

some Surrealist methods

for voice and oboe

devised by

James Whittle
Elspeth Piggott
and Giacomo Pozzuto

2012-3

some Surrealist methods (2012-3)

Dedicated to Elspeth Piggott and Giacomo Pozzuto.

Premiere Elspeth Piggott (voice) and Giacomo Pozzuto (oboe), Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York, 10th January 2013.

Text André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924. Translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane.

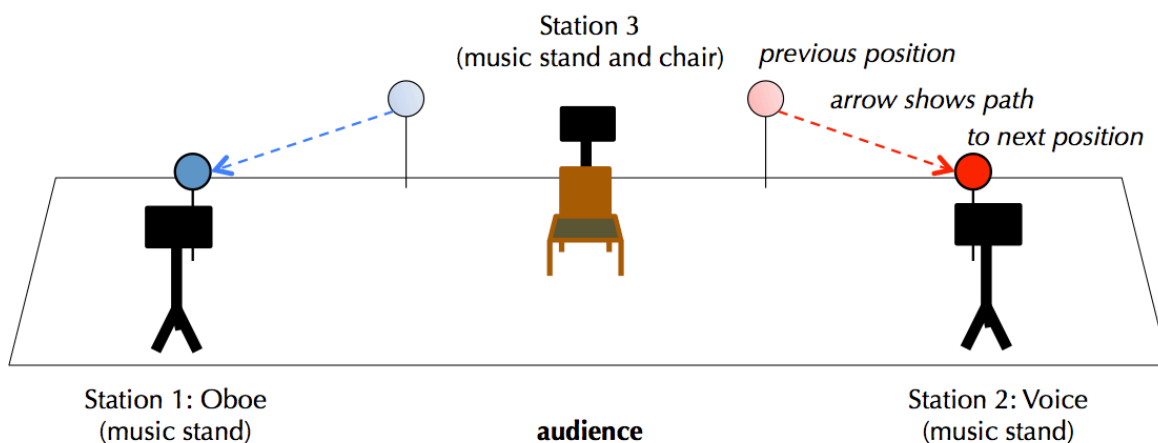
Duration c.15 minutes

Lighting Light brightly only where needed.

Costume At the performers' discretion.

Stage Plan The performing area is a long rectangle, not too deep, sufficient to allow for space behind and in front of the chair and music stand centre stage. A melted clock should be placed somewhere onstage.

Stations 1 and 2 are locations of independent activity; Station 3 and stage centre are locations of interaction. Dashed arrows plot the movement paths.



Performance Notes – General

- **Red** directions are for Voice.
- **Blue** directions are for Oboe.
- **Green** directions are for both.
- Accidentals carry throughout the bar.
- Giant comma = *tutti* pause.
- *Rubato* may be used liberally.
- Tempo markings may be adapted to suit the performers.
- (U/D)SL = (up/down)stage left.
- (U/D)SR = (up/down)stage right.
- (U/D)SC = (up/down)stage centre.

The communication of words – their characters, meanings and all possible connotations – are the most important elements of this piece. Focus on their interpretation and communication to the audience.

Musical notation is used to express a specific way of delivering the words. Keep the narrative going in passages of determinate notation! Avoid focusing on ‘musical performance’ there and lapsing into a different feel.

Part I is a musical essay on the creation of Part II. While the six sections should have their own feel and sense of purpose, performers should maintain the communication of absurd self-awareness and meaningfulness whenever they reach a sudden *non sequitur*, the likes of which define the flow of Part II. Do not allow much pause between sections.

- Black text subtitles should be delivered by Voice.
- Theatrical directions at the start of each section are colour-coded and *italicised*.
- Musical and theatrical directions are colour-coded and *italicised*.

Part II should have the feel of a fast-paced collage, a discontinuous “clip-show” of characters and emotions, all performed with the highest possible levels of energy.

- Musical instructions are *italicised*.
- Theatrical instructions are underlined.
- **N.B.** While Voice recites the text of *POEM*, Oboe does not but instead responds to the text simultaneously by improvising around it.

Performance Notes – Oboe

- Multiphonics: expected sounding pitches are notated with fingerings.
- Flutter-tonguing: if necessary, replace these with trills.
- All trills (except timbral trills) are to the semitone above.
- Supplementary to all instructions, phrases and extracts of pieces that you remember can be put into this piece at any moment they come into your head, or when you feel the need to play them.

Performance Notes – Voice

Create a wide range of highly expressive and individualistic persona, delivering the texts with as much nuance and characterisation as possible.

- Timbre should range from a full singing voice to a normal speaking voice. Use your full range and exploit all pitches and dynamics.
- However quiet, the words must always be heard.
- Extremes of range are encouraged, as are ornamentation, such as *vibrato*, *portamento*, trills, any extended vocal techniques, any accents and voice types (e.g. through impersonation and caricature). Be selective to avoid repetition and maintain stamina.
- Unspecified pitches (invisible noteheads) = a pitch contour to be interpreted in a singsong, *Sprechstimme* style. Articulation is notated on the side of the invisible notehead. In *To make speeches*, the contour matches Oboe's line.
- Cross noteheads = spoken text.

