

KA

Acousmatic Radio-Opera in nine scenes

based on a short story by Vielimir Khlebnikov
libretto by Marcus Alessi Bittencourt

LIST OF CHARACTERS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ka• the Poet• Laili<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the White One– the Woman With The Jar• Amenofis – Ekhnaten• Amenofis, the Black Ape• AM Narrator• The Scientist<ul style="list-style-type: none">from the Year 2222• a Painter• Mohammed• an Old Ape	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two girls• a Muslim• a Christian Fisherman• Two Monks• a Stranger• a Merchant• an Old Man• a Russian Parrot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Egyptian Priests• the Hunters• the Citizen's Choir• the Grotesque Choir• the Fishermen's Choir• the Niam-Niams• the Four Kas• the Ape Choir – All Apes• the Whispered Choir• the Narrator Choirs<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Half and Full
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KA

Electroacoustic Acousmatic Radio-Opera in nine scenes.

Music and libretto composed and produced by
Marcus Alessi Bittencourt.
Based on the homonymous short story by
Vielimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922).

KA is the shadow of the soul. He will be the guide to a kaleidoscopic passage spiced with the dust of the Eastern Religions and Myths. KA will bring Ra-Aten, the Egyptian Sun, and reveal the greatness of Ekhnaten. KA will bring the Scandinavian Eddas' sea, the earth and the air of a mythological Japan, the Islam's false prophet. He will bring Christianity's reasoning of Good and Evil, he will reveal ancient China, Pericles's Greece, Addia-Saka's Scythians, the Love of the everyday Man. The centuries are indeed his rocking chair.

KA proposes a hallucinatory spiraling descent through the Ages: Time and Space will become one and merge into the Universal, into Death. The whole world will be brought into play as the orchestra to materialize Khlebnikov's 1916 work. We shall try to conjure the miracle of Acousmatics: sounds that are normally regarded as non-musical noises will disincarnate from their daily ordinary function of Source Indexes and will be allowed to become Music.

KA is a canvas of one hour and forty-six minutes of organized sound, all tempered with a fictitious orientalism generated in laboratory. Strange tuning systems, complex rhythmical methods, new orchestration techniques, all was specially reinvented and designed to evoke hypothetical musical civilizations. The electroacoustic medium is used in a unique way to generate a world of deceiving realistic appearance that nonetheless bears the mark of an oneiric surrealism.

The sounds used are mostly real sounds recorded in real life, real spoken voices, real people singing, concrete sounds of all sorts, and a huge assortment of musical instruments. All was blended, transformed, multiplied, agglomerated, beaten into shapes all the way from the smallest sound particles up to the very actual

stretched painted canvas. All this is accomplished by unique computer algorithms specially designed for this project by the composer himself.

No live performers are involved in the performance of this work, which consists solely on the reproduction of previously recorded sounds. KA is a digital work in stereo. Nonetheless, in its concert version, the two audio channels of the work are to be diffused live and spatialized through a realtime digital surround system of eight channels.

The world premiere of KA in its concert version happened on May 19, 2002, at Columbia University in New York City. Some individual scenes were also played in other venues, like the concert of April 27, 2002, at Engine27 in New York City, where the scene II of KA was diffused over 16 channels. The radiophonic broadcast premiere took place on December 18, 2002, in Chicago, IL, by WHPK 88.5 FM.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION	
Length:	Approximately 1 hour and 46 minutes.
Number of Channels:	Stereo. Its concert version is to be diffused live through a realtime processing digital surround system of 8 speakers.
Music, performance, sound engineering, computer programming, production and direction:	Marcus Alessi Bittencourt. Created at the Zoológico studio, New York, USA.
Libretto:	Marcus Alessi Bittencourt, based on the homonymous short story by the Russian poet Vielimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922).
Previous performances: <i>Listen to the complete work in mp3 format on the web at:</i> www.music.columbia.edu/~alessi/mp3_samples.html	Complete (all nine scenes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 19th, 2002 at Prentis Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY. Diffused live through an experimental 100% digital real-time processing surround system of eight speakers. • Dec 18th, 2002. Radiophonic broadcast Premiere. WHPK 88.5 FM, Chicago, IL. Scene 2 alone : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 27th, 2002 at Engine27, New York, NY. Concert of new music from the Computer Music Center, Columbia University. Diffused over 16 speakers.
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CHARACTER VOICES

