

mauricio kagel: antithese

libretto | — partitur
— score
— partition

deutsch/english/français



mauricio kagel

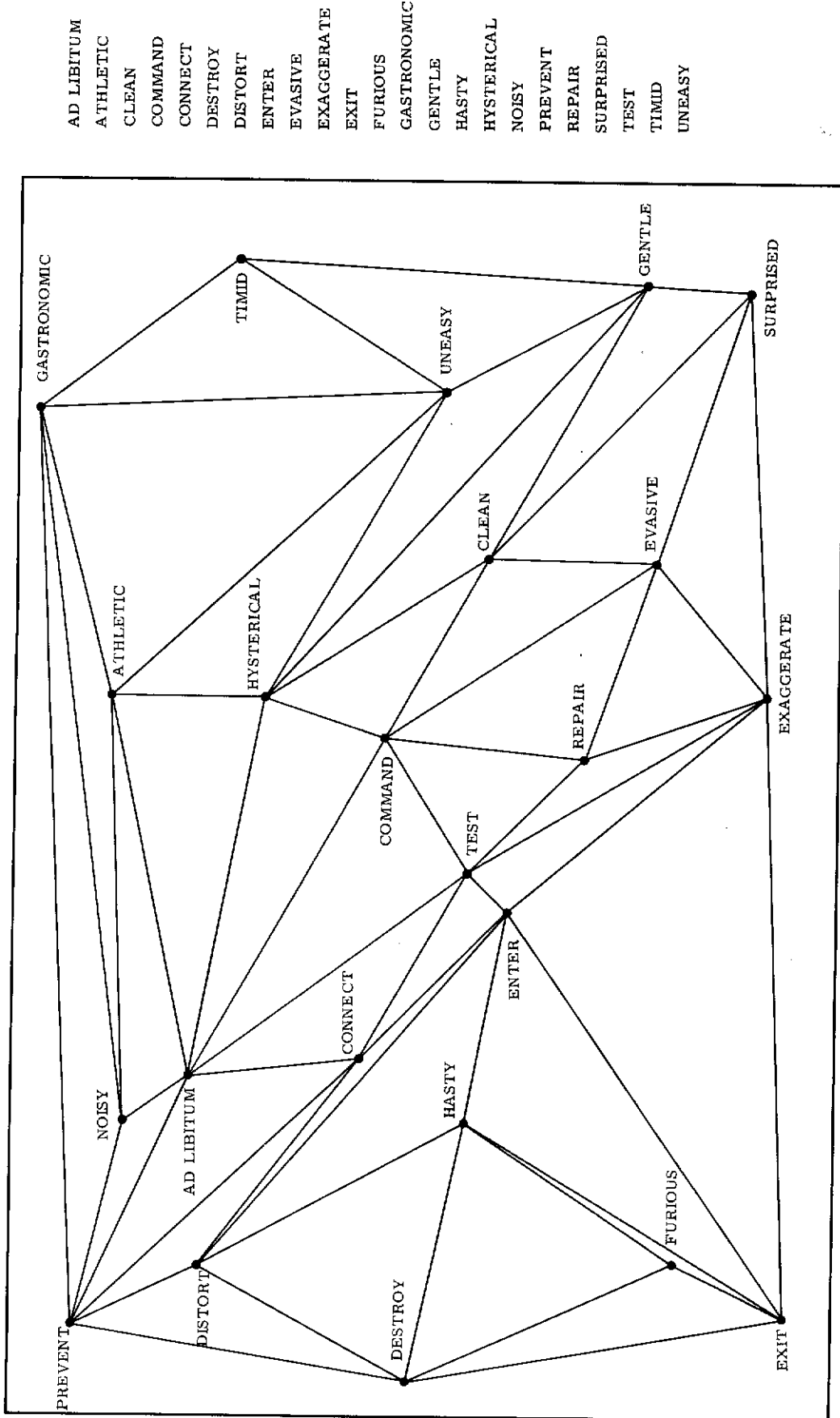
antithese

piece for one performer
with electronic + public sounds

1962

libretto/score

henry litolff's verlag / c. f. peters
frankfurt · new york · london



AD LIBITUM
 ATHLETIC
 CLEAN
 COMMAND
 CONNECT
 DESTROY
 DISTORT
 ENTER
 EVASIVE
 EXAGGERATE
 EXIT
 FURIOUS
 GASTRONOMIC
 GENTLE
 HASTY
 HYSTERICAL
 NOISY
 PREVENT
 REPAIR
 SURPRISED
 TEST
 TIMID
 UNEASY

