOYSIUS

your choice.

JANE

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

LIN

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

RON

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

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LIN

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our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

RON

We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and papers.
We signed the papers,
our numbers and names.
Names and numbers.
Numbers and names.

(The Parents hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously at the forms and the parents, and hands the forms back.)
ALOYSIUS

You understand.
The choice
is better....

The little boy.
You'll have to
tell him.

JANE

Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
But we must leave you.
We won't be back.
We won't see you
any more.

LIN

you know
we love you.
Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
But we must leave you.
We won't be back.
We won't see you
any more.

RON

...Sammy...Sammy...
you know
we love you.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
...Sammy...Sammy...
you know we care.
ALOYSIUS

You will be with others. You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to learn again. Sammy...Sammy... you know we love you. Sammy...Sammy... you know we care. But now our time is up. The choice is made.

JANE

You will be with others. You must forget our ways, and learn again. ...Sammy...Sammy... you know we love you. ...Sammy...Sammy... you know we care. But now our time is up. The choice is made.

LIN

You will be with others. You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to learn again. Sammy...Sammy... you know we love you. Sammy...Sammy... you know we care. But now our time is up. The choice is made.

RON

You will be with others. You must forget our ways, and learn again. ...Sammy...Sammy... you know we love you. ...Sammy...Sammy... you know we care. But now our time is up. The choice is made.
(Sammy simply plays with his toy bulldozer, oblivious. The Parents slip away quietly as Aloysius and Jane, one on either side of Sammy, begin to argue.)

Why do they look so,
so dead. Their eyes.
Like zombies.
I don't understand.
ALOYSIUS

Why do they
make me
feel this way?

JANE

That's what they all look like
when they've decided.
All of them.
What did you expect?

The boy.

Why does he just
play like that?
He should
say something.

What should he say?

I don't know....
It's not my job
ALOYSIUS

to know these things....
I have other skills.
I....

JANE

I think you talk too much.
Great decisions are made
in silence.

How do you plead?
Answer the
questions,
fill in the forms.
We must have order here.
You must make
your decision.
The choice is yours.
Do you have the courage?
Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.
ALOYSIUS

You know I'm frightened.
I can't decide.
They'll come and get me.
It's like the darkness,
the cold winter nights,
with no one there.
What will I do?
Help me decide!

JANE

The choice is yours.
The time is up.
You've been too stupid.
You've been too slow.
Now I can't help you.
My time's been wasted.
I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.
ALOYSIUS

JANE

My time is up.

(She exits angrily. Aloysius looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.)

No,

no.

Wait.

Please.

Don't leave me now.

You don't understand.

I need you.
ALOYSIUS
You're my Alter Ego.
My self.
You HAVE to help me.

I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill me.

I'm of some value.

I must decide.

The time is coming.

(Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases, "names, numbers, papers," as he plays, oblivious, with the toy bulldozer.)
ALOYSIUS

I must make
my decision.
The time...the time.

Resecurity or death.
Help me, someone.
I must decide,
decide....

They're here.
The time is here.
The numbers, the papers.
The forms are waiting.
All those papers.
The time....
....
(Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the Three Masked Figures in yellow appear and beckon Aloysius to come away with them. Numbly Aloysius follows them off. The light shrinks to a spot on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer, and snaps into a blackout.)

N.B. The fully scored opera is available for inspection in the School of Music.
--Some Slightly Jaundiced Comments On Libretto Writing--

When I first began discussing the possibility of doing an opera with Composer Sherman Himelblau, it all seemed so simple. I would just whip off the scenario and libretto. He would just whip off the score. And presto! However, as George Gershwin has it, "It ain't necessarily so." The actual time from the start of serious discussions to the final fully-scored product was one year and seven months. It was not exactly the all-time land speed record, but on the other hand, we all lived to tell about it.

Much has been made by critics and music historians of the supposed bad feeling engendered between a composer and librettist by the writing of an opera. I can't imagine where they could get that opinion—unless it's from incidents such as the occasion in the Missoula House of Pancakes when I attempted to nail Sherman with a plate of strawberry crepes over some lead lines for a characterization. But what's a little fit of temperament between friends? If we weren't both under five feet tall, things might have been considerably worse during all three stages of the work.

During the scenario phase, the problems were ones of technical knowledge—Sherman's lack of expertise in language struc-
tures and poetry, and mine in contemporary musical composition. We've both had some experience in theater technique, so we proceeded merrily from there on the assumption that between the two of us, everything was well in hand. Put in a small chuckle in E above high C.

My first move was to immerse myself (me, the Bach freak) in twentieth-century music—Villa-Lobos, Stravinsky, Carter, Britten, Himelblau,—to get a grasp of the general types of phrasing I would be working with, and the kinds of instrumental qualities that would surround the singing characters. I concentrated on instruments with solo qualities which step from note to note as the singing voice steps from syllable to syllable. My education in contemporary libretto had also been sorely neglected until then, and if I never hear Menotti's "The Consul" again....

My background in film and contemporary drama and dance was not exactly suited to the $3 million, cast-of-thousands approach. So our first decision was to restrict ourselves to chamber-size opera. We stayed basically with Sherman's suggestion of four characters (Aloysius, the protagonist; Jane, his alter ego, the antagonist; and Ron and Lin, the parents and victims). We added young Sammy in person only for the final scene, and a Dancer/Mime to make some transitions.

The development of the basic plot was a schizophrenia-inducing experience. Writing an opera about power and the loss
thereof was thoroughly hair-raising when all the full glories of Watergate burst forth (or asunder) in the final revision period. Fortunately I was concerned with the psychology, not the politics, of decision-making, and on death and not votes as a psychological inhibitor. So we persevered.

Once we had the basic plot sketch of a science fiction society in the throes of a revolution, my main problems began. There were questions of scene progressions, tempo, characterization, and the constant need to balance the changing characters of Aloysius and Jane, the Alter Ego. (To say nothing of having to decide on names and titles—Aloysius was at various points The Educator, The Enlightener, and, finally, The Protector.) I also had to come up with some technical suggestions to make the opera performable, and if possible, relatively portable.

What to do about the scenery situation? We decided that a judicious use of rear projection would eliminate the need for conventional sets, plus giving the singers room to move more easily around the stage. Since our original concept included the use of various "levels", concerns arose regarding singers moving, or even tarzanning, from one level to another. So we designated various areas with lighting, between which the action would move. This use of high and low levels would give visual emphasis to the reduction of Aloysius's self-image, without the need for large staging areas and scene breaks.
Finally the working scenario was essentially finished. I had some idea of Sherman's basic expectations in terms of language structures, and we had our first deadline—finish the scoring draft of the libretto before Sherman left for the Aspen Music Festival at the end of May.

So, in early spring, the first trial balloons for the opening scenes went up. And promptly got shot down by Sherman. Back to the drawing board. And back. And back.

By mid-April I had finished the first drafts of all six scenes of the libretto—the first full working draft of the real thing. Only four months' work.

Whereupon we entered the second phase. The painful part. For two months we worked the libretto over, making cuts. From an original first draft of eighty pages, we were down to fifty pages when Sherman and I parted in Aspen. Scene Three and Flashback Three were barely present. The Parents, Ron and Lin, were mere shadows of their former verbose selves, and I had made an enemy of the painter on whom Lin, the Mother, was originally based. All I heard in the ensuing four months was that Scene Two was no-go and that Sherman was getting married. That was nice, but hmm... .