The Poet Christopher Bailey	Mohammed Alexandre Tannous	Citizen's Choir Christopher Bailey Marcus Bittencourt Lilian Pelaez	Woman with the jar Lilian Pelaez
AM Narrator Ramin Arjomand	Beach Girls Miriam Weiss Amanda Wolf	Stammering voices Hiroya Miura	Spoken choirs Steven Kane Ramin Arjomand Marcus Bittencourt Fernando Gomez-Evelson Alexandre Tannous
KA Marcus Bittencourt	Grotesque choir, Fishermen's choir, Niam-Niams Marcus Bittencourt	A Stranger Marcus Bittencourt	The Egyptian Priests Fernando Gomez-Evelson Ramin Amir Arjomand Marcus Bittencourt Alexandre Tannous Steven Kane
The Scientist from the year 2222 Steven Kane	A Muslim Alexandre Tannous	Old Ape Christopher Buchenholz	other singing voices Amanda Wolf Mary Catherine Ford Rodney Holman Marcus Bittencourt
Gramophone voice Vielimir Khlebnikov	A Fisherman Ramin Arjomand	White One Lilian Pelaez	
Amenofis Rodney Holman	Laili Lilian Pelaez	Ekhnaton, Black Ape Rodney Holman	
A Painter Ramin Arjomand		A Merchant, his Assistant, his Parrot Marcus Bittencourt	

SPECIAL THANKS

The Bogliasco Foundation

The Computer Music Center
of Columbia University

Biographical Notes on the Composer

Marcus Alessi Bittencourt, born in 1974, is a Brazilian-American composer living in New York City. He studied composition with Willy Corrêa de Oliveira at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, where he majored in Piano Performance. He holds Master and Doctoral degrees in Music Composition from Columbia University, where he specialized in Electroacoustic and Computer Music studying with Thanassis Rikakis, Bradford Garton, and Tristan Murail.

He is the recipient of several awards, including the first prize at the Projeto Nascente V (1996) given by the University of São Paulo and the Abril Publishing House, a seven year scholarship for graduate studies at Columbia University (1996-2003), and a residency at the Centro Studi Ligure in Genoa, Italy (2000), given by the Bogliasco Foundation.

His list of compositions includes works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, choir, solo instruments (specially the piano), operas, and several electroacoustic works. He performs regularly in New York City as a composer, pianist, conductor and sound engineer.

I

The Poet's voice :

I had once a Ka.

In the White China days,
 Eve,
 stepping into the ice
 expelled from Andrei's balloon,
 her naked feet,
 what a wish,—
 left imprinted on Eskimo snows,
 she would not expect to hear such word.

[The voice of someone shouting " Go ! "]

AM Narrator :

The prologue : no character is on stage.

The Poet's voice :

Though times ago in Masr
 Ka was already known to men.

Quite correctly,
 they split in three the soul :
 Khu and Bha :
 a man's fame,
 bad or good,
 and Ka,
 a replica and shadow of the soul,
 sent among the ones a snoring sir dreams of.

Time is no barrier for Ka.
 He glides from dream to dream,
 he cuts through time,
 he reaches the bronze of the Ages.
 The centuries are his rocking chair.
 True,
 like chairs in a room,
 consciousness also joins the times together.

Ka was vivacious,
 graceful, tanned, loving.
 An Egyptian profile :
 wide tuberculous eyes,
 Dotted eyebrows.

Now, some notes on me.

I live in a city,
lots of misspelled signs.
Ingenious barbarians
keep their eyes cautiously
staring at you.
They climb the trees
served by breeds of rabbits.

Here in the city streets
finefur people
always graze in herds.
The ideal of the day : human studs,
Krenov Farms style.
" Or else mankind is finished ! ", they say.