1
 1.1
 1.2
 1.3
 2
 2.1
 2.2

ELEMENTS OF THE SCENIC PLAY

- 1 The music of ANTITHESE, composition for electronic + public sounds, 1962 (1)⁺ (duration 9'39"), recorded on tape and to be played over loudspeakers (see 3. 1);
 1. 1 one performer, whose chief task is that of carrying out silent actions (see 2. 4 for the case of two performers acting simultaneously);
 1. 2 the pattern illustrated on the opposite page of 23 main actions and the various forms of realising them (see 2. 2), which are the basis for the dramatic actions of the performer;
 1. 3 a collection of electro-acoustical apparatus and other properties serving as scenery as well as for playing over the music of ANTITHESE (see 3).

ACTION

- 2 The pattern of 23 main actions can be interpreted in various ways - a), b), c), etc. - (see 2. 2). The performer (and / or producer) should begin with (any) one main action, and, by following one of the lines, make a selection among the next main actions (2). A main action may occur several times during a version of the performance, but must be carried out in a different fashion each time.
 2. 1 It is not necessary to perform all the main actions, but two conditions are to be fulfilled:
 - a) - at least 11 different realisations (thus at the most 11 main actions) must be performed;
 - b) - there must be activity on the stage for at least 5'30".

2. 2 REALISATION OF THE MAIN ACTIONS

AD LIBITUM:

- a) -
- b) -

ATHLETIC:

- a) - physical training (a voice calls directives through megaphone or loudspeaker).
- b) - weight-lifting (a radio or something similar in each hand).
- c) - flex muscles; then push or upset table or stand.

CLEAN:

- a) - dust somewhat hysterically with a large duster.
- b) - kick everything lying on the floor together to a heap.
- c) - blow dust (talcum !) from machines and valves, causing thick clouds of dust.
- d) - pick up certain machines and polish them on overall sleeve.
- e) - use a little feather duster.
- f) - breathe on and polish, for instance, television screens.
- g) - polish the floor using a cloth wrapped round the foot, singing merrily the meanwhile.

+) Footnotes on page 23.

COMMAND:

- a) - cause several loudspeakers standing some distance away to stop by means of hand-given signals. (3) (4)
- b) - stand at the front of the stage, give a signal upwards with the right hand while pointing with the left to a loudspeaker. (3) (4)
- c) - noticeable alterations in the lighting are ordered by means of appropriate gestures to all sides. The lights in the auditorium can also be manipulated. (4)
- d) - indicate television sets in working order, which should be switched off from backstage (see "TEST" c), d)). (4)

CONNECT:

- a) - several machines by means of hosepipe or vacuumcleaner pipe.
- b) - pull long cables and tapes out of machines, wind them round a chair (at the front of the stage) and knot them round table-legs and apparatus. This action is to be carried out in quick tempo, getting faster all the time, and must be repeated several times. It is to be performed seriously.
- c) - pull cables and tapes from tables and apparatus and wind them (cocoon fashion) round the body. (5)

DESTROY:

- a) - drop a container of radio valves.
- b) - use a hammer. (6)
- c) - lovingly. (7)
- d) - let a heavy object fixed to a cord fall from above with great force onto the apparatus. Either repeat the action or have the object disappear upwards.
- e) - have a number of iron objects, fixed to cords, let down onto the apparatus in the same tempo.
- f) - fire a pistol (especially at television screens!).

DISTORT:

- a) - place objects in the cone of one or more open loudspeakers.
- b) - face.
- c) - turn various knobs. At the same time, the technician in the control room performs distortions of the sound and feedbacks.

ENTER:

- a) - go to center of stage, resolutely, but looking backwards the whole time. (8)
- b) - from the left with back to audience. When the left side of the body is visible to the audience, remain stationary. (8)
- c) - putting on a white overall. (8)
- d) - at a run. (8)
- e) - laughing. (8)
- f) - crawling. (8)

EVASIVE:

- a) - walk very quickly, almost at a run, towards a loudspeaker and jump aside at the last moment.
- b) - move forwards on hands and knees, clearing cables and wires out of the way.

EXAGGERATE:

- a) - the immediately following action.
- b) - the next action but one.

EXIT:

- a) - putting on a white overall.
- b) - taking off a white overall. Then throw it onto the stage from the sidestage.
- c) - holding a portable radio to the ear.
- d) - backwards, unrolling wire (or tape, or cable).
- e) - pulling a table of apparatus.
- f) - crawling.

FURIOUS:

- a) - tear out several cables and other connections.
- b) - hit loudspeaker or radio with the flat of the hand.
- c) - place a small loudspeaker or radio on the ground and maltreat it with hands and feet (without touching it).
- d) - be furious.
- e) - walk jerkingly, halt suddenly.