Programme Note

Part I. SECRETS of the MAGICAL SURREALIST ART

Written Surrealist composition or first and last draft

How not to be bored any longer when with others

To make speeches

To write false novels

How to catch the eye of a woman you pass in the street

Against death

Part II. POEM

This theatre piece takes two texts from André Breton's *First Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), forming two parts performed *attacca*. A collaborative devised process aimed to build a narrative from these texts, through aural and visual relationships between Oboe and Voice: two parts of a whole, two wholes apart. The 'Secrets' set out in Part I are epitomised in Part II – 'the most random assemblage possible (observe, if you will, the syntax) of headlines and scraps of headlines cut out of the newspapers.'

some Surrealist methods

Part I. Secrets of the Magical Surrealist Art

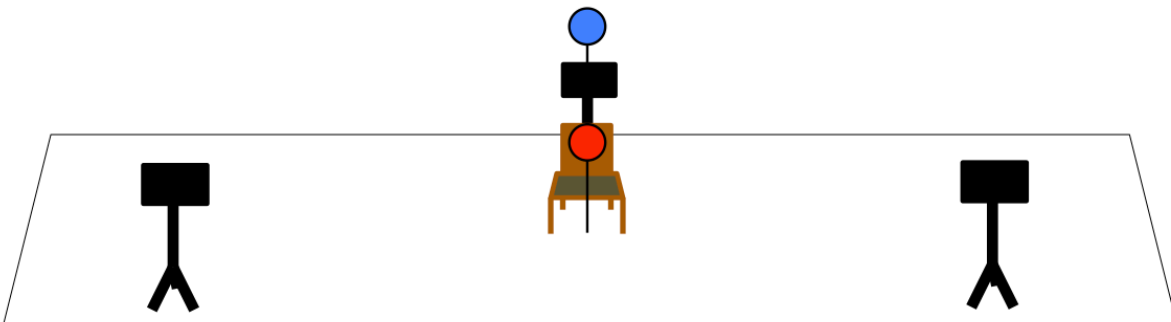
Oboe and Voice march on from SR, bowing mechanically as soon as the audience claps, then continue to their first positions. Voice carries a score in the form of a book (or the Manifesto, or any book if performing from memory). When seated, she flicks swiftly through to the right page.

Voice reads knowingly:

Written Surrealist composition

or

first and last draft

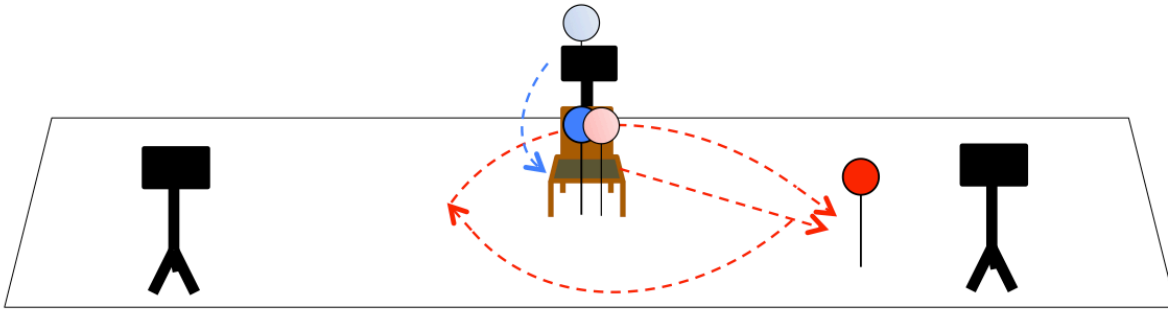


Oboe is stood still, aimed at Voice's head. Voice is seated, relaxed; regal and stuffy; extravagant. Oboe makes click sounds like a typewriter as Voice reads. Oboe pauses just after Voice pauses, with one exception.

[*stuffy, like an aristocratic auntie teaching to cook*] After you have settled yourself in a place as favourable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have writing materials brought to you. Put yourself in as passive, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. [*From here, Oboe begins to introduce short bursts of pitch, rhythmically mimicking "Yes!", "Yes Mum!", "OK", "I can do that", etc.*] Forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything. Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. [*sing*] The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to our consciousness which is only crying out to be heard. [*pitch bursts are more frequent; speak warily.*] It is somewhat of a problem to form an opinion about the next sentence; [*pitch bursts are louder and growing.*] it doubtless partakes both of our conscious activity and of the other, if one agrees that the fact of having written the first entails a minimum of perception. [*comforting*] This should be of no importance to you, however; to a large extent, this is what is most interesting and intriguing about the Surrealist game. [*Pause abruptly, looking dead ahead knowingly. Carry on as normal as if nothing happened: factual and disenfranchised; just clicking.*] The fact still remains that punctuation [*Oboe bursts*] no doubt resists the absolute continuity of the flow with which we are concerned, [*slightly more upbeat*] although it may seem as necessary as the arrangement of knots in a vibrating cord. [*start making jerky sideways movements during a couple of pitches; leisurely*] Go on as long as you like. Put your trust in the inexhaustible nature of the murmur. [*sung animatedly*] If silence threatens to settle in if you should ever happen to make a mistake – [*spoken, accusatory*] a mistake, perhaps due to carelessness – break off without hesitation with an overly clear line. Following a word the origin of which seems suspicious to you, place any letter whatsoever, the letter "l" [*bottom D at every "l"*] for example, [*wondering a thought to herself*] always the letter "l," and [*sung religiously*] bring the arbitrary back [*spoken*] by making this letter the first of the following word.