I have my own little zoo of friends,
all dear to me for their fine lineage.
I live in the third rock from the sun,
and I like treating it like gloves :
you can always throw them to the rabbits.
What else can I tell you ?

I foresee terrible wars
on the spelling of my name.
I have no mandible-legs,
no breast-heads,
no mustache-antennas.
My height :
taller than an ant,
smaller than an elephant.
Two eyes.
Enough of me ...

Ka was my friend.
I loved him for his bird moods,
his calmness, his panache.
Ka was comfy like a raincoat.
He taught me about words,
eye-words, good for seeing,
hand-words, good for making.

And here are
some other things he did.

[END OF SCENE]

II

AM Narrator :

The city of the buttoned people.
 Their guts show,
 enveloped by pockets of flesh
 fastened by horn bubbles.
 At lunch time,
 their thoughts cook inside their stomachs
 and come out as smoke
 through the flesh seams.

The Poet :

The Science of the Future has to be taken care of.

AM Narrator :

From the top of an iron bridge :

The Poet :

For the sake of Future Archeology,
 Into the river,
 from this great iron bridge,
 I will throw this little coin.
 What delving scholar shall find
 this fluvial sacrifice of mine ?

Ka :

You ask.
 Therefore,
 I introduce you to the Scientist from the year 2222.

AM Narrator :

The coin will be found.

Scientist from the year 2222 : [*finding the coin and scrutinizing it.*]

Incredible !
 Only one year after the first new-born cry
 of ASTSU, the superstate.
 Astonishing ...
 ASTSU !!

Scientist from the year 2222 :

In those times
they still believed in space.
Little was thought about time.

Scientist from the year 2222 : *[to the Poet]*

Sir, can you describe a human being ?

The Poet :

As a matter of fact,
I can.

Scientist :

Number of eyes ?
Number of hands ?
Number of legs ?
Number of fingers and toes ?

The Poet :

Two.
Two.
Two.
Twenty.

Scientist :

Interesting.
Do these figures ever change ?

The Poet :

No, these are the maximum figures.
In fact, sometimes people do turn up
one-armed or one-legged.
The number of such people
tends to increase considerably
every 317 years.

Scientist :

Anyway,
That information already suffices
to formulate the Equation of Death.

See the Equation of the Destruction of the Kingdoms :

$$X = k + n (10^5 + 10^4 + 11^5) - (10^2 - (2n - 1) 11) \text{ days.}$$

Scientist :

A little further and we can, from observing light,
construct the Equation of the Abstract Purposes of Morality
for Evil starts from light's dark burning end,
and Good, from its cold luminous end.

But remember,
Language will remain the perennial source of knowledge.
Indeed, Language holds more truths than we think.

[the Scientist from the year 2222 leaves]

Ka : *[to the Poet]*

We shall now
visit Amenofis.

[END OF SCENE]

III

Amenofis :

Greetings !
 Aten, listen to your son, Nefer-Khepru-Ra !
 There are flying gods,
 there are swimming gods,
 even crawling gods,
 all deaf to the prayers of the mortals.
 Sukh, Mnevis, Bennu.
 Above the Hapi even rats now demand for prayers.

By the Nine Bows !

Sound the Ancestral Trumpet !
 I am here !
 Shesh holds my shadow with agile hands,
 She protects the me in here
 from the me in there.

By the Nine Bows !

Do not doubt :
 My Ka now rides the clouds
 handling columns of fire.
 Gently, there is light in the blue Hapi.
 I decree : the you there shall worship the me here !

Go, strangers.
 Take my speech to your own times.

Ka :

I shall introduce him to the Scientist from the year 2222.

Ka : *[to the Poet]*

Go meet Akbar and Asok.
 When returning,
 please beware of trains and Sikorskis,
 against fatigue, learn to walk sleeping,
 the legs awake, moving at their will,
 the head deeply asleep.

AM Narrator :

Ka and Amenofis exit.

AM Narrator :

He travels the road.
He finds the painter.

The Poet : *[to the painter he finds in the road]*

Heading to the war ?