Finally the problem of Scene Two was resolved by a complete rewrite of that part of the opera. By the middle of Scene Two
Aloysius had been onstage and singing continuously for twenty minutes. Something had to give, and it would most likely be Aloysius. So the wishing duet between Aloysius and Jane became a dreaming sequence by Jane, with interpretation by the Mime, to give Aloysius a chance to get off stage, have a sip of water and sit down for a few seconds. My first rewrite of the scene turned out in scoring to provide not much more than a few seconds. Back to the drawing board. Jane was left just sort of standing there singing to herself. Not terrifically dramatic, but it had possibilities. Hmm... Add on a little routine about the less appetizing aspects of brainwashing? No, that would foul up the tempo of Flashback Two. Rant and rave about power in the hands of idiots. Too much like the daily news, and wouldn't go well with Scene Three. Hmm... I did a lot of hummm...ing during this period, and finally decided to take the central imagery from a poem in my portfolio which wasn't doing too well on its own. With a little genteel re-arranging of the imagery at the end of Flashback Three, I had a sequence between Jane and the Mime which prefigured Aloysius ending lines, and gave Aloysius a full five seconds of sit-down time. (See Appendix "A").

Which brought us to the third phase, final scoring of the libretto (not that Sherman hadn't been working on parts of it all along). During this part I mostly cried and pleaded in
vain. Some of my best lines were wiped out by an oboe and a snare drum. There was no way the final libretto could be confused with a play. The music took over for what had been entire pages of mood material and character interplay. Lighting and entrance/exit cues chopped out more. Two of my best jokes in Scene One were gone. Everything fell victim to the critical concern for keeping the performance time down to forty-five minutes. My original rotund babe was trimmed to well under dramatic fighting weight. Then, to make life interesting, someone wanted Jane brought back on at the end of the opera, after Aloysius's final exit. Impossible, I told them. Impossible, I told Sherman. Impossible, he stormed. Impossible, they wailed. Some people can't take a hint.

This is, of course, the phase during which we handed over the various scores to music copyists and typists. The music copyist turned out to never have done music copying before, and evidently never to have seen music before. This is not to be recommended. About every six pages in the performers' rehearsal scores something was left out, repeated, put in the wrong key or tempo, given to the wrong singer, etc., etc., ad nauseum. The vocal typist turned out to be me. (The regular typist had gone on vacation.) And of course the singers, directors, musicians, designers, technicians and cheering section all wanted their rehearsal scores immediately if not sooner.
And, just to keep its hand in, the scheduling office for the theater changed the dates—three times!—and the theater in which the performance would take place. Conflicts of scheduling, you know.

Since I was supposed to run interference with the people who were doing the rear-projected slide scenery, I didn't exactly ^sdear the notion of opera to various photographers and darkroom technicians. And when I had to give them the word that due to the rehearsal schedule the whole thing was probably going to be done strictly with lighting.... Well, Fred may never speak to me again.

But as with any other circus, the show must go on, opening night coronaries no object.

So when Sherman asked me the other day if I wanted to write another opera this year, I did the only graceful thing I could think of—laughed right in his face.

And asked when the deadline was.

Viewing the process retrospectively, I suggest that my main concerns as a librettist, despite various incidental traumas, were the ones I consistently encounter as a poet—compression and accessibility.

Contemporary poetry makes various demands on language.
Compression rather than expansion of imagery is demanded. Contemporary music for opera use also makes demands for the excision of unnecessary words and phrases, for a more controlled non-metric syntax, coupled with a concentration on specific linguistic structures to create and reinforce imagery by use of sound patterns which the poet manipulates. The few carefully-chosen words must carry their own weight, not demanding excess baggage of verbal decoration. Combining the compression of language with the compressed nature of contemporary music, the librettist in a more demanding way than the poet must consider the accessibility of the material.

The playwright has the simplified task of presenting his work in spoken prose with action—the common currency of his audience. Various verbal liberties can be taken if the dramatist pleases, because the performed work can be slowed or various phrases interpreted with visual business or expressions of voice. The librettist's material will be controlled very strictly by the music, both vocal and instrumental. A singer cannot slow a song independently of the orchestra and other singers, for the sake of clarity. Further, since singers often do not have the acting training and experience of their prose-speaking colleagues, staging must be considered in new ways. Unrealistic demands on the singers can destroy a production. An actor may deliver lines standing on his head at the top of a ladder. A
soprano may well come after the librettist with a fire axe for the same piece of staging.

The matter of concentration is also of some concern to the librettist, in terms of the singers as well as of the audience. The repetition which makes the plot and characterization more accessible to the audience makes the work more difficult for the singer to learn. A highly complex piece of contemporary music makes great demands on the singer, and the dramatic demands of the libretto add to the need for clarity in order to aid the singer's concentration. Further, the general lack of exposure of musical audiences to the cutting edge of contemporary music makes a forty-five minute opera a significant demand on the audience's concentration. To the "what is going on" of the words and actions is added the "what is going on" of sophisticated orchestral and vocal music. Everything must be blended into a musical whole which is technically performable and capable of conveying the intentions of the composer and librettist as well as the interpretations of the performing personnel.

What does all this mean to the librettist? First and foremost it means an unrelenting demand for clarity, both of words and of narrative and psychological structures. It must involve simple diction, reduced vocabulary, careful manipulation of verbal temp and stage action, repetition, and a clear, straight-
forward narrative line in the plot. The librettist and composer must make their intentions clear to the musical personnel and the audience.

The poem must answer in spoken words and the pauses between them for whatever drama, lyricism, evocative impression, or rhythmic subtlety it is striving for. No one with a violin can bail out the poem. The libretto, on the other hand, must express itself plainly and evocatively as part of something more. A libretto is made of words which were written to be heard as they are sung, not to be read separately. What can be done more effectively with music should be taken out of the written libretto. It is obviously wasteful to demand mood-setting language to do double duty with mood-setting music, visuals, actions and lighting. These other elements are all more direct communicators of mood than words are. So they should be called upon by the librettist and composer to carry a share of the dramatic work.

Yet the librettist depends utterly on the composer to make his linguistic ambitions work. The composer must see clearly from the early drafts of the libretto what it is the librettist is driving at, and what can be done more forcefully and clearly in music and what more clearly in words and actions. For example, in the initial drafts of "The Decision" I had to write out in monolog and dialog a tremendous amount of the emotional "mood" of the last scene between Aloysius and Jane, so that Sherman
could see what kind of scene I was after. Eight pages of speech in the early drafts ended in three pages of the final libretto copied from the score of the opera. (See appendix "B".)

The poet's concerns are for imagery, timing and phrasing. These are also the concerns of the composer. The two artists cannot independently produce finished libretto and finished score. Each is dependent on the knowledge of the other's talents and inclinations. Each works under a double set of expectations—one's own and the other person's. The poet cannot expect to do everything in words, and the musician cannot expect to cover everything musically. In the early drafts of "The Decision", the parents' farewell to Sammy consisted of a few lines from each parent before the quiet slipping away. So Sherman took the lines and made them into something more dramatically interesting—a duet. This also made the ensuing dialog between Jane and Aloysius more powerful, emphasizing the distance between the couples. This musical treatment of the farewell made my point clear by changing its structure to a more musically structured form. (See Appendix "C".)