Voice wanders to Station 2, saying, bored:

How not to be bored any longer when with others



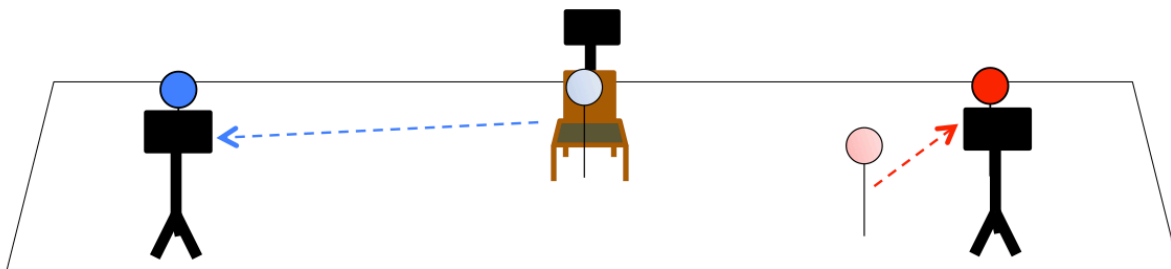
Oboe, bored, goes to sit on the chair, legs crossed. Voice pauses to consider the topic. As Voice talks, Oboe clicks with more frequent and longer bursts of pitch that attempt to match the contour of Voice's intonation. Voice moves crossly around Oboe, at last expressing frustration at him before sauntering away.

[*pause*] This is very difficult. [*a short pause, then far more energetically – walk round Oboe to SR*] Don't be at home for anyone, and occasionally, when no one has forced his way in, [*rising in intensity*] interrupting you in the midst of your Surrealist activity, and you, crossing your arms, say: [*suddenly placated*] "It doesn't matter, there are doubtless better things to do or not do. [*rising in intensity again*] Interest in life is indefensible. Simplicity, [*frustrated, to Oboe*] what is going on inside me, is still tiresome to me!" [*throwaway, sauntering away to SL*] or any other revolting banality.

Voice and Oboe move to their stations.

Voice proclaims:

To make speeches



Oboe and Voice go to their stations and stand strong. They deliver energetic, vociferous speeches. Oboe plays just after Voice as if out of time. Oboe pauses when Voice pauses. Voice only continues after a pause when Oboe is silent.

Text included below for reference.

Just prior to the elections, in the first country which deems it worthwhile to proceed in this kind of public expression of opinion, have yourself put on the ballot. Each of us has within himself the potential of an orator: multicoloured loin-cloths, glass trinkets of words. Through Surrealism he will take despair unawares in its poverty. One night, on a stage, he will, by himself, carve up the eternal heaven, that *Peau de l'ours*. He will promise so much that any promises he keeps will be a source of wonder and dismay. In answer to the claims of an entire people he will give a partial and ludicrous vote. He will make the bitterest enemies partake of a secret desire which will blow up the countries. And in this he will succeed simply by allowing himself to be moved by the immense word which dissolves into pity and revolves in hate. Incapable of failure, he will play on the velvet of all failures. He will be truly elected, and women will love him with an all-consuming passion.

To make speeches

104 < ♩ < 120 (Oboe out of time with Voice)

excited

disapprovingly

mf

Voice

Just prior to the e - lec - tions, in the first coun - try which deems it worth - while to pro - ceed in

Oboe

mf

Play JUST after Voice like a slightly delayed/out of sync track.

becoming alarmed

neatly

f

Voice

this kind of pub - lic ex - pres - sion of o - pi - nion, have your - self put on the bal - lot.

Oboe

f

mp

singsong advice

Voice

Each of us has with - in him - self the po - ten - tial of an o - ra - tor:

Oboe

p

Voice

mu - l - ti - co - loured loin cloths, glass trin - kets of words.

Oboe

p

soulful

mp

Through Sur-re - a-lis-m he will take__ des-pair un - a-ware in its po-ver-ty.

mp

tentative

explode reverential

flowery

p *ff* *p*

One night, on a stage, he will, by him-self, carve up the e ter - nal Hea-ven, that Peau de l'ours.

p *ff* *p*

spoken grumpily through gritted teeth

suddenly soft!