GASTRONOMIC:

- a) - drink furtively from bottles concealed in various places.
- b) - take sandwiches out of pockets, machines and attaché case; then ...
- c) - chew gum.
- d) - chew nails.

GENTLE

- a) - pick up a transistor radio, stroke it, sink slowly to the ground and embrace the radio.
- b) - dismantle one or several loudspeakers or other machines.
- c) - slumber.
- d) - kneeling near a loudspeaker, talk occasionally; sway lightly.
- e) - tenderly embrace a machine.
- f) - sit with back to audience, listen.

HASTY:

- a) - continue the preceding action getting quicker all the time, or repeat it.
- b) - perform the next action as quickly as possible.

HYSTERICAL:

- a) - get hysterical.
- b) - clap when the audience applauds or shows disapproval.
- c) - clap - applause for ANTITHESE.

NOISY:

- a) - imitate the music of ANTITHESE (a concealed pocket-microphone may be used): rapidly modulated hissing and fricative sounds, whistling, clapping etc.

- b) - utter very short, high cries when the music is loud.
- c) - roar very loud and deep with the head behind the machines.

PREVENT:

- a) - turn radios and loudspeakers around or place them face-downwards on the table.
- b) - hold hand in front of loudspeakers.
- c) - hide radios and open loudspeakers with back and hands. 2.
- d) - cover machines and tables with cloths.

REPAIR:

- a) - lying under a table like a car mechanic. (The technician should perform noticeable variations in the timbre and volume of the tape-recording.)
- b) - try to saw the "uneven" legs of a table level (the table must not fall over).

SURPRISED:

- a) - turn a radio or loudspeaker around and inspect it from the rear.
- b) - listen to the auditorium.
- c) - observe himself.
- d) - set an old gramophone going (if possible with horn); stop it after about 2 minutes.
- e) - play a tape (of TRANSICION I for electronic sounds by Mauricio Kagel); stop tape after about 4.5 minutes. A technician can start the tape and connect it to the other loudspeakers, or it can actually be played over the loudspeaker of the tape-recorder (9).

TEST:

- a) - plug in a radio and twiddle all the knobs. (10) 2.
- b) - plug in radios, tape-recorders and gramophones, vary their timbre and volume. (10)
- c) - turn on a television set and vary brightness, contrast and channels (turn the volume up high and operate it sporadically and staccato). (11)
- d) - turn on several television sets with different programmes (test as in c)). (11)
- e) - poke head into radio or loudspeaker.
- f) - listening carefully, follow the sound at various loudspeakers and machines. 3

TIMID:

- a) - look around in all directions, then crawl into an empty television set and make appropriate facial expressions behind the screen. (12)
- b) - handle certain dismantled machines extremely carefully. Sudden screams, followed by "fuse". At the same instant, all lights go out and the tape of ANTITHESE stops. After about 15 or 20 seconds, the stage is lit again and the music continues. The performer is seen standing on same spot but with both arms hidden under his overall, which is buttoned all the way up. The sleeves of the overall can either be stuffed in the pockets or hang loosely. (13)
- c) - startled by the music, the performer tries to turn down the volume, which instead grows louder. There is a gradual crescendo until the loudspeakers' greatest power is reached. The performer winces and laughs embarrassedly; at this moment the volume starts to return to normal.

UNEASY:

- a) - search in a large attaché case (on a chair at the front of the stage). Gradually let both arms disappear up to the shoulders in the case.
- b) - keep putting headphones on and taking them off again, getting more and more nervous. Put them on again.

2. 3 In order to determine the length of one action, one of the following methods may be employed:

- the music having been heard, a plan of time and activity can be made, according to which the actions can be selected and their duration fixed (see 5, I);
- the main actions can be selected (see 5, II) and the lengths of the lines between these main actions measured and added. The total length of the music (9'39" = 579") is to be divided by the number - in cms - which is the sum of the added lengths. The result will be the duration in seconds, being equal to 1 cm of the line.

For example: total duration..... $\frac{579}{82}$ seconds = ca. 7 sec/cms
 total length..... 82 cms
 (between 15
 main actions)

(If the length of the line between two actions were 3 cms, the first (initial) action would have to be realised in ca. 21".);

- the sort and amount of properties (scenery) influence the choice of actions; the duration of each action cannot be determined before rehearsals (see 5, II and specially 5, III)

2. 4 It is also possible for two simultaneously acting performers with differing main actions and realisations of them to give a scenic version. It is, however, preferable for the piece to be executed by a single performer.