In the original scenario, or in the initial adaptation of a work in another genre, the librettist must experiment with saying things which will later be "said" in other ways. These early drafts are in the nature of an exploration of the basic materials of the opera and are open to a considerable freedom
of language and dramatic structure. Of course the librettist who is adapting a work from another genre has certain limitations on his basic narrative structure. Since "The Decision" was original as a scenario, and not adapted, I didn't have to deal with whatever technical problems are entailed by adaptation. "The Sentry", the opera on which I am currently working in the scenario stage, is an adaptation. However, it is adapted from a short story by me, so of course I have no compunctions about changing anything. A much handier situation than that faced by most librettists. I can survive with my ego very much intact after severe cutting of the piece since I don't have to defend my interpretation of someone else's work. The opera must in the end be a unified and independent work of itself, not a piece of accompanied drama.

The poet is limited to communicating solely with the spoken word, heightening or depressing the mood or action by basically verbal means. The playwright adds physical action to his means of communicating. The librettist and composer add instrumental music, pure singing, chanting, sprechstimme, rhythmic speech and humming to say additionally some of what the early drafts had to say verbally.

Naturally, the librettist does not do all of this independently, nor does the composer. Each must assist the other at each step of the process. The librettist must be able to
defend his work and at the same time assist the composer in making some smooth transitions from verbal to non-verbal expressions. The composer may not have the verbal skills to smooth over or patch up a severely amputated scene, and must depend on the librettist to understand his musical intentions. The librettist who cannot read music (heaven forbid) would have to depend on the composer’s compassion and gracious consideration (the composer’s what???) during the various revisions, putting the burden on the composer to say exactly what he wants in the verbal element of the opera. The basic idea each of the artists has of the opera must be combined in some sort of graceful way. Cooperation certainly, but not of the master-and-slave variety. The composer may have the upper hand in controlling the final product, but he also must bow to skills in others. And the greater number of skills each artist has to bring to the relationship, the greater freedom the opera has to grow into a well-made independent creation.

As a case in point, the knowledge and experience of each artist in the technology of theater production can add ideas and insights into the basic thrust of the work and provide means of expressing the work in the most felicitous ways. The librettist has a freer hand with visual drama by the use of modern theater technology. The need for prolonged inter-
Indeces for scene changes has been removed by the electronic fade-over of rear-projected scenery. If a break is wanted, it can be provided, but it needn't be dictated by the set. Action and visual elements of the production are necessary informational factors in sung drama, as Jospeh Kerman\textsuperscript{1} and Ronald E. Mitchell\textsuperscript{2} point out, in terms of both the well-made composition and the well-made production. These can be enhanced by the judicious use of technological expertise by both the librettist and the composer.

Somehow the librettist must acknowledge all of these diverse and competing elements, and though embroiled in debate over the sibilance of "must" and the awkward "a" sound in "have to", he has to consider the overall consequences of a thousand points of poetic technique, musical composition technique, dramatic technique, lighting and staging technique, as well as the calls from photographers and copyists, and the rising price of antacids.

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] \textit{Opera As Drama}, Vintage, 1966.
\end{itemize}
What else could
they expect.

They have to face
the real world
and learn to live
in it or die.

It's nothing personal.
It's just my job.
I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Aloysius?

Do you ever dream?

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
Well, of course

one would always like…

Perhaps a season ticket
a little larger house,
to the football games
some year,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.

And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules:
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

Oh, Aloysius,

Perhaps a season ticket
smile a bit.

The Dancer's dream song begins.
Let's just pretend

you have a heart.

We're all just dreamers

in this place anyway.

For a moment,

close your mind,

the closet full of numbers,

musty laws and tests

that never dream,

that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses,

or old barns

laid soft to rest

by time and weight of snows.

Does all this cant

and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable

A little more time by real people?
to make all my People's dreams
important decisions,
are not just
fewer people jelly in a jar.
whining on my desk. You make a child
Oh, just to be rid a baited barb to kill the heart.
of people's gripes. Are you that little boy again,
Just have the papers a showing how much tougher
and the laws. you can be
A quiet sunny desk, than a starving puppy
a library, on a string.
an assistant. I have no child
No names, just numbers. to bait this hook,
Numbers and papers. just the dash of time
Enough of other people beyond the catch of power.

with their wishes,

lies and hopes.

Their dreams are hopeless.

Why should they bother me.

Just give me peace!

No numbers needed.

The decision's yours.

You know the choices.

You know the time.

Your time is coming.

....

I haven't come here

to cheer the revolution,

just to tell the time.

The time to think,

the moment to decide.

This revolution stuff's

all nonsense anyway,

a lot of energy

and noise for nothing.
ALOYSIUS

I'm highly skilled
at things like this.
 Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

Well, of course
one would always like...
perhaps a season ticket
to the football games
every year,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance,
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

JANE

Do you ever dream?
I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
and plans.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules;
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

The Dancer's Dream Song begins. Oh, Aloysius,
smile a bit.
Let's just pretend
you have a heart.
We're all just dreamers
in this place anyway.
For a moment,
close your mind,
the closet full of numbers,
musty laws and tests
that never dream,
that never breathe or run.
Imagine grassy-roaming horses,
or old barns
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snows.
Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people?
People's dreams
are not just
jelly in a jar.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
Are you that little boy again,
showing how much tougher
A L O Y U T T S

J A N E

you can be
than a starving puppy
on a string.
I offer no child
to bait this hook,
just the dash of time
beyond the catch of power.
No numbers needed. —
The decision's yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.
Your time is coming.

A little more time,
to make all my
important decisions.
Fewer people
whining on my desk.
Oh, just to be rid
of people's gripes.
Just have the papers
and the laws,
A quiet sunny desk,
a library,
an assistant.
No names, just numbers.
Numbers and papers.
ALOYSIUS

Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.
Their dreams are hopeless.
Why should they bother me?
Just give me peace!

JANE

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in
as if from all sides, collapsing into a
blackout. A moment of silence.

.....
.....

I haven't come here
(etc.)
scene two, rewrite, p. A

ALOYSIUS

I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thanks.

Well, of course
one would always like...
perhaps a ticket
to the football games
some year,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

Perhaps just one new
rule to be the end of rules:
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.

The Dancer's Dream Song begins.

JANE

Aloisius?

Do you ever dream?

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
and plans.

Oh, Aloisius,
smile a bit.
ALOYSIUS

JANE

Let's just pretend
you have a heart.
We're all just dreamers
in this place anyway.
For a moment,
close your mind,
the closet full of numbers,
musty laws and tests;
things that never dream,
that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses,
or old barns
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snows.
Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable
by real people?
People's dreams
are not just
jelly in a jar.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
Are you that little boy again,
showing how much tougher
Imagine frisky-romping horses
or old barns^
laid soft to rest
by time and weight of snow,
birch trees reaching quietly
along the river.
Rabbits here think
modest thoughts of lunch,
a crow drowses in a bush.
Here's the place
for real plaid jackets
worn comfortable by people
by real children.