He will pro-mise so much that a - ny pro-mis-es he keeps will be a source of won-der and dis-may.

tr *

* Flutter-tongue if possible, otherwise, replace with semitonal trills.

patronising (back to singing)

f

In ans - wer to the claim of an en - ti - re peo-ple he will give a par - tial and lu - di-crous vote.

f

c. ♩ = 120 (Oboe in time with Voice)
as sickeningly saccharine as possible

mf molto legato

He will make the bit - ter - est e - ne - mies par - take of a se -

mf

stubborn

cret de-sire which will blow _____ up the coun - tries. And in this he will suc-

f

p *f*

careless

mf poco a poco dim.

ceed sim - ply by al - lo - wing him - self to be moved by the im-mense word which

mf poco a poco dim.

dis - solves in - to pi - ty and re - volves in hate.

p

cross *f* **hushed** *pp*

In - ca - pa - ble of fai - lure, he will play on the vel - vet of all fai - lures.

gross *f*

He will be tru - ly e - lec - ted,

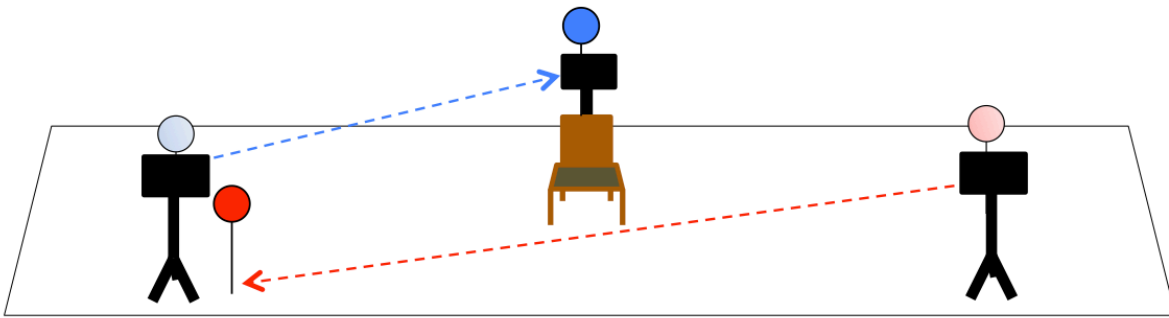
avaricious *mp* *rit.* *f* *p*

and wo - men will love him with an all - con - su - ming pas - sion.

attacca

Voice, with irritation:

To write false novels



Oboe moves USC to Station 3, always looking at Voice. When playing, Oboe pays no attention to Voice. Voice delivers a lecture from Station 2, moving DSR in the last sentence.

Grave quasi recitative: prophetic with intense energy

mf *f*

Voice

Who - e - ver you may be, if the spi-rit moves you burn a few lau-rel leaves and,

Oboe

sf *p* *mf*

(multiphonic)

4 *sempre f* (spoken) in naive wonder

with-out wish-ing to tend this mea-ger fire, you will be-gin to write a nov-el.

mp *mf* *f* poss.

To text score.

To fragments, *ad lib.* Repeat. Take pauses. Deviate. Go elsewhere. Pay no attention to Voice.

[sung wild and fast] Surrealism will allow you to: all you have to do is set the needle marked "fair" at "action," and the rest will follow naturally. Here are *p* suspenseful

some characters rather different in appearance: their names in your *p* meek handwriting are a question of capital letters, and they will conduct themselves

with the same ease with respect to active verbs as does the impersonal pronoun "it" with respect to words such as "is raining," "is," "must," etc. They *pp*

Timbral trill
(+ Eb)
tr
p — *f*
awaken

ff furious

will command them, so to speak, and wherever observation, reflection, and

f gruff

the faculty of generalization prove to be of no help to you, you may rest assured that they will credit you with a thousand intentions you never had.

any pitch & dynamic

Thus endowed with a tiny number of physical and moral characteristics, these

beings who in truth owe you so little will thereafter deviate not one iota from

a certain line of conduct about which you need not concern yourself any

f

mp-sf

further. [Pause - Oboe cues recitative]

Grave, prophetic accel.

f *ff*

Out of this will result a plot more or less clever in appearance,

trill any key for distortion

fff

(return to the fragments)

[sung - teach!] justifying point by point this moving or comforting

mp don't count *f*

denouement about which you couldn't care less. Your false novel will simulate to a

marvellous degree a real novel; you will be rich, and everyone will agree that

[spoken, flatteringly] "you've really got a lot of guts," [sung] since it's also in this

region that this something is located.

[spoken, matter-of-fact] Of course, by an

analogous method, and provided you ignore what

you are reviewing, you can successfully devote yourself to false literary criticism.

senza vib. — vib.

