



Forrest Wentzel
2025

Performance instructions

Saxophone and oboe are assigned lines of dialogue, however these lines should not be read aloud. Instead, they should be performed on the instrument. Performers may choose to interpret these lines of dialogue any way they choose. For example, the performer may choose to “read” the lines using their instrument, mimicking speech patterns, or they may choose a more abstract method of interpretation, conveying the emotional meaning of the lines through the sounds they produce. Multiple methods of interpretation may be used over the course of the piece.

The actors portraying Bird and Person should read their lines of dialogue and perform actions as written.

Electronics are comprised of four fixed media cues which should be triggered when noted in the script.

Sticks are scattered about the stage, near the person and in the audience. A BIRD is decisively navigating the room, collecting the sticks for their nest. They pick up two or three at a time and bring them back to their nest, which they are building. The nest is partially built but needs 10 to 12 more sticks to be complete.

PERSON is asleep. Basketball-sized rocks are scattered around them to which their limbs are shackled by strips of cloth.

OBOE stands behind BIRD's nest and SAXOPHONE stands near PERSON.

OBOE and SAXOPHONE enter after about 30 seconds. They are playing from the following pitch set (any octave):

OBOE (Concert)



(Eighth-note tremolo – interval of at least a fifth – change pitch every 6–8 eighth notes, any tempo)

SAXOPHONE (Transposed)



(Eighth-note pulse – change pitch every 5–9 eighth notes, any tempo)

OBOE and SAXOPHONE hold whichever note they are playing when the narration begins and decrescendo to niente.

ELECTRONICS crescendo until NARRATION begins. (Cue 1)

c. 2' 00"

NARRATION

A strange thing we saw today was a blackbird's nest
built in the body of a field-gun.

BIRD

Nearly finished, it must be nearly finished.

OBOE

Against the odds, we're still alive.

BIRD

The days are longer here.

OBOE

The nights are shorter, but much more dangerous.

BIRD

Stick upon stick, one by one, and one day, suddenly,
there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap.

OBOE

An impossible heap. Our impossible heap.

BIRD

I left. I left my home. I left the cold.

OBOE

We have never looked back.

BIRD

I build. I build for the spring. I build for the summer.

OBOE

Until the leaves begin to change.

BIRD

I tilt my head to the side and I look forward.

OBOE

Stick upon stick.

BIRD

With each stick, I come closer.

OBOE

Come closer, come closer.

BIRD approaches the nest with one more stick and begins perfecting it — calmly and quietly inspecting sticks and rearranging them, ensuring they are in the correct location.

PERSON continues to sleep, twitching occasionally as if having a bad dream.

OBOE and SAXOPHONE are playing from the following pitch set (any octave):

OBOE (Concert)	SAXOPHONE (Transposed)
	

Hold pitch for as long as possible, breathe, then pick a new pitch to play and hold for as long as possible.

When the narration begins, hold whichever note is currently being played and decrescendo to niente.

ELECTRONICS crescendo until NARRATION begins. (Cue 2)

c. 1' 30"

NARRATION

An artilleryman told us that they did not fire for about four days, during which time the nest was built and three eggs laid. They have fired each of the three days since then and two more eggs have been laid.

PERSON

(Startled awake)

Wake up. Stay awake.

SAXOPHONE

Pry your eyes open and stare into the sun.

PERSON

These stones are all that stand between me and the collapse. Without them, I would suffocate.

SAXOPHONE

You are suffocating us.

PERSON

My feet are swollen, my eyes are yellow, and my stomach is bloated, but I know the truth.

SAXOPHONE

Which is worse - the pain or the fear?

PERSON

Those birds show up every spring and they test us. They test our values. They test our patience. They test our security.

SAXOPHONE

Your stones protect you?

PERSON

Some people welcome them!

SAXOPHONE

And?

PERSON

It's so dangerous! Think of the children! And all in the name of "equality."

SAXOPHONE

It feels like you're going to set up a straw man argument...

PERSON

What good is equality when you're dead? How about when you let your children grow a pair of wings and fly into the sun because you let them believe they could?

SAXOPHONE

Fly. Fly into the sun.

PERSON

(Falling asleep)

I'm exhausted. Please let me sleep.

SAXOPHONE

Please go back to sleep.

PERSON falls back asleep. BIRD leaves their nest to continue looking for materials for building. They pick up another stick and examine it but decide it's not quite right and discard it. They find one more stick, but quickly discard it, deciding it needs something else entirely. They return to their nest and examine it, trying to understand what is missing. What will be the finishing touch?

OBOE and SAXOPHONE are playing from the following pitch set (any octave):

OBOE (Concert)	SAXOPHONE (Transposed)
	

Hold pitch for as long as possible, breathe, then pick a new pitch to play and hold for as long as possible.

When the narration begins, hold whichever note is currently being played and decrescendo to niente.

ELECTRONICS crescendo until NARRATION begins. (Cue 3)

c. 1' 00"

NARRATION

He said that last night when the bird came back to her nest they were standing-to and getting the gun ready for action.

BIRD

It needs something else.

OBOE

Something heavy.

SAXOPHONE

I see where this is going.

BIRD

Something for the balance.

OBOE

Something like a dream.

OBOE

You only need a few.

SAXOPHONE

The bird should take them all.

BIRD

Something cool in the heat.

OBOE

Something blue?

SAXOPHONE

Something green.

BIRD OBOE SAXOPHONE
Something green! *The stones bleed.* *They bleed green.*

BIRD approaches PERSON's stones and spryly picks one up, happily returning to their nest with it and carefully placing it inside. Happy with this addition, BIRD returns to PERSON to take another stone.

PERSON
(Suddenly wakes when BIRD picks up second stone.)
Thief! Leech!

ELECTRONICS
(Cue 4)

SAXOPHONE
The stones were never yours.

PERSON
I told you!

SAXOPHONE
Frothing. Overflowing. Dissolving. I feel my patience leaving my body.

PERSON
It's finished! I'll have to start again!

SAXOPHONE OBOE
Start again?! *(Laughs sarcastically)*

SAXOPHONE turns their back on PERSON.

PERSON

No! Don't leave me with
them! Please!

SAXOPHONE

*There's nothing else I can do
to help you.*

Forlorn and afraid, PERSON stands up, holding one of the remaining stones.

SAXOPHONE

*I have sympathy for you but
it's time for me to step away
to protect my own sanity.*

OBOE

Should we be worried?

BIRD

I didn't know they could
stand. Can they fly?

OBOE

*I don't think they can, but
the stones can fly.*

BIRD approaches remaining stones and takes one more.

BIRD

They're so still. They seem harmless.

Still in shock, PERSON slowly turns toward BIRD, holding the stone.

BIRD

Look across the sea. Do you see the sun? It's setting.
The days are so long here.

PERSON

I didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know...

PERSON walks toward BIRD with the stone. BIRD retreats to a safe distance. PERSON stands above the nest holding the stone, looking into the distance before setting the stone in the nest, and returning their spot, lying back down, and tethering their wrist to the remaining stone.

OBOE and SAXOPHONE are playing the following line, slowly and overlapping each other, taking a long breath in between each repetition.