People's dreams are more
to them than jelly in a jar,
more consequential than these traps of words.
You make a child
a baited barb to kill the heart.
I offer no child of yours
to bait decisive hooks,
just time,
beyond the catch of power.
Your cant and ranting
just fade/ to numbers
not to faces.
No numbers needed.
You must face your choice.
You know the choice.
You know the time.
Your time is coming.
....
A little more time,

A L O Y S I U S

to make all my

J A N E

important decisions.

you can be

Fewer people

than a starving puppy

whining on my desk.

on a string.

Oh, just to be rid

I offer no child

of people's gripes.

to bait this hook,

Just have the papers

just the dash of time

and the laws.

beyond the catch of power.

A quiet sunny desk,

No numbers needed.

an assistant.

The decisions yours.

No names, just numbers.

You know the choices.

Numbers and papers.

You know the time.

Your time is coming.
ALOYSIUS

Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.
Their dreams are hopeless.
Why should they bother me?
Just give me peace!
---

JANE

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in
as if from all sides, collapsing into a
blackout. A moment of silence.

• • •

I haven't come here

(etc.)
and learn to live
in it or die.

It's nothing personal.

It's just my job.

I'm highly skilled
at things like this.

Aloysius?

Do you ever dream?

Dream? I sleep
quite soundly, thank you.

I mean the wishes
of the secret heart,
the little hopes
and plans.
Well, of course,
one would always like
a little larger house,
a nicer desk,
a little more importance.
And perhaps from time
to time a new decree
to make life a little
more interesting.

Perhaps just one new rule,
a rule to be the end of rules:
if you're going to breathe,
don't make a habit of it.
Oh, Aloysius,
smile a bit.

Perhaps a season ticket to the football games some year...

Let's just pretend you have a heart.

We're all just dreamers in this place anyway.

For a moment, close your mind, the closet full of numbers, musty laws and tests that never dream, that never breathe or run.

Imagine grassy-romping horses.

A spot light comes up on the Dancer, and the dream song begins.
or old barns
laid soft to rest

A little nicer car... by time and weight of snows.

Does all this cant
and ranting ever translate
into real plaid jackets
worn comfortable

A little more time by real people?
to make all my People's dreams
important decisions, are not just
fewer people jelly in a jar.
whining on my desk. You make a child

Oh, just to be rid a baited barb to kill the heart.
ALCYSIUS

of people's gripes.
Just to have the papers
and the laws.
A quiet sunny desk,
a library,
an assistant,
No names, just numbers.
Numbers and papers.
Enough of other people
with their wishes,
lies and hopes.
Their dreams are hopeless.
Why should they bother me?

JANE

Are you that little boy again,
showing how much tougher
you can be
than a starving puppy
on a string.
I have no child
to bait this hook,
just the dash of time
beyond the catch of power.
No numbers needed.
The decision's yours.
You know the choices.
You know the time.

LIN

Ron

The dance ends with the Dancer, pressed in as if from all sides, collapsing into a blackout. A moment of silence.
ALOYSIUS       JANE       LIN       RON

(Just give me peace!) (Your time is coming.)

.....

I haven't come here
to cheer the revolution,
just to tell the time.
The time to think,
the moment to decide.

This revolution stuff's-
all nonsense anyway.

a lot of energy-

and noise for nothing.

It'll all be over
in a day or two,
They must face the real world and learn to live in it, or die. It's nothing personal, it's just my job. I highly skill.

Allo-ysius, do you ever dream? things like that. Dream?
I mean the wishes of the secret

I sleep quite soundly, thank you.

Well, of

heart. The little hopes and plans.

Alphres Music Corp.

Hollywood Calif.
course, one would always like perhaps a

season ticket to the football games, a nicer desk, etc.

little more importance. And perhaps from time to time, a
We're all dreamers in this place anyway.
Must-y laws and tests

full of numbers.

things that never dream, that never breathe or run.

Imagine romping horses, or
old barns laid soft to rest by time and weight of snow.

Birch trees reaching quietly along the river.

Rabbits here think modest thoughts of lunch, a crow.
drow-ses in a bush. Here's the place for real plaid jac-kets worn com-fort-a-ble by
People's dreams are more to them than real people.
jelly in a jar, more consequent than these traps of words.

You make a child a bait-ed barb to kill the heart.

I offer no child of yours to bait de-ci-sive
Your cant and hooks, just time beyond the catch of pow'r.

Rant-ing just fade to numbers not faces.

No numbers needed the decision is yours, You know the choices,
you know the time. Your time is near!

A little more time to make

all my important decisions. Fewer people

whining at my desk. Just have the papers, just have the laws. A
quis- et sun-my desk with no peo- ple's gripes. En- nough of o- ther people with their
wishes, lies and hopes. Their dreams are hope-less. Why should they bo- ther
I haven't come to cheer-the-revolu-
I..tion. Just to tell the time; the
time to think, the time to decide.
Just give me peace!
Long A
fill in the forms.

We must have order.

No time to waste.

You must make

the decision.

The question is clear.

Your future's the question.

The choice is yours.

Do you have the courage?

What are your values?

Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

A silly joke.

You know I'm frightened.

What will they do to me?

You know my weakness.
I need quiet,
not pushing faces,
not demands.

......

The values
of the greater state,
the happiness or peace
of more than just one life.

You know my values.
They're very social.
They're very proper.

You know I'm frightened.
I can't decide.
They'll come and get me.

It's like the darkness,
the winter nights,
when no one's there.

What will I do?

Help me decide!

Why should I help you?

The choice is yours.

The time is up.

You've been too stupid.

You've been too slow.

Now I can't help you.

My time is up.

My time's been wasted.

You showed you're not worth worrying about any longer.

I have other jobs, other concerns.
I'm not a babysitter.

I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.

It's not worth hearing.

My time is up.

Are you worth saving?

There are so many others,

so many better.

If I thought you'd use it,

I'd wish you luck.

Instead I'll just remind you

of your decision.

Accept the wiping out

of a security clearance.

Or wait for death.

I don't care which.
No, no. Wait.

Please.

Don't leave me now.

You don't understand.

I need you now.

You're my Alter Ego, my self.

You have to help me.

I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill me.

I'm of some value.

I've made decisions.

I've worked with people.

I must decide.

She exits angrily. He looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.
The time is coming.

I must make my decision right away.

The most important decision—death or death.

Someone must help me.

I must decide, decide.

I have some value.

I must think.

The time is coming.

Decide.

I must decide about my future.

Sammy begins to sing a little nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases he has heard, as he plays with the toy bulldozer oblivious of Aloysius.
I'm a man of some importance,
a highly valued man.

The time, the time.

Security or death.

Help me someone.

I must decide,

decide...

They're here.

The time is here.

The numbers and papers.

The forms are waiting.

All those papers.

The time is here....

Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the three Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to come with them. Numbly he follows them off. The light shrinks to a spotlight on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer and snaps into a blackout.
ALOYSIUS    JANE

questions,

fill in the forms.

We must have order here.

No time to waste.

You must make your decision.

The question is clear.

Your future's the question.

The choice is yours.

Do you have the courage?

What are your values?

Your time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.
ALOYSIUS

A-silly joke.

You know I'm frightened.

What will they do to me?

