

***TEETH***  
**IN A HYENA'S FACE**  
**ALWAYS SLIDE INTO PLACE**

by  
Sheree Clement  
2021  
© Rude Awakening Music

### Your team

If the pianist doesn't have training in acting, staging, performance art or other theatrical work, then engaging a theatre director / acting coach, a costumer or art director and maybe a lighting person, will open whole new artistic possibilities, confidence and joy with the theatrical aspects of the piece. Art and theatre directors often come up with unexpected, insightful, and creative perspectives on a character, with elegant ways to expose that information via costume and gestures, working through all the details of how to articulate character.

### The Character: we can call her Alvina

In addition to playing the piano inside and out and possibly also starting and stopping the fixed audio with a pedal, the pianist is 'in character'. The character is female but can of course be played by anyone. Alvina was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Southern US heritage. She performs a dream-like memoire at the piano, sharing emotional 'vapors' without filling in any narrative. Her story floats between scenes, connected by particular sounds or words. She is:

- A cynical, judgmental moralist, who 'leaks' her feelings with sighs, groans and mumbling, as she struggles to articulate them directly.
- Her mother recently died, perhaps during the pandemic, perhaps of Covid-19.
- She is traumatized and is trying to understand her current situation and is flooded with memories related to the trauma.
- She is possibly responsible for people dying during the pandemic.
- She is considering whether or not she is complicit in her Mom's death.
- She speaks to her mother because her mother is still here with her.

### Relationship of the fixed media

The content in the fixed audio and optional video is the sounds and images that Alvina hears and sees in her mind. We the audience get a window into her musings.

### Costume

A costume will send a clear signal to the audience that the pianist is in character, which will be very helpful if they're performing other non-theatrical works on the same

program. A costume designed especially for the purpose could be good; if that's not possible, here are some costume ideas that might do instead.

- Pandemic at-home attire: maybe a [caftan](#) ? or colorful pajamas or the loose, shapeless, knit lounge clothing that can be identified as 'pandemic attire'. Shoes can be [colorful flipflops](#), [Maribou feather slides](#), or moccasins with some noticeable qualities, such as fluffiness, silliness or worn-outed-ness. Maybe a housecoat/ bathrobe.
- Or pandemic attire: PPE. Several layers, in pastels. Consider wearing and playing the piano in purple nitrile gloves and even [fingerless fishnet gloves](#). (in black, of course). Consider wearing a surgical mask. If no microphone is being used, it can be in 'chinstrap' position; with a microphone, there are probably more options for where a mask would be on the pianist's face
- Other attire completely: A choir robe – elegant or [cheesy](#). Or All black anything, with the emphasis on covering all skin (turtleneck? Long sleeves. Tights?).

### Props

Purple nitrile latex-free gloves should sit somewhere out of the way on the piano – a pair, or a whole box.

A box of medical masks.

### Lighting

Low light on a dark stage, either from a low soft spotlight on the piano or a set of music desk-lights – a few around the piano, in case the optional video is being projected. The lighting doesn't need to change during the performance.

### Logistics

To preserve the acting and visual drama it is almost certainly necessary for the pianist / Alvina to not be operating the audio herself from a laptop on the piano in performance. Someone else can do that offstage, coordinated with nods or eye contact. Similarly, the performance will likely be more convincing visually if the pianist / Alvina is not turning pages in a score, but instead performing from memory, in order to give the appearance of a person extemporizing at the piano while hearing (and possibly even seeing) memories. She must wear a Bluetooth headset probably in just one ear to hear the click track.

A media operator can set up the laptop(s), audio diffusion, any microphones, and perform the fixed audio. If there is video, they can operate that as well. This may include a projector and projection surfaces or might be accomplished with loops playing on any number of iPads, computers, monitors around the space.

The fixed audio will need to stop for a fermata in at least one spot: m. 110, rehearsal letter H. There may be more as we figure out coordination between pianist and fixed media.

#### Fixed Media's musical content:

Includes recordings of an older woman in her last days, a younger woman talking to the older woman and sometimes singing, recordings of piano, played in all the ways the live pianist will play them. Sometimes these recordings have been manipulated for effect. Found sounds: sirens, birds, paper crumpling, wood chimes, rattles, floors creaking, distorted vinyl recordings played at variable speeds. The metered, tonal music included is almost never really in the same tempo as the rest of the work. The largest of these snippets, 'close your eyes and let them die' is more or less at quarter note = 90 but has been notated in the score's tempo of quarter note = 60, resulting in inconsistent rhythmic notation.