Painter :

Yes, but a war to conquer time, not space !
I dwell in the trenches
extracting scraps of time.
My heavy debts exceed
the space debts of an army.

The Poet :

It seems you paint people only with one eye.

Painter :

I'm painting a feast of corpses,
The very feast of revenge.
The dead eat vegetables
swimming in the delirious grievance
of moonbeams.

AM Narrator :

Ka has now returned.

Ka :

Hey, you once told me
you wanted to see the Huris.
Do as I say,
We will pretend a battle.

AM Narrator :

Ka shaves off his hair.
Ka smears him with cranberry juice.
For his mouth, he gives a vial of red ink,
to simulate blood.
Ka ties a belt around him
and gives him Muslim robes,
and a turban.

The Poet :

And then ?

Ka :

Dead men do not speak.
To the ground.

*[Ka produces battle noises, throws rocks at mirrors,
bangs on trays and cans,
shouts A-A-Á-A !!]*

AM Narrator :

The Huris arrive to take
the warriors dead in battle.

[The Huris dance around the Poet gently.]

AM Narrator :

Mohammed arrives.

Mohammed : *[smiling]*

These days,
things just are not authentic.
But that is all right, young man,
that is all right.
Just keep up the good work.

Mohammed : *[sternly]*

Unauthorized persons strictly forbidden !

Ka : *[bailing the Poet out]*

Come, the warriors of Vijaya
are sailing to Sakhali.

The Poet :

When are we ?

Ka :

In the year 543 B.C.

[They exit. As they leave, we hear the Poet's voice :]

The Poet's voice :

Certainly,
many of you love playing cards.
I'm sure some of you have even had nightmares in your sleep
about sevens, queens of hearts and aces.
But have you ever played
not exactly against a simple concrete Mr. So and So
but against a collective entity,
like the Universal Will ?

I have, and I know well the game.

I consider it far more interesting than normal gambling
with its candles, chalkboards,
green cloths, midnights.
The choice of movement is virtually unlimited.
If the game requires,
and of course
if you have the necessary powers,
you can use a damp sponge
and wipe out entire constellations from the night sky
just like a teacher wipes the equations on his blackboard.

The goal is to move in such a way
that your opponent's position is nullified.
Despite its universal nature,
the opponent is felt to be an equal
and the game proceeds according to the principles of mutual respect.

That's what's so charming about it.
You end up knowing your opponent like an old friend.
It's much better than playing against any ghost out of a tomb.
You get much more involved in it.

[END OF SCENE]

IV

[This scene comprises three simultaneous layers of equal time length.]

LAYER ONE

[Two girls, left channel, right channel, whispering and giggling]

First girl :

Hey, watch out !
 Careful with the jelly fish.

 Come this way. Let's swim in that direction.

 Which one ? That one on the seashore dangling his feet ?

 I see, you want to comfort him ...

 He's well tanned though. And what about his derby hat ?

 Hey, don't push ! Strange... My eyes are playing tricks on me. I just saw that seagull pass right through his elbow !

 That's interesting. Shall we take a closer look ?

 I can't help it. Oh no, I think I passed right through him. Man or mirage, he is now cut in half.

 Just wait a little.

 Why ?

Second girl :

What ?

 Eeeew ! There are so many of them.

 I see, checking out that fellow...

 Doesn't he look really sad like that ?

 No, silly. He's too thin for me.

 Well, I don't like it. Want to swim closer ? Smile at him, see if he smiles back.

 Maybe it is not a person, maybe it is a mirage or something ...

 Careful with the waves. You're getting too close.

 Let's go away. This is too strange for me.

 No way, let's go. Don't smile at it anymore.

 You know...

See, he is assuming his original form again.

I don't know. Hey, don't go over there near those buffaloes.

The shadow-man continues to swim over there, see ?

Whatever it is, it went to the beach now and is lying down on the sand.

What the hell is he shouting now ?

Six hundred sixty-six.

Now that fisherman is telling something to the Muslim.

He seems very alarmed.

I can't see him anymore.