You know my weakness.

I need quiet,

not pushing faces,

not demands.

.....

The values

of the greater state,

the happiness or peace

of more than just one life.

You know my values.
They're very social.
They're very proper.

You know I'm frightened.
I can't decide.

They'll come and get me.

It's like the darkness,
the winter nights,
when no one's there.

What will I do?

Help me decide!

Why should I help you?

The choice is yours.

The time is up.
ALOYSIUS

You've been too stupid.

You've been too slow.

Now I can't help you.

My time is up.

My time's been wasted.

You showed you're not worth worrying about any longer.

I have other jobs,

other concerns.

I'm not a babysitter.

I'm highly skilled.

The choice is yours.
ALOYSIUS

It's not worth hearing.

My time is up.

Are you worth saving?

There are so many others,

so many better.

If I thought you'd use it,

I'd wish you luck.

Instead I'll just remind you

of your decision.

Accept the wiping out

of a security clearance.

Or wait for death.

I don't care which.
ALOYSIUS

my time is up
(exit)

She exits angrily. He looks after her in bewilderment and fright. The lights begin slowly to shrink inward toward Aloysius and Sammy.

No, no. Wait.

Please.

Don’t leave me now.

You don’t understand.

I need you.

You’re my Alter Ego.

my self.

You HAVE to help me.

(long boat)
ALOYSIUS

I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill me.

I'm of some value.

I've made decisions.

I've worked with people.

I must decide.

The time is coming.

I must make my decision.

right away.

The most important

SAMMY

Sammy begins to sing a nonsense chant made up of the words and phrases he has heard, as he plays with the bulldozer, oblivious.
ALOYSIUS

decision--

dead or death.

Someone must help me.

I must decide,

decide.

I have some value.

I must think.

The time is coming.

Decide.

I must decide

about my future.

I'm a man of some

importance.
Alcysius

A highly valued man.

The time, the time.

Security or death.

Help me someone.

I must decide,

decide....

They're here.

The time is here.

The numbers and papers.

The forms are waiting.

All those papers.

The time is here.

(Off direct next off)
Sammy continues his oblivious chant as the three Masked Figures appear and beckon Aloysius to come with them. Numbly he follows them off. The light shrinks to a spot on Sammy and the toy. The music comes up and drowns Sammy out in a discordant note as the light shrinks to a spot on the bulldozer and snaps into a blackout.
silence.

How do you plead? Answer the questions,

fill in the forms. We must have order here--. You must

make your decision. The choice is yours. Do you have the courage? Your
Time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

You know I'm frightened. I can't decide. They'll come and get me. It's like the darkness, the...
cold winter nights, with no one there. What will I do?

The choice is yours. The time is up. You've

Help me decide.

been too stupid, you've been too slow. Now I can't help you. My
I'm highly skilled. The time's been wasted. My time is up!

Wait. Please...
Don't leave me now. You don't understand. I need you. You're my Alter Ego, my Self.

You have to help me.
I'm frightened. What will happen? I must decide. They couldn't kill
I must decide. 

I'm of some value. I must decide! 

The time is coming. I must make my decision. The
Rese-time, the time. Re-se-cu-ri-ty or

decide. I must de-cide, de-cide!
They're here. The time is here.

The numbers, the papers, the forms are
All those papers -- The time

crescendo poco a poco al fine.
Using given pitch limitations and pitch order, execute any rhythms and registers playing frantically until cued by conductor to play the final measure. The order (numbers in score) is given but the duration is to be determined by the conductor.
you know

we love you.

But

we have to go away.

We won't be back.

We won't see you

any more.

You'll

be with others.

You'll

have to forget,

to learn again.

You know we

love

you.

We'll try
to go quietly.

It will be

better.

The time is

up.

The choice is made.

You know we love you.

Try to...

forget us.

The time is up.

We had to decide.

decide.

Our names,

numbers,

papers.

It's really nothing.

You needn't worry.

It'll soon be over....
Numbers and papers.
Your names and numbers.
It's so much better.
We know you'll...
think it better.
You understand.
The choice is better...
( )

The little boy,
you'll have to
tell him.
(p.o.v.-e.)

They hand over the forms to Aloysius. He looks nervously
at the forms, and the parents, and hands the forms back.

you know
we love you.

But

You know we can't

we have to go away.

But we must leave you.

We won't be back.

We won't see you any more.

You'll

be with others.

You'll have to forget,

our ways again.

You'll have to learn again.

You know we love
ALOYSIUS

JANE

LIN

RON

you.

S - S, You know we care.

We'll try...

It will be

to go quietly...

better.

now our

The time is

up.

The choice is made.

You know we love you.

Try to...

forget us.

The time is up.

We had to decide,
Sammy simply plays with his toy, oblivious. The parents slip off quietly as Aloysius and Jane, one on either side of Sammy, begin to argue.

Why do they look so dead. Their eyes. Like zombies.

I don't understand.

Why do they stare? I can't decide.

Why do they make me
But care must leave you.

You know we care. But we must leave -- you.

We won't be back. We won't

We -- won't be back -- --. We won't
I'm more. You will be with

see you any more. You will be with

see you any more.

others. You'll have to forget our ways. You'll have to

others. You must forget our ways, and
learn a-gain.

Sam-ny, Sam-ny, You know we
love you. Sammy, Sammy, Sammy, You know we know we love you. Sammy, Sammy.

care. But now -- our time is up,

You know we care. But now -- our time is up.
the choice is made.

Why do they look so, so dead?
Their eyes like

Sammy.
THE POET RETURNS TO NAPLES, FORGOTTEN

For Dick Hugo

From a cellar of cracked plates
you have come twenty-five years
back to this Italian-ragged coastline.

Stranger again, your house is grey,
your children rejected. The sea explodes.
It is all you can see, homesick--
empty eyes stolen from young thieves,
the natives tired of your
picturesque life. Still

you catch the familiar sounds--
wet rocks crumbling to caves, old
women singing for a boat fifty years gone,
the sun forgetting to rise.

You came to lose your fears,
find instead the same gulls,
still grey, still farther than you can
reach.
I stand all night by the window
waiting to fly with the geese to Newfoundland—
leave the moon behind and set a course
by cloud shadows on the valley.

Butterflies cross the highway,
flow into the dawning gulf.
Snowbanks melt to grey moths.

Soon it will be high time.
ESCAPES

For My Mother

Is she dead yet? The blood keeps coming.
The silence, the silence--furniture gone
into limbo, dry flowers, the dust
around the carpets.

This vase
came from my grandmother's house. She waited
in a French convent for the Prussians to leave.
They were slower than love. Handkerchief
with strange initials,
yellowed sheets, tepid water.