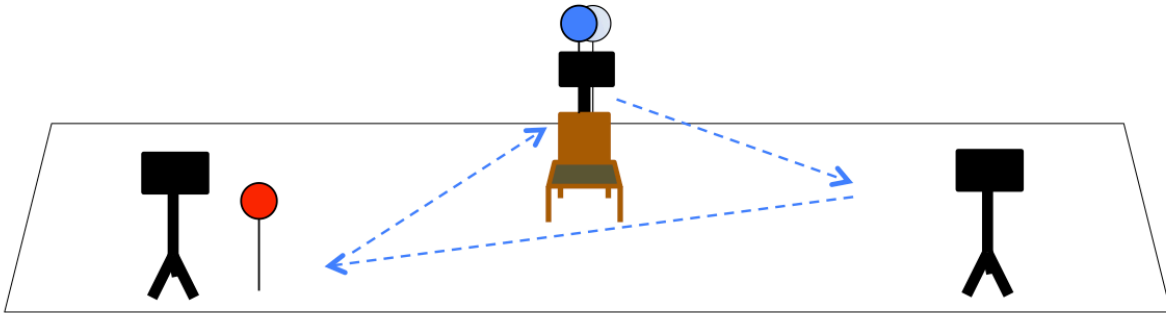
f — *mp* — close — *p*

mf count

mp nervous

Voice starts confidently but becomes doubtful of the answer:

*How to catch the eye of a woman
you pass in the street*



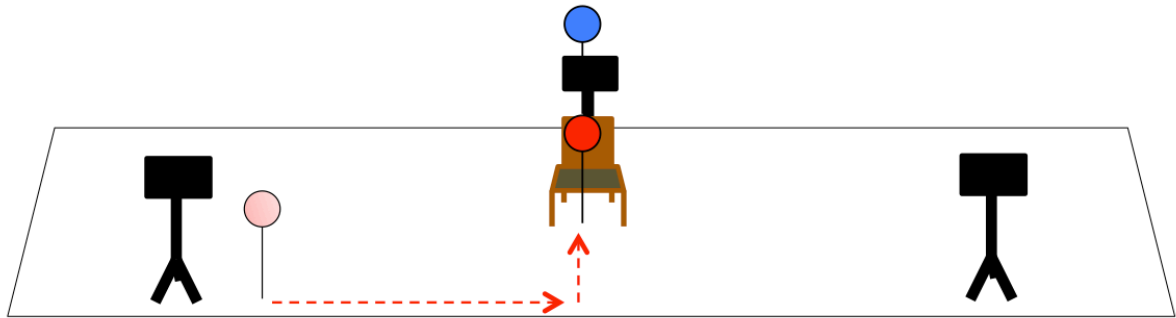
Voice stands thoughtfully, stumped. Oboe moves bashfully, cartoonishly towards Voice: kicking the dust, turning towards her and away, eyes darting around hopefully, all the time playing approximately 125 very high staccato F's (F7). Oboe gets very close to Voice: when he cannot bear it any longer he freezes, then as the pressure overpowers he shuffles away.

.
.
.
.
.

Voice does not notice Oboe.

Voice, expressionless:

Against death



Oboe returns to where he came from. Voice drifts slowly to the chair. Both are subdued.

Text included below for reference.

Surrealism will usher you into death, which is a secret society. It will glove your hand, burying therein the profound M with which the word Memory begins. Do not forget to make proper arrangements for your last will and testament: speaking personally, I ask that I be taken to the cemetery in a moving van. May my friends destroy every last copy of the printing of the *Speech concerning the Modicum of Reality*.

Against death

Grave c. ♩ = 96 bewitched, smooth

Voice *p* Sur-re - a - li - sm will u - sher you in - to

Oboe *ff* *p* *sf* *ff* *p poss.*

slowly release Bb key to change multiphonic and increase beating:

4 *pp* *mp* *p* *mf*

spoken, naive fearful

death, which is a secret society. It will

ad lib.

6 *p* *mp* *mf*

glove your hand, bu-ry-ing there - in the pro-found M with which the word_

Slightly slower c. ♩ = 80

9 *f* *mp* *p* *ppp*

Me-mo-ry-be-gins. — Do not for - get to make pro-per ar-range-ments for your

pushing forward to the end:
passionate

f - sf sf sf

11

last will and tes-ta-ment: speak - ing per - so - nal - ly,

pp *sempre cresc.* *mf* *p* *f*

colla parte ad lib., pushing forward

14

I ask that I be ta - ken to the ce - me-te-ry

ff

17

in a mov-ing van.

p
pp sfp pp mp

21 *mp*

May my friends des-troy e - ve-ry last co - py of the print - ing of the

mp

25 *mf*

Speech con-cern - ing the Mo - di-cum of Re - a - li - ty.

mf

* If necessary, all flutter-tonguing may be replaced with trills to the semitone above.

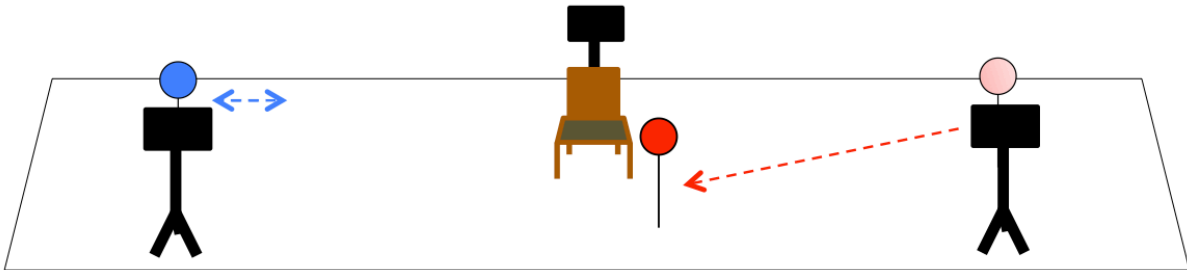
Long pause.
Attaca.