Now there is a flock of sea serpents over there. You're right. It's too weird in here. Let's go home.

Not the shadow-man. He is staying.

But ...

All right ...

You mean he or it ?

Oh, you're right... I've never seen buffaloes in the water like that. You only see their nostrils and eyes popping out of the water.

What do you think that thing is ?

The Muslim with the buffaloes seems very harassed. I've never seen someone gathering animals that fast.

Is that Arabic ? Can you read what those two there in raincoats are writing on the sand ?

That can't be a good sign.

He seems pretty calm to me. And what's up with that soldier with a telescope on the top of that hill ?

You brought me to the weirdest beach. Now the soldier is leaving fast. Where is he going ?

Things are getting very strange in here.

Everyone seems to be leaving the beach anyway...

Leave that alone. Let's just go.

Let's go !

[END OF LAYER ONE]

LAYER TWO*[The Grotesque Choir]***The Grotesque Choir :**

Behold !
 A beast is rising from the sea.
 The Muslim sees in it the Evil one,
 the Christian waits in disbelief.
 Fast the Soldier runs to warn his peers.

Behold !
 Still, the Ka ashore remains,
 the Great Beluga flies and eats him up.
 Brought inside its guts,
 Ka is now a stone, small and round.

Soon the Great Beluga shall lay dead,
 caught inside a sailor's net.

[END OF LAYER TWO]**LAYER THREE***[actual dialogue]***A Muslim :**

Alh Masikh alh Dedjal !!
 Alh Masikh alh Dedjal !!

A Christian Fisherman :

How can we know ?
 We are no experts,
 people just say things ...

*[only after layers one and two are finished]***Ka :** *[SUNG]*

All is vain, all is overdue ...

*[a big sturgeon jumps out of the water and swallows him]***AM Narrator :**

Swallowed by a big sturgeon.

[END OF LAYER THREE] [END OF SCENE]

V

[the fishermen are bringing the dead sturgeon]

AM Narrator :

The boats arrive.
The dead sturgeon is being brought.

Sailor's Song

Fishermen Choir : *[first part bocca chiusa, then :]*

Today, all things have things to say.
Smoothly and quickly,
They blaze through the air.

[end with bocca chiusa]

Laili's Dance

AM Narrator :

She takes the stone.
She draws a green leaf on it.

Laili :

If Death had your curls and eyes,
I would gladly wish to die.

[she kisses the stone (Ka)]

To the one who knows how to smile.

[Laili leaves]

*[Ka is alone.
Ka knocks at his master's door]*

The Poet : *[singing, angrily]*

We ate En-Sao,
sick bird spit.
We ate En-Sao,
sick bird spit.
We'll eat, eat, eat, eat,
till the En-Sao friends !

[he opens the door]

Oh ! You ...
Well... So, what is it that you have to say for yourself ?

Ka :

I was sitting by the sea.
Swimming girls were all around me, smiling.
I left the water.
People got disturbed and left the shore.
A sturgeon swallowed me.
I had to live as a stone,
among some mussels,
two life belts and an anchor chain.
A sailor caught the sturgeon,
then I was rescued by Laili.
She drew green leaves on the stone
and gently kissed me as I suffered
the Torments of Montezuma.
She was full of that ineffable expression,
so unearthly ...

The Poet :

I see ...
Return immediately to your post and stand watch !
Go !

[Ka leaves, we follow him]

Ka :

He is awake.
I am on guard duty here.

[END OF SCENE]

VI

[*near the city*]

Ka :

Exclamation mark,
Question mark,
Three dots !

There where the Divine winds blow.
The goddess Izanagui.
Her silver garments flare in the wind :

Ash-gray charming fabric,
trembling young hands.
Fire glaze running
over silver silk waves.
Wind over the grass.
The evening fire falling
over the town buildings.

She calls herself the adorable,
the enchanting.

The Poet :

It is not so.
It is wrong !

Ka :

Really ?

The Poet :

It is not as you say !

Ka :

How is it possible ?

The Poet :

You are mistaken !