Her hair is still black, her fingers still stronger
than mine. She wants to hear Ravel--pavane
for a dead princess. We are all dying young.
Only children of only children.
ON THE MOUNTAIN

This is the house the poets built,
three walls peeled logs,
the fourth an old trailer--
hide covered couch, a salamander
in the water pipes. We think it as we go,
lashing the poles til we dream a threshold.
Dutch doors on thong hinges, a candle
on a thong. The hillside here's
two degrees warmer, pines
in the lee of the mountain. We fill
the chinks with willow sticks,
tarps when the snow comes. Pounding the bottoms
of logs outward against rain, finding
under the floor rocks a cicada,
locust of seven years' luck.
HIGHLIGHT PEAK--FIRST CLIMB OF THE SEASON

Half way on a horsefly afternoon
my feet can only remind me
of the taste of green shade.
Minestrone on the fire won't fill
the holes carved by walking
through a waterfall. The same path
leads back, six miles over,
one mile down.
Behind the snow lake, true summit--
another half mile, sheer.
The creek we started from
survives, thin ribbon
on this barren pale bouquet.
Li Po fell drunk into the moon.
His yellow silk pillow is preserved in the pavilion.
He wanted to write seven syllables about the Great Way
and the meeting of the North and South Winds.

In the darkness plum blossoms are falling
and a single boatman is on the river.
Shall I sing you a song about a feather
falling into the grass?
You said you would take me to the Li Po Bar
across the alley in the Tokyo Hilton,
the poet above plum velvet bottles.
Serene smile hides the Great Way.

And here we are, across the alley
in the best-lit bar in Missoula, Montana.
The regulars hang on the walls.

Li Po could never fall into the moon here,
could he?
ANNIVERSARY

A hundred miles away last year
I still heard the scratch of gravel
when frail Kate went under a deeper sky.
Now I work that night she made,
keeping the sky green for her pale bones' admiration. I sight from the bottom of a grave
to the mausoleum roof,
waiting to see that other sky turn green.
INCANTATION FOR THE VERNAL EQUINOX

In the crescent of a long spring
the moon calls my eye to madness, the true
name of things, glass owls through an iron fence.
I wait
by locked doors to become swift and dark,
run behind the shadows, stay close to the river.
My head fills with static from Siberia,
a prisoner. And here, in the mountains,
our attendants lock themselves in,
safe from dark creatures, owls, the spring moon.
PRAYER FOR THE HILL GYPSIES

We bring our shawls and wagons finally to the sea,
bow in bright skirts, ring the fire
with gold bangles to keep the sea out.

Albatross attack in long flights from unknown islands.

I think there is no need for such grim birds.
The tide is already turning into night.
It's not the birth certificate that proves I'm here,
but what I write on the back--
strange grey marks to remember myself,
names I've never heard before.

Two or three years difference doesn't matter
as long as you really believe
in the chinese order of things,
a road map with the final inch missing.

The real story:
that I always answer pagan sounds,
approve initials I couldn't own,
dream myself some unknown seer's wife.
Like saints or children I wait to hear my name called,
and wonder who will answer, shouting.
EVERY POEM SHOULD HAVE A TITLE

Night climbs up to a pale horizon
as birches pull down the moon--
fireworks through black lace curtain.

Your voice is filled with the river fog,
blue shadows have followed you out of the forest.
Limp on the jagged shore, I dream of mountain sides,
poets making music with their hands,
firesingers between the ritual and the hills.

A third eye awakens dry bones.
Slowly we dance the circle inward.
SHORT SCENE IN WHITE

Trees gone harsh with winter
become their own judges. White jade lions
wait for thoughts of color,
the old mustaches of lonely men
for an end to silence. A white arc,
four seconds,
the blast.
Out of reach of time,
the balance is kept.
"FROM MOUNTAIN BELL, THE TIME IS 7:45"

I find the darkness softer here,
far from gulls and riptide--
a wider night of stars turns past
this attic window. Why should I
wait for magicians, live on rye?
A new music haunts my eyes..
a slower rhythm paces coming spring.
Walking the roofteres, I can
listen to a wren breathe.
POEM FOR MY STUDENT FROM MARYLAND

I.
I hated to give you that Indian,
startle the fancy in your grey eyes.
You wanted Montana, a red man
from the hills, a horse. Poised
at the edge of your chair, you wait
for that first high scream.

II.
Behind the fear, squaws dance with slow feet.
They offer us such graceful pitchers and baskets,
warm furs, fringed dresses. The dogs
are all around, snuffling at our feet, baying. They
vanish past the fire at the sound
of horses coming. Hard earth breaks under hooves.
Here are red men,
noble. They give us broken arrows,
a soft-eyed colt. Everyone is smiling.
The pleasure is ours,
they say. We smile. This horse is very gentle.
III.

Over the long crest of the hill
they come, gentle ponies
bringing death. Each night
we win that war again, again.
The Big Hole is a battle
field. Rocky Boy a reservation.
Short-lived men in cattle trucks.
Children starving, smiling, slowly.

IV.
This Indian smiles. He has the eyes
of a Trojan. He brings us news
from Wounded Knee Creek,
the Cherokee Republic.
He wrote the book on Plato
and the teepee, living communions.

V.
Safe again, away from open land, you can't believe.

An Indian...I saw a real Indian....
But in the corners of your eyes I can see the dance
slowing, feet closer to bare ground,
a drumbeat
ROCK PAINTING FOR A PEOPLE WITHOUT DREAMS

Strange, the things we leave behind,
stick men painted on the rocks,
red ochre sprinkled over bones.
The Indian has a word for it,
the hoop that brings time back,
flooding like a wind-tide
onto the snow, chipping years
from our hands to silt dreams to stone.

What remains--fingerbones of children,
a painted deer with calm gaze.
THE DECISION
A CHAMBER OPERA FOR FINE CHARACTERS AND MIME

LIBRETTO:
A.D. ZEIGLER

MUSIC:
SHERMAN H. HIMELBLAU

MFA Thesis 1975
"THE DECISION"

CHARACTERS:

Aloysius J. Morton .............. tenor
Jane ......................... mezzo soprano
Ron Everett ................. baritone
Lin Everett ................ soprano
Sammy Everett ............. boy soprano
The Mime

ORCHESTRA:

Oboe/English Horn
Clarinet in B flat/Bass Clarinet in B flat
Trumpet in C
Violin
Violin Cello
Percussion:

Woodblock
Claves
Triangle
Suspended Cymbal

Snare Drum
Three Adjustable Drums
Medium Bass Drum
THE DECISION

A CHAMBER OPERA FOR FINE CHARACTERS AND MIME

Libretto:
A.D. Zeigler

Music:
Sherman H. Himelblau

Slow (1:64)

Copyright © 1975 by Sherman H. Himelblau
Voices Shouting off-stage

There's one! In blue! Get him!

Crack Him! A Protector! Get the Protector!

Using the given pitch limitations and pitch sequence, execute any rhythms and registers moving to a frantic climax.
Here I am.

Where am I? At least I'm still alive.

Alpheus Music Corp
I think.

Or maybe they be I've died, and gone to ... heaven.

killed me when I wasn't looking. May -
Is this heaven? They can't kill me! ——

Ah...

(spoken) They can't kill me. M E ! A-l-o-y-si-us J.
Morton, Protector!

It's not permitted.

I'm a man of great im-

Alpheus Music Corp
I make great decisions ev'
I can't be dead.
I'm sure I would have noticed.

What a dumb revolution.

They're not following the guidelines.
This is the slop-pest

All those

YELLOW is an

YELLOWs running a-round.
Interesting color.

minds one of sunshine, or

Just outrageous.
I can't believe it; like children out to have some fun.
That's it! We can solve this problem right now! Some new *Pu-rec-secs!

