
Six Duets

To be performed by you and
a series of unsuspecting strangers
in and around a city centre

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DUET ONE — A listening exercise

Your first duet begins here in the street.
You are standing very still
breathing in and
breathing out
as you normally would.

You may notice other people moving
around you
if so ignore them.
You are concentrating on
this booklet.

Hold the booklet up in front of you
try to look like you are reading
without actually reading.

Instead you should be listening.

You are listening for the sound of a voice
from some other part of the street.
If you cannot hear any voices immediately
don't worry be patient
eventually a voice will arrive.

This voice will be your partner.
Listen to the voice.
Listen to the voice like you are listening to an exquisite aria
or some treasured poem read aloud to an attentive audience
in an otherwise silent concert hall.

Imagine this voice asking you a question
something simple like the location of a nearby cafe
or something complicated like
is there really a god
what are examples of the effective use of soft power in 21st century diplomacy
what other animals dream
do you think we'll be together forever?

Remain still and listening for as long as the voice remains
but never look up
resist the temptation to locate its owner
and when finally it begins to move away
let it go.



DUET TWO — A Romance

Find a place busy with people
and choose one of these people as your partner
it might be anyone
but whoever it is
they must not know they have been chosen
This is a secret duet.

The performance begins with drifting
your partner leads and you very gently follow.
You are their mirror.
You are their counter-melody.
When they pause you pause
when they move you move
not together necessarily
but always in rhythm with one another
sometimes closer
sometimes further away.

This first part of the duet can continue for some time
drifting from one place to the next
until slowly
almost imperceptibly
your shared rhythm starts to
fall apart

Everything begins to feel precarious.

When they move

you rush

when they pause

you stumble.

Your footsteps talk over one another

the melody tangles and disintegrates.

You find yourself now suddenly uncomfortably close to them

and then far

too far

away

Eventually you trip and fall

inelegantly

spectacularly

an avalanche of splayed limbs

and a loud exhale of breath.

This is nearly the end of the performance

so do take a moment to pause and enjoy it

sprawled there on the ground

your warm face

resting against the cool hard floor

All that now remains is to stand up and with as much dignity as you can muster

walk swiftly out of eyeshot.

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**DUET THREE —
An interlude**

Ask someone nearby
if you can use their phone to make a quick call

use their phone to call yourself

leave yourself a short message
describing where you are.

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DUET FOUR — A long distance relationship

Find a location high up
where you can look out over the city
From here find a person
somewhere in the distance
they should be far enough away that you cannot read the expressions on their face
only the movements in their body

Try to measure the distant between you and them
Try to imagine how long it would take you to cross that distance:
1) if you were walking
2) if you were running
3) if you were a bullet fired from a sniper's rifle

Try to imagine who this person is
and what they are doing:
where have they just been?
where are they going?
how well do they know the city?

what is the loneliest they have ever been?
what is their biggest fear?
when was the last time they kissed someone completely spontaneously?
do they miss being younger?
have they noticed you standing here yet?

who is older you or them?
who is wiser you or them?
who is stronger you or them?
who has seen more places?
who has had more lovers?
who has made more promises?
who has made more mistakes?
who has done more good?
who is going to die sooner?
who has more phone battery?

what would they do if you walked up to them and said hello?
what would they do if you walked up to them and told them they were beautiful?
what would they do if you walked up to them and told them that your life and their life and the lives of every goddamned person in this whole goddamned city are in mortal danger unless they can help you get this flash disk to an as-yet-undisclosed location within the next 45 minutes?
what would they do if you walked up to them and asked them for some change?

Keep looking at them
as you do so raise your arm above your head
and begin to wave.
keep waving until they notice you
or until they disappear completely
from view.



DUET FIVE — A pas de deux for the end of the world

Pick a flower from a flower bed or a bouquet in a nearby supermarket and when you have done so head out into the street.

1. Entrée

Find a car with only one occupant
moving slowly amongst other cars
or stopped temporarily by traffic lights or a busy junction
or simply waiting at the side of the road
windows shut
engine idling

Approach the car discretely
but be cautious
this partner is far larger and stronger than you are
a single misstep could mean torn flesh and shattered bones
Best to stay (relatively) safe here on the pavement

2. *Adagio*

If your partner moves you should also move
do your very best to stay with them
to match their mechanical rhythm
you may have to run to keep pace
a dance of two simple machines along a strip of unremarkable concrete

It is a kind of love story perhaps
a romance
exhausted breaths mingling
heart and engine
the fluids moving through your warm body
speaking to the fluids moving through theirs

3. *Variation one*

This is your solo
your moment to shine
Grip the flower between your teeth
and move carefully out
into the road

Make one complete circuit of your partner
stepping first in front of them
then along the far side
and back around behind
returning as quickly as you can to the safety of the pavement

as you go you might briefly
accidentally
graze a hand against your partner's body
fingertips running along smooth paintwork
a moment of illicit connection
a kind of shared understanding
a hand held
a kiss
a taste of each other before the inevitable separation

4. *Variation two*

The car will remain a car

Engine gurgling its idiot gurgle

and somewhere inside it

a person will be breathing their own air

maybe listening to the radio

maybe noticing briefly the stranger moving in a curious circle

around their stationary vehicle

5. *Coda*

The dance ends with an offering

You stand still

arm outstretched

the stem of the flower held gently between thumb and forefinger.

You know they will not take it from you

but you stand here anyway

breathing in the fumes

and waiting.

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DUET SIX — A moonlight duet with Oleg Kononenko

This final duet is for the middle of the night
at home alone in your room
imagining what weightlessness must feel like
whilst somewhere
250 miles above you
your partner is remembering
the feeling of walking.



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