Ka :

Try to understand :
 Three mistakes,
 One: in the city ;
 Two: in the street ;
 Three: in the house ;
 But where exactly ?

The Poet :

Indeed, where exactly ?

Ka :

I don't know ...
 I don't know.
 I don't know !!

[Ka flies away]

The Poet :

I offended him.
 I offended him.

Citizen's choir :

There he is !
 The one with the abyss-eyes.
 But where is Tamara ?
 Where is Gudal ?

The Poet :

I offended him.
 I offended him.
 Ka is now gone ...

The Poet : **[SUNG]**

I am a solitary singer,
 the harp of blood
 Stains my hands.
 I lead flocks of souls,
 I am a shepherd.

Two Monks :

Don't worry, a parade is in town.
 The crowds swarm
 to see a large stuffed ape
 with foamy lips and stitched sides,
 clung to a woman figure.

Citizen's choir :

There he is !
 The one with the abyss-eyes.
 But where is Tamara ?
 Where is Gudal ?

Stranger :

It is coming !
It will happen, soon !

The Poet : *[stomping the grass furiously]*

Stronger grows my brutal foot
smashing down these begging weeds !

Stranger :

It is coming !
It will happen, soon !

The Poet :

I acted like a raven.
First I gave the Life-Water,
and then the Death-Water.
That will not happen twice.

[END OF SCENE]

VII

AM Narrator :

A flaming dawn.
Ka is flying.

Ka :

The sole dwellers of my thoughts :
A leaf, grayish-green,
A stone, its printed words.
"If Death had your curls and eyes,
I would gladly wish to die."

[The Mighty Ancestral Horn is sounded. Ka initiates landing.]

Ka :

There is no way back to the past.
Friends, deeds, glory, all lay ahead.

Ka : [SUNG]

Bite my knees, horse.
Turn and rear tall !
Fly across these barren lands !
There is no way back to the past.
Friends, deeds, glory, all lay ahead.

Seize my elbow, horse.
Scoff at the wolves !
Never mind their nasal cries !
There is no way back to the past.
Friends, deeds, glory, all lay ahead.

Eyes ablaze, horse.
Haste to those falls !
I shall be among the Apes !
There is no way back to the past.
Friends, deeds, glory, all lay ahead.

Niam-Niam #1 :

Quick, Niam-Niam !
Shoot the poisoned arrows !

Niam-Niam #2 :

He can't be shot, Niam-Niam.

Niam-Niam #3 :

More poisoned arrows !

Niam-Niam #2 :

He can't be shot, Niam-Niam.

All 3 Niam-Niams :

Horror !
To the ground, Niam-Niams !

Ka :

This is it !
 Earth, my greetings.
 Apes, my greetings.

An Old Ape :

Long ago things were different.
 The Ruk bird is now gone.
 Haven't we shattered the swords of Hanno,
 Covering ourselves in glory ?
 He, I know, returned to the sea.
 But where is the Ruk bird ?
 No more sleeping on its feathers,
 No more of its morning cry.
 In those times,
 the Ruk would carry away the infant elephants,
 trunks and tusks to the sky.
 Now the bird is gone.
 Forgive us, o Ruk, forgive us !

All Apes :

Forgive us ! Forgive us !

Old Ape :

White one, fire maker,
 When you wandered through the desert,
 We knew, we sent our young
 and now you are among us.
 Many cannot gaze at the stars anymore.
 Sing to us in your native tongue.

[the white one is Laili herself]

Ka :

Yes, please sing.
 I brought an instrument for you.
 On this elephant tusk,
 I fastened years as pegs for the strings.
 Fixed on the upper part
 are the years 411, 709, 1237, 1453, 1871.
 Fixed on the lower board
 are the years 1491, 1193, 665, 449, 31.
 Will you sing ?

The White one :

Move over, grandmother .

The White one :

Yes.

The White one : [SUNG]

By the will of envious fates
 I am among you.
 Were the fates mere artless tailors,
 I would tell them
 They do not ply well their needle,
 I would not accept their orders,
 I would sit myself at work
 and then force the very iron
 into singing.