*pronounced poo-rek-sex.
Football, baseball, hand-ball, tether-ball,

foos-ball.

We'll have a

new

*Poo-sek-seer!

*pronounced poo-sek-seer.
Pu-sec-ser?!

Public Security Series!

To re-

mind ev'-ry-one to just love it.

They will have fun; lots of
Did you ever hear the nice, correct fun. Just think about the traveling revolutionary what it will do
and the foot-ball
to the fa-mi-ly,

The
the neigh-bor-hood, the school and the...
problems you have aren't bad enough already?
Who are you?

I'm a man of great importance,
highly valued man.

I make great decisions every day.
No time to waste on...

Who are you?

You are Aloysius J.
Morton, Protector.

Yes?

I am Jane, your Alter Ego.
I'm really not a religious person.

Churches and altars and all those things just wrong.

Wrong kind of altar. Not church altar, aren't in my de-
Alter Ego; it means

other self.

So I know all about you, and I'm ev'rything you're
I'm the reverse of you.

(SPOKEN) You are?

You're a he, I'm a she.

You're a powerful official, I'm just here.
I'm young, you're ...

I can whistle,

ride a bike and stand on my head!
Opposite, Alter Ego,

Jane.

Are you sure of that?
For your lifetime.

It doesn't seem very likely to me.

In fact,
I can't recall a single regulation about

Alter Egos. I'm sure you would fall in section

four three eight, sub-section "A" - five defining
I said: "Per·foc's?"

Per·foc's

Per·foc's?

That's the one part I haven't got the hang of yet.

What's that? The acronym formit·ted occu·pa·tions.

The what?
Achromy. Abbreviation words.

Oh. What are you doing here?

The same thing you are. Yes.

You are?
Waiting for your decision.

My decision.

What decision?!
I'm a man of great importance, a highly valued man. I make great decisions every day. (spoken) I've changed hundreds of lives.
That's what your decision's about.

What?

Your decision, your decision is the same one you have given all those other people;
about accepting re-secu-ri-ty.

Non-sense! I know all about re-secu-ri-ty. I'm a Pro-
As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State. As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State. As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State. As a matter of fact, a Protector of the State.

Class nine.

Per-son-na-li-ty Readjustment

Offi-cer To En-hance Clear-ance for
Terminal Official Re-secur-ity,

A person could get high just repeating a title like that.

That's very high, you know.

Pardon?
Anyway, these Yellows just don't understand.

They don't appreciate the great skill of a person like my—

A person who understands decisions.

Yes, yes exactly.
Like the decision you must make now.

What's this decision business? You haven't even told me which regulation is involved. I must have order here.
It's very simple. No regulation applies. The regulations are gone. The revolution has replaced them with nothing. You have been
given the same choice, the same choice you gave others: accept re-se-cur-i-ty
or be de-stroyed

That's not a very nice way to put it.
Rese - cu - ri - ty's a ve - ry fine thing;
a ne - cessary tool for pro - gress and
or - der. I've cleared a lot of peo - ple.
Have you ever seen one through, to the end?

Certainly not! (Not in choral) I have a great many other things to do, decisions to make.
Yes, decisions to make one you offered like the

Ron and Lin Everett. You remember them.

What do you think is going to happen?
And their little boy, Sammy. They came in on a

just can't think of any-thing we've

Regulation nine seven three
done. Regulation nine seven
No explanation,

three means nothing to me.

just a summons.

and all that jargon on the
Names and papers, papers and names.

door.

Fill in the blanks and sign.

They checked so thoroughly our names and papers.
Names and papers.

But this is a Protector's office,

isn't it?

There must be some mistake,

don't you think? They don't really care about painters and scholars,
except to approve whatever we do

It must be something I did in a paper, forgot a memo, missed someone's title.
They never say anything about paintings.

You haven't used a wrong color somehow: Peach,

Umber, Yellow?
No, No. I've always been so careful a-

bout the width of lines, and angles too

At your neighborhood meeting?

No-thing. My name, my number.
I helped with my work paper.

Mine was the same. My

No, nothing.

name, my number. Numbers and papers, papers and
Names. Nothing.

Names. Numbers.

Papers. Names. I'm a highly valued man, a very busy man.
No time to waste on mix-ups or mistakes. You must have a name, you must have a number. Where are your papers?

Summons! Ronald Ev-er-ett, Lin-da Ev-er-ett. Regulation
Nine Se-ven

Three. A se-ri-ous charge.

We don't

What is your an-sw-er?

un-der-stand.

un-der-stand.
How do you plead? You must know the laws. The laws are serious.

What does it mean? It must be a mistake.
charge. The subject is Samuel:

Same address, same last name, a child.

He couldn't... He's only a child.
We must remain calm. Don't get upset.

No comments at all.

Surely we can...

Please let us explain.
loved. You must make a decision. The law is clear, the regulations here.

Easy, easy.

Nine Seven Three. You must fill in these forms. Names and numbers. The
child is in question. You must give a full account. You must always tried to give him things that would make him want to.

We've played with him, and walked with him, and

answer a serious question, a serious charge. Licensed teachers only are to know. Tried to teach him to understand this world.

read to him.
E a 0

mit-ted to teach chil-dren.

We're just pa rents, not teac hers. Can't you un-de-

must know the law, You must be re-gi-stered. Where are your pa-pers?

stand?!

Alpheus Music Corp.
Hollywood, Calif.
Numbers and names. Humanitarians must be registered. Regulation

We're

manities.

Three Nine Seven. The law is clear, a

not humanitarians.

We only care about our
re-gu-la-tion co-vers it. Eight Four One. Painting walls is not per-

You see I'm a painter.

child.

I don't paint walls, I paint pictures. I'm an artist. With colors and brushes on canvas.

This is all a mistake.
answer the accusation.

What accusation? We

don't understand. The summons says nothing. What is the
You know the o-ther. We wouldn't care to have it.

Where is our child?!

Such a lovely child to be an orphan at so young an age. We'll send him home while you decide. The child is yours, the choice is yours. Sign the papers. Names and numbers.

Alpheus Music Corp
Hollywood, Calif. V-40
Numbers and papers. The choice is yours. The time is short.

He can't hold my child like bait, a legal ransom! It's
The law is clear. Accept security, or the other. A choice.

Social re-adjustment in careful lessons, well reinforced, a positive approach.
drow-ses in a bush. Here’s the place for

real plaid jac-kets worn com - for-ta-ble by
People's dreams are more to them than real people.
it's all a question of great decisions, highly valued things.

one death or another.

I guess we'll have to

My time is highly valued. People don't appreciate

think about it.
But time is running out, down, away
all the training, all that time.

You must step into their shoes, face their pain.

Pain is not my job. You still don't understand. Re-secu-ri-ty is
business, my life's work.

Nothing, personal, of course, about the people. They value themselves too much. They should have realized they couldn't live like that, and have it.
last. They must face the real world and learn to live in it, or
die. It's nothing personal, it's just my job. I highly skill

A-loy-slus, do you ever dream

things like that.

Dream?
I mean the wish-es of the se-cret

I sleep quite soundly, thank you.

heart. The lit-tle hopes and plans.

Well, of
course, one would always like perhaps a

season ticket to the football games, a nicer desk, a

little more importance. And perhaps from time to time, a
Perhaps just one new decree may be the end of rules!