Part II. POEM

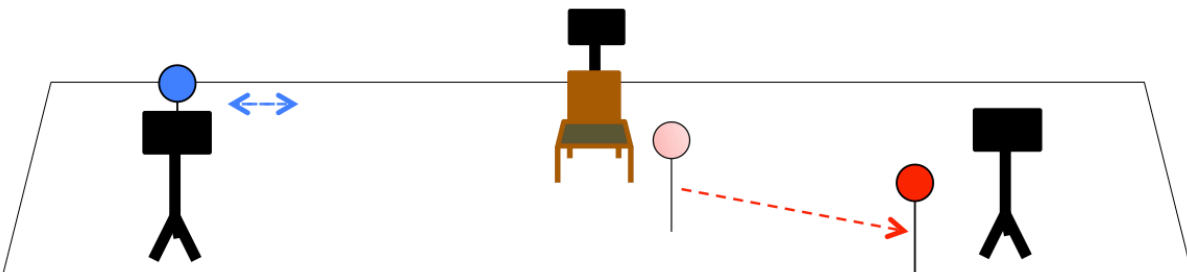
Oboe and Voice move to their Stations to begin POEM together.

Stage Directions

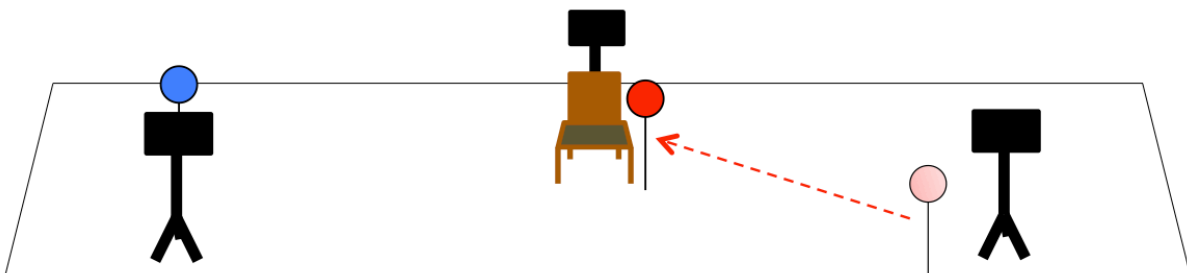
'The most beautiful straws...'



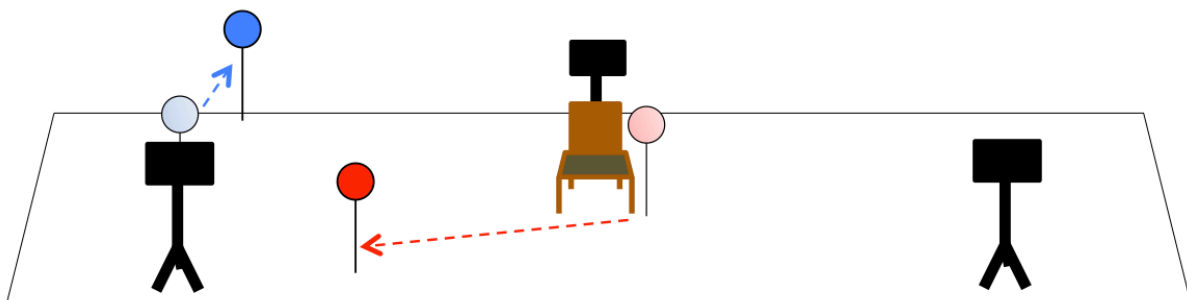
'On an isolated farm... A carriage road'



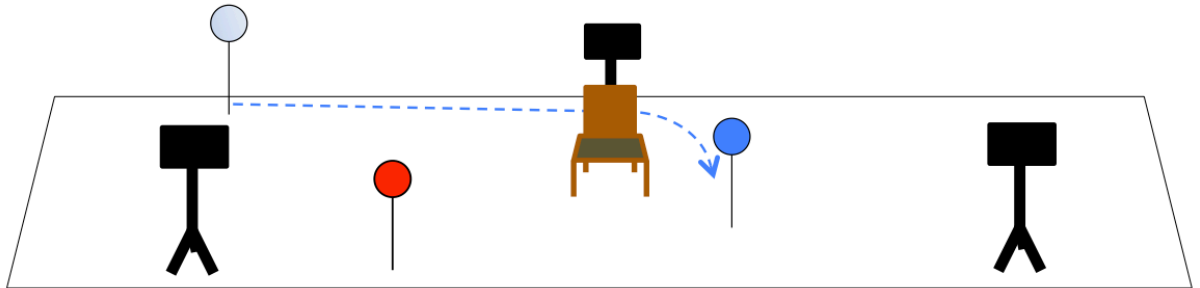
'a pair... of silk stockings...'