Ka :*[Laili laughs]*

Each string contains six parts,
 317 years each,
 1902 years in all.
 The upper pegs show
 East invading West.
 Lower pegs show
 West invading East.
 Vandals, Arabs, Tatars,
 Turks and Germans.
 Egyptians of Hatshepsut,
 Greeks of Odysseus, Scythians,
 Greeks of Pericles, Romans.
 One more string is needed,
 two more pegs :
 Year 78, Adia Saka,
 Year 1980, the East.

*[Eventually it turns into weeping]***The White one :** *[weeping bitterly]*

You do work badly.

Do we need seven strings ?

You do not ply well your needle.

Ka :

Normally,
 A green leaf
 brings me peace.

The White one :

Once,
 in my calm childhood
 I had a stone, round.
 On it there was a green leaf,
 like this one.

[Ka leaves, choked by suppressed sobs]

Old Ape :

Listen,
 I will speak of our guest.
 Once she came on Moe.
 Her curls held a butterfly
 impaled on a porcupine quill.
 One hand held a willow twig
 with silver buds. Firmly,
 on the Moe was the other hand.
 She was the Venus of the Apes,
 With fervent smiles,
 she was the chosen lamb.
 And laughing she crossed our fields.

[Laili exits slowly, laughing]

Laili : *[whispered]*

If Death had your curls and eyes,
 I would gladly wish to die.

Goddess of black breasts,
 Goddess of nocturnal sighs.

Choir of Apes :

But where is Amenofis ?

Ka :

Who ?

Choir of Apes :

Amenofis, son of Tei !

We think he wanders by the falls
 repeating to the winds
 the name of Nefertite.

AM Narrator :

Amenofis makes his entrance.

Amenofis :

Be seated !

[Quietness, then, softly :]

Whispering Choir:

Atsu ...

[*horror :]*

Choir of Apes :

Amenofis is shot !
Amenofis is hurt !
Amenofis is dying !

Choir of Apes :

Run !
Run !

Amenofis :

Go !
Transmit my spirit
to the most worthy.
Give him my kiss.

Choir of Apes :

Run !
Run !

AM Narrator :

All escape, running madly

Choir of Apes :

Run !
Run !

Old Ape : *[Left alone]*

The escape was successful.
No one saw them.

[END OF SCENE]

VIII

[*Here we have spoken choirs as narrators*]

Half Choir :

But what happened in the forest ?
How did Amenofis die ?

Full Choir :

First ! Amenofis, the son of Tei !

Amenofis :

I am Ekhnaten !
Son of Amon !
Ay, father of the gods,
what do you say ?
An Ushabti won't you grant me ?
I am the god of gods,
glorified by the Rometu !
Osiris, Hathor, Sobek, all of you !
Like simple slaves I hereby discharge you !
Glory to the Sun, Ra Aten !
Ay, help me shape words
a plowman can understand !
Priests, you swarm of gnats
stuck on the rocky reeds of the temples !
In the beginning was the word ...

Oh Nefertite, help me !
I made fertile the Hapi fields,
I led the Rometu to the Sun.
I shall engrave on the rock of the walls :
" Ekhnaten, peer of the Sun ".
Ra dissolved the clouds of superstition !
Ushabti shall second me,
" You are right, Ekhnaten peer of the Sun ".

Ay, give the Turtle shield, the strings !
Above the Hapi even rats now demand for prayers.
They grunt, they moo, they growl,
They chew hay, hunt beetles, eat slaves,
with whole cities consecrated.
More gods than non-gods.

Disorder.

Full Choir :

Second ! Amenofis, the Black Ape !
Striped wolfcubs, parrot !

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

Khau, khau
Jrabr, tchap-tchap !
Ugu-um mkhe ! Mkhe-e !
bgaf ! Gkhaf kha ! Kha ! Kha !
Ebza tchitore-nh ! Epsei kai-kai !

Half Choir :

He strolls through oaks.
He picks flowers.

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

Mgu-um mapp ! Mapp ! Mapp ! Mapp !