If you're going to breathe, don't make a habit of it. Oh, Aloysius, smile a bit. Let's pretend.

To make life a little more interesting.

new decree.

you have a heart. We're all dreamers in this place any way.

For a moment close your mind. The closet.
Must - y laws and te-

things that ne - ver dream, that ne - ver breathe or run.

Im - a - gine romp-ing hors es, or

Alphors Music Corp.
Hollywood Calif.
old barns laid soft to rest by time and weight of snow.

Birch trees reaching quietly along the river.

Rabbits here think modest thoughts of lunch, a crow.
Jelly in a jar, more consequent than these traps of words.

You make a child a baited barb to kill the heart.

I offer no child of yours to bait decisive
books, just time beyond the catch of pow'r. Your cant and

crant-ing just fade to numbers not faces.

No numbers need-ed the de-ci-sion is yours. You know the choi-ces,

f marcato
you know the time. Your time is near!

A little more time to make all my important decisions. Fewer people whining at my desk. Just have the papers, just have the laws.
qui-et sun-nay desk with no peo-ple’s gripes. E-nough of o-ther people with

their

wishes, lies and hopes. Their dreams are hope-less. Why should they bo-ther

I have'n't come to cheer the re-volu-
tion, just to tell the time: the-
time to think, the time to de-cide.

me?! Just give me peace!
It'll all be over in a day or two, then back to work:

Names and numbers, numbers and

But numbers and papers can't be killed, can't be made secure.

papers.

Alphavulc Corp.
Hollywood, Calif.
What will you say when you enter your office

and meet a highly valued man in yellow

sitting at your desk? A man who remembers the

It couldn't come to that.
cries of pain, the final silence of those who must die.

We never torture anyone at all. It's their choice, just my job.
Numbers and numbers and papers.

You'll have to get interested in decisions. Just as

That's my only interest, not decisions.
Ron and Lin were interested in their decision.

We should probably eat something. It's getting late.

We've gone over and over this for

What decision?
It still don't understand. It
hours.

Just take the paper,

sign their names.

And you haven't got much time.
can't be true. They must mean something else.

Why think it over? Thinking wastes time.
Less time than Ron and Lin.

Where's Sammy? He was in the other room.

He went to bed. Tired of playing with his a while ago.
bull-dozer, and no-one to talk to.

What do you think they'll do to him?

Just a name, just a number!

He's just a boy.
At least he won't have to decide.

Let's not start that again.

The Protector will be here soon. We have to decide.
We have no choice, we have no time.

Decision - is it? Have our child, our home, our jobs taken...

Sit and wait until they get to our...
except Re-se-cur-i-ty; have our minds wiped out. New thoughts, new hopes, new loy-al-ties. A su- per-vised life.
Which will it be, my dear, which will it be? A living death with

Sammy still alive somewhere, or final death and

Maybe it's not real-

who knows what for him.

* N.B.: These speeches are not to be in rhythm, but must be completed by the close of bar # 894.
ly a serious thing we did.

The summons says he's a Protector.

Maybe we'll just

have to go to re-training every week.

Retraining is police and case workers. It must be re-
It seems like
It feels like a dream, a
years since we got the summons, Just a few hours
nightmare.
Running, running,
What a wreck our life's become. A shadow.

Voices laughing, yelling... Decide! Decide!
match with, with nothing.

cr.sh.

What to do, die or die. Be-

Alyre Music Corp.
Hollywood Cld.
come a mind-less num-ber or be re-moved.

we sign the pa-per we'll have each o- ther.

If we don’t, black-ness, and may- be
We must decide the time.

It still comes down to time. Time to think, time to decide, the time, the time.
You must decide. They can't make your choice.

I can't make it for you. The choice is yours. Time is short.

You're making this up. It's
not this bad. They just don't realize.

Anyway. It's not so simple.

I have so many things to consider. I'm a
But highly valued men get tossed a-
high-ly val-ued man.

side, you know. The choice is yours.
The choice is yours.

We can't take this lightly. It's a serious charge.

true there's the matter of results.
How do you accepting re- se- cu- ri- ty has cer- tain re- sults.

Your highly valued re- sults.

Your

high- ly val- ued re- sults.
time is coming, the time is soon. What are your values?

The reduction is total. A final agreement, no
The matter is time.

matter with what.

I'm a

The matter is choice. The choice must be made.
"What do you value?"

The decision is yours.

The time, the time.

Highly valued...
How can they do this? It's all a mistake.

I don't believe it.

I'll have to think about it. I must think about it.
The time is coming. The forms are waiting. The choice is yours.
Come in.

Hello.

I must tell you, your time is up.
I have to ask you your choice.

We signed the papers, our
Numbers and names. Names and numbers, papers, our numbers and names.

Numbers and papers, We signed the papers, our numbers, numbers and papers. We signed the
numbers. It's so much better. We know you'll think it better. You understand. The choice is better.
The little boy, you'll have to tell him.
Sam-my, Sam-my, you know we love you.

Sam-my, Sam-my, you know we love you.

Sam-my, you know we love you.

Sam-my, Sam-my, you know we love you.

Sam-my, Sam-my,
You know we care. But we must leave you.

We won't be back. We won't

We -- won't be back --.

We won't
You will be with me, you'll see you any more. You will be with me, you'll see you any more. You will be with me, you'll see you any more.

You'll have to forget our ways, you'll have to forget our ways. You must forget our ways, and

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Hollywood Calif.
learn again.

learn again.

Sam-my, Sam-my, You know we

Sam-my Sam-my

Alpheus Music Corp
Hollywood Calif.
Sam-my, You know we love you.
You know we care. But now our time is up.

Alpheus Music Corp
Hollywood Calif.
the choice is made.

Why do they look so, so dead? Their eyes look like...
I don't understand. Why do they make me feel this way?

That's what they all look like when they've done this...
J: What should he say? I don't know. It's not my job to know these things; I have other skills.

A: I think you talk too much. Great decisions are made in

J:
ci-ded. All of them. What did you expect?

The boy. Why does he just play like that?

He should say something.
silence.

How do you plead? Answer the questions,

fill in the forms. We must have order here...

You must

make your decision. The choice is yours. Do you have the courage? Your
Time's running out.

This is not just a sport, Jane.

You know I'm frightened. I can't decide. They'll come and get me. It's like the darkness, the
cold winter nights, with no one there. What will I do?

The choice is yours. The time is up. You've

Help me decide.

been too stupid, you've been too slow. Now I can't help you. My
time's been wasted I'm highly skilled. The choice is yours. My time is up!

EXIT

No. No. Wait. Please.
Don't leave me now. You don't understand. I need you. You're my Alter Ego, my Self.

You have to help me.
I'm frightened.

What will happen?

I must decide.

They couldn't kill
I must decide some value. Time is coming. I must make my decision.
Re-secURITY or death. Help me, some-one! I must de-cide, de-cide!
They're here. The time is here.

The numbers, the papers the forms are
All those waiting. The time

crescendo poco a poco al fine.
Using given pitch limitations and pitch order, execute any rhythms and registers playing frantically until cued by conductor to play the final measure. The order (numbers in score) is given but the duration is to be determined by the conductor.