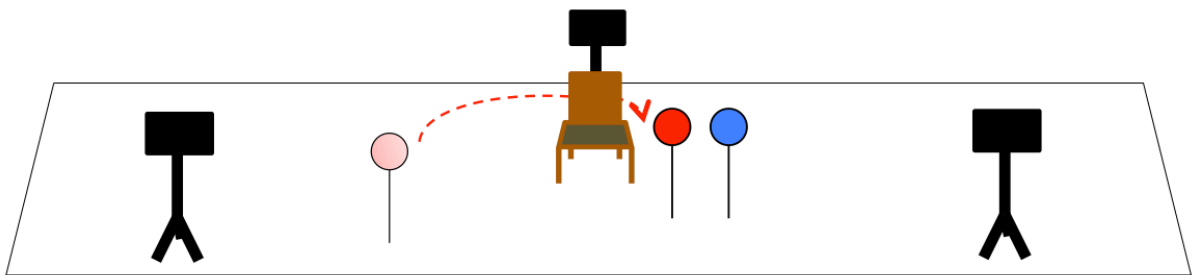
'A leap into space...'



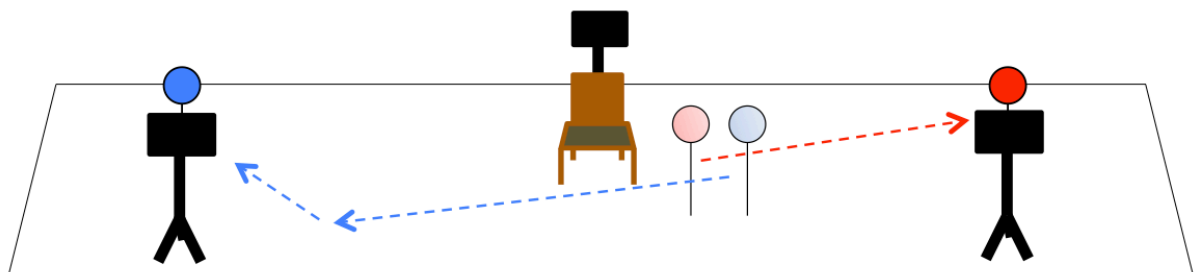
'PARIS...'



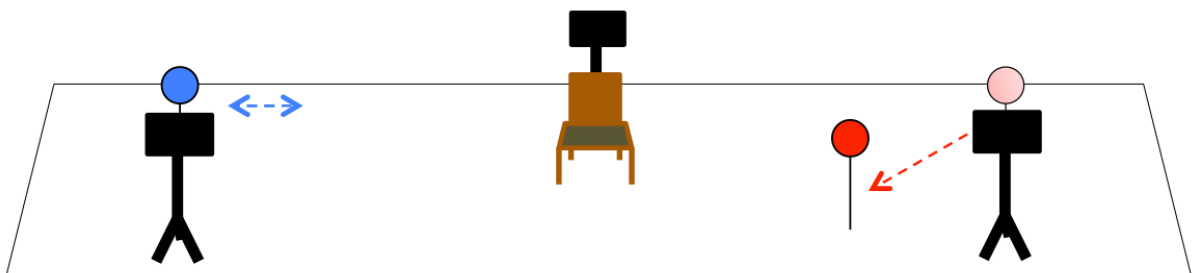
'Watch out...'



'Know that...'



'The wandering singer...'



(Voice)

*Stand frozen, looking forward. Glance at the music.
Burst into a mocking laugh.*

mocking disbelief at what you see

A burst of laughter

informative

of sapphire in the island of Ceylon

dainty

The most beautiful straws

worried

Approach Oboe. Get ignored.

HAVE A FADED COLOR

comically cast off **UNDER THE LOCKS**

Turn to face forward.

(a gap)

bleak

on an isolated farm

with hand gestures, wander slightly to SL

FROM DAY TO DAY

throwaway

the pleasant

Turn back, fall to the floor

melodramatically

with the weight of the world

grows worse

Get up

gruff

A carriage road

Now stride to SL, reaching into the distance...

takes you to the edge of the unknown

...instead pick an imaginary apple from a tree

(Oboe)

Stand frozen, looking forward. Glance at the music.
Imitate Voice's laughter with sucking-in sounds.



continue laughing

A burst of laughter

laugh some more with
rude flutter-tongue pitches

of sapphire in the island of Ceylon

Leap out suddenly very romantic:  Leap back to aggressive clicks, odd pitches

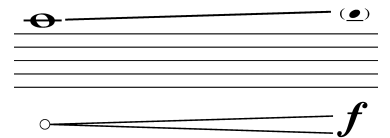
Voice approaches:
ignore her

The most beautiful straws

HAVE A FADED COLOR

no pitch subdued clicks UNDER THE LOCKS silent

Leap out: drop low and rise throughout (raise Oboe high):



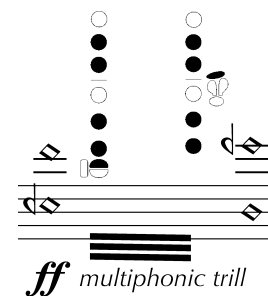
on an isolated farm

Leap back

lots of scrambled notes, **FROM DAY TO DAY**
the odd multiphonic

the pleasant

grows worse



Laughter!