STAGE

3 The scenery is provided by a collection of electro-acoustical machines of various kinds and vintage on movable stands with tables. This scene should characterise a neglected, dusty laboratory and at the same time give the impression of a retrospective exhibition of the apparatus which has been used for relaying sound from the beginning of the century up to the present day:

old record players, horn gramophones, old-fashioned tape-recorders, loudspeakers in all sizes, radio shells and dismantled chassis, single valves, tapes, extravagant switchboards, incomplete amplifiers, damaged television screens, empty television sets, etc. On the ground loose tapes, tools, a jumble of cables, tape-spools, technical blue-prints and many more.

3. 1 At each side of the tables (left and right, see diagram 1) is a group of loudspeakers in working order (not good-looking!). These are for the main transmission of the 2-track (stereo) copy of ANTITHESE. (If stereo equipment is not available, the 1-track (mono) copy of the piece should be played over both loud-speaker groups.)

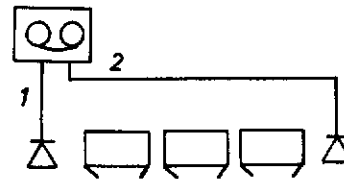


Diagram 1

Some of the old loudspeakers (and possibly radios) on show should be used for relaying the tape (diagram 2). The distortion and other deformations of the sound that may occur are to be put up with. In this way, the sum of technical defects will achieve a "historical" timbre, and the available apparatus (loudspeakers and radios) retain their original function.

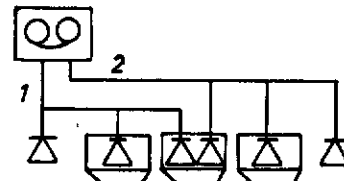


Diagram 2

During the course of the performance, the quality of the sound should be continually varied by switching the various loudspeakers on and off. The groups of loudspeakers at the left and right should occasionally be switched off or turned down when this allows the defective quality of individual loudspeakers to be clearly audible. It is permitted and even recommended to use electric filters (high- and low-pass) to alter the sound completely if the desired manipulations of timbre can not be adequately performed with the available electro-acoustic equipment.

3. 2 At the commencement of the performance, the stage is dark or the curtain down. The stage should not be very brightly lit during the piece. One or two machines which are not going to be moved during the performance are to be illuminated by spotlights. This static illumination may only be altered if the performer asks for special alterations in the lighting within the piece (for example at the main action "COMMAND" in the realisation-form c).
- Apart from this, and apart from the dramatic activity, a dynamic direction of the lighting is required, being based on constant, slow alteration and spatial movement. Extremely slow, continuous transitions from dark to light and back again must be carried out the whole time. The piece should end with a blackout.
3. 3 It is also possible to combine a film version with the scenic one. For this, various main actions and realisations are to be selected so as to avoid repetitions. This (silent) film version would have the function of a second performer, and could star an actor (or actress) not identical with the one of the scenic version. The film could be made in various locations (for example, in the open air, in the laboratory, in a wood, on the deck of a steamboat); however, the original decoration - a collection of machines of disparate age - must be shown in its original arrangement.
3. 4 Projected slides may also be used. The photographs must be of the same stage and apparatus that will be available for the scenic performance.
- A second performer could also act.
- As many projectors as possible should be used.

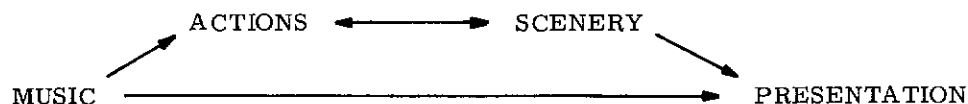
MUSIC

- 4 The tape of ANTITHESE, composition for electronic + public sounds, 1962, may be played independently of scenic performances.
- 4.1 Other musical versions of the work which the composer might produce can also be used for a scenic performance.

STAGING

- 5 Three different departures are open to the performer (and producer) with regard to the composition of a scenic version:

I.



Here, the music is starting-point and time-basis of the staging. The performer, after listening to the tape several times, will find an arrangement of the music; this schematic cutting into single sections will thus give him an idea as to how to proceed. He will try to translate the musical sections into dramatic activity. Having achieved this, and guided by the given scheme of main actions and their various realisations, he will determine a scenic sequence. (14)

The selection of the apparatus and other properties and their spatial distribution will depend on this fixed scenic sequence. During the course of rehearsals, action and scenery will get adapted to each other: it will soon become clear where a movement must be shortened, lengthened or omitted. The final "credibility" of the presentation depends on these decisions and the achievement of differentiated transitions between the individual actions.