A carriage road

high glissando up 

takes you to the edge of the unknown

Face back towards Oboe

Be a brash broad!

coffee

choir boy voice

hands together

preaches for its saint

*Aristocratic
Sprechstimme*

THE DAILY ARTISAN OF YOUR BEAUTY

a mischievous

outburst

MADAM,

Saunter to the chair...

sexy

a pair

of silk stockings

whisper **is not**

Turning to the audience:

with amazement

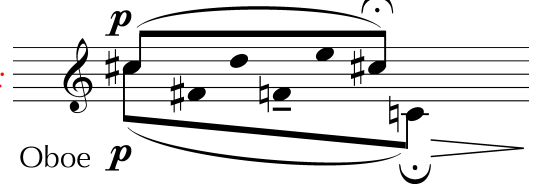
A leap into space

Petrified!

A STAG

Voice Love a - bove all

Stay still: sung soft duet with Oboe, slow and meek:



Love above all

Oboe *p*

grumpy and teary

Everything could be worked out so well

Be a drunken aristocrat

PARIS IS A BIG VILLAGE

Sneak around the chair and up on Oboe...

surprise!

Watch out for

the fire that covers

Hands are a fire
that tickles Oboe

brief choir boy

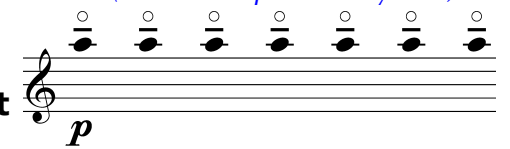
THE PRAYER

Indicate where on the
weather map (Oboe)

of fair weather

Try to play jazz


coffee *Plainchant (intone a speech rhythm):*

preaches for its saint 

p

THE DAILY ARTISAN OF YOUR BEAUTY

 **MADAM,**

a pair  *p* *cheeky*

of silk stockings 

is not 

Draw a horizon with Oboe

rapid bursts

Leap back from Stand, move to Station 3:

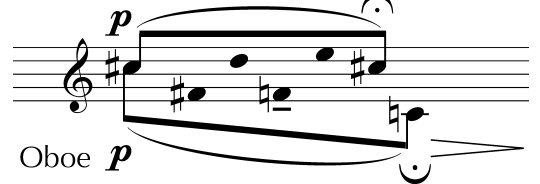
A leap into space

petrified squawking

A STAG

Voice Love a - bove all

Silence. Soft duet with Voice:



p

Oboe *p*

fluttery splutters

Love above all

Everything could be worked out so well

POULENC **PARIS IS A BIG VILLAGE**

Move to FSC

rising streams and splutters.....settle on a low A

Watch out for

Voice surprises you and plays keys with her hands (keep air constant)

the fire that covers

silent

THE PRAYER

Move to Stand robotically, hunched and crouched

of fair weather

a brief chirpy memory

Move fast to Stand –
grasp Stand *edgy imperative*

Know that

The ultraviolet rays

have finished their task

throwaway **short and sweet**

Tell *the spectators a story* with hand gestures

THE FIRST WHITE PAPER OF CHANCE

Red will be

In (self-)confrontation... move off the stand

The wandering singer

WHERE IS HE?

sing **in memory** Antiphonal Interlude:

in his house

flamboyant

*Sing some more.
Respond to Oboe
(no words)*

AT THE SUITORS' BALL

obstinate

I do

as I dance

Pause: suddenly anxious

fearful

What people did, what they're going to do

freeze

Multiphonic Fanfare
(one, repeated, dense and irregular)

Know that

The ultraviolet rays

have finished their task

Go back to Stand

Play irregularly. Leave gaps.

short and sweet

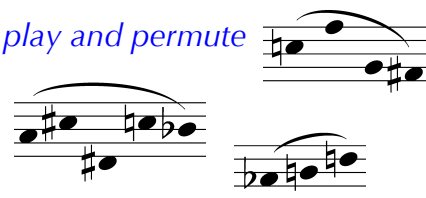


THE FIRST WHITE PAPER

OF CHANCE

play and permute

Red will be



The wandering singer

Be still.

WHERE IS HE?

monosyllabic reply:



in memory

Antiphonal Interlude:

Call and response with Voice

in his house

Leap out



p

Leap back

AT THE SUITORS' BALL

brash multiphonic waltz

I do

as I dance

BACCHUS

ad lib. ...



What people did, what they're going to do

from florid..... become stuck – try to play! – multiphonic... noise –

(stop) freeze