II.

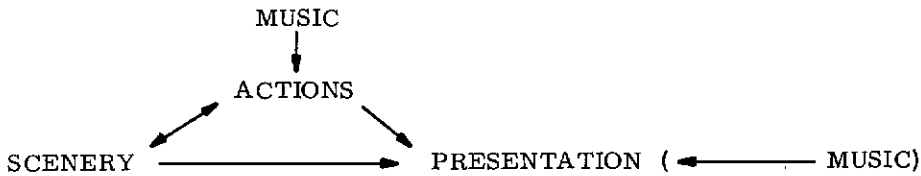
Here, the point of departure is the pattern of the main actions; the duration of the tape (9'39") is merely a time-limit. The scenic sequence (the order of the actions) is fixed according to mimodramatic aspects alone, that is, without taking the music into account.



If the staging is constructed in this manner, the performer could choose the forms of realisation - following the action pattern - which most appeal to his dramatic temperament; for example, only grotesque, comical or serious actions, or also an unequivocal selection of these. In other words, the performer would then work on his role "personally". When the sequence of actions has been fixed, the scenery will be adapted to it (as already described in 5, I). Finally, the completed staging is combined with the music: the scenic and musical sequences are superposed. In this manner, the music remains a definitely secondary event for the performer. It is the audience's business to find connections between actions and sounds. (15)

III.

Here we start with the scenery: the collected apparatus and properties are set up and adapted to the spatial and lighting facilities of the stage. The selection of the actions will be primarily determined by the conditions under which they are to be performed. The performer, stimulated by the available properties, will give certain actions preference, regard others as being unfeasible.



These actions can either have a time-relationship to the music (as in 5, I), or be completely independent of it (as in 5, II).

- 5. 1 Two different scenic realisations of the piece could be performed at the same programme. Between both versions another event should be given.
- 5. 2 On page 2 and 26 two different patterns of main actions are given. The performer can also use them for the staging of other scenic realisations.

(1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5)
 (6)
 (7)
 (8)
 (9)
 (10)
 (11)
 (12)
 (13)
 (14)
 (15)

F o o t n o t e s

- (1) The composition was realised in the Siemens Studio for Electronic Music, Munich, from August to December, 1962.
- (2) Unless the performer begins with the action "ENTER", he must already be on stage at the commencement of the piece (see 3. 2: lighting)
- (3) The technician makes the connections.
- (4) The gestures should gradually get to imitate those of a policeman on point-duty.
- (5) It is recommended to use this realisation only at the end of the piece.
- (6) Also in connection with c).
- (7) Also in connection with b).
- (8) Enter with a large attaché case, which should be placed on a chair at the front of the stage.
- (9) When the start-button is depressed, the following announcement is to be heard: "TRANSICION I for electronic sounds, 1958/60, by Mauricio Kagel". This announcement must be recorded in the language of the country in which the performance is given. A tape copy of this work can be requested from C. F. Peters Edition.
- (10) During this action, the machine (or machines) must be switched off. The performer tries unsuccessfully to get them working again.
- (11) Begin the next action while the television set (or sets) is transmitting the picture only (no sound). The television can either be switched off backstage as the result of an action occurring later (for example, "COMMAND"), or can remain on until the performer finds a suitable opportunity of switching it off. It is also possible, however, to leave it on. In this case, the picture should continue to be seen in the dark for a short time after the blackout in the lighting (see 3. 2).
- (12) Instead of the screen, a black cloth could hang, to be pulled aside from behind.
- (13) If this realisation b) is selected, the piece should end soon afterwards.
- (14) Because of the permutable, preformed actions, it will be clear that the actor cannot give an interpretation of the musical processes, as, with the variable forming of the scenic order, the independence from music is determined beforehand. In any case, a "faithfully adapted" transference into adequate movement-sequences would be out of place. The exclusive task of the performer remains, therefore, to find the superior reasons - analytical - psychological, frivolous, psychosomatic, senseless, peripatetic, tone - psychological, etc., etc. - , which justify his acting to himself. If the actor is interested in the "why" of his acting - and usually an actor can hardly believe in the justification of his appearance on the stage without reasons - his fantasy need know no bounds. One thing, however, remains important: he must play his part extremely intensively, and especially convincingly and realistically. A stylised performance - between pantomime and dance - would destroy the artificial character of the piece.
- (15) One might protest that the music of ANTITHESE becomes a background of sounds and noises here, if one were not aware of the equally unequivocal background character of the given actions, whose untendentious, time-wasting nature is an authentic counterpart to this form of construction (II) of the staging, taken independently of the music.