Half Choir :

He eats baby birds.

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

Mi-o bpek. Bpek ! Vee-eek.
Ga kha ! Ma-ll ! Bgkhaf ! Gkhaf !
Eg-ji-zeu ravi-ra !
Ma-ll ! Ma-ll ! Ma-ll ! Mai, mai.
Khulha khag khiutsiu
r-r-r-rra ga-ga. Ga ! Graff !
Enh-ma me-eiu-uiai !

Half Choir :

He survives his yesterday.

Full Choir :

Third ! A Russian hut in the woods near the Nile.

[a parrot babbles from
time to time]

Merchant :

Plumes, Tusks, well done, my dear.
An order for you : an ape,
a male, full-grown ape.
Do you understand ?
It can't be alive, it is for stuffing,
a dead one will do fine. You know,
sewed-up sides, wax foam on the lips,
the arms holding a little wax figure...
From town to town .
Tse, Tse ! [*laughter*]

A Russian Parrot :

Shining stars.
Did you hear ?
He sings his love.
Limpid sky.
Shining stars.

Merchant :

I passed by here.
A frisky female, young one,
was running by the stones with a jar.
Toc - toc - toc. Little feet.
It is cheap. Another glass of wine,
my dear.

Old man :

Listen, my esteemed sir, he may get
angry. What if he disarrange your
hair and collars, my esteemed sir ?

Merchant :

Oh, pardon me .
Don't get mad.
He, he, he ...
So, tomorrow
we go hunting.
Get guns ready,
blacks for the ambush.

[*Laili*]
Woman with the jar :

Black Ape,

Parrot :

Did you hear ?
He sings his love.

Woman with the jar :

I feel sorry for you.
When you come
from behind the pinetree,
a shot will bring you death.
They told me,
no common ape you are.
You are Ekhnaten.

Parrot :

He sings his grief.

Merchant :

Simple.

Have you seen ?

She goes with the jar
to get water,

Woman with the jar :

There he is !

Limpid sky.

Merchant :

he comes out,
he gets killed.

Woman with the jar :

A tender gaze I give you,
so you die lit
by the autumn of desire.

Merchant :

Aim at his forehead
and his black chest.

My sweet,
terrifying admirer.

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

Me-u ! Mantch !
Mantch ! Mantch !

[a shot]

Hunters :

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

[falling to the ground]

Mantch ! Mantch ! Mantch !

Woman with the jar :

Smoke !

We got him !

He's dead !

Hunters :

He's dead !

AM Narrator:

A shot !

Laili touches the ape's forehead.

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

Mantch !

Woman with the jar :

Terrible scream.

AM Narrator:

The Hunters take their prey.

Hunters :

There is a feast tonight !

Amenofis, the Black Ape :

[as he dies,]

Mantch !

AM Narrator:

The spirits carry Laili off-stage.

[eerie silence]

Full Choir :

Fourth ! Ancient Egypt !
The priests plan revenge !

AM Narrator :

Priests enter from one side.
Ekhnaten enters from the other.

Priests :

He trampled our customs !
The world of the dead
he peopled with equality !
He slandered our foundations !
Death ! Death !

Ekhnaten : [SUNG]

Ah, fifth of the evenings,
release the mooring lines ...

Priests :

Poison.
Hey, Ekhnaten ! Drink,
the day is hot.

[Amenofis drinks the poison]

Priests :

He drank it !
He is dead !

Ekhnaten : [falling]

Where is Shurur ?
Ay ? Where ?
Where are the incantations ?
Nefertite ! Nefertite !

Priests :

He is dead !

[he dies clutching the air in despair]

[another period of silence]

Half Choir :

That is what happened by the falls.

[END OF SCENE]

IX

[the Poet in his simple chamber, lost in his thoughts.

Then :

A monstrous sound of glass being shattered violently]

AM Narrator :

Four Kas enter the room.

The Four Kas :

Ekhnaten is dead.
We have brought you his will.

AM Narrator :

A head is pushed through the broken window.

The Poet :

It smells of gunpowder...

AM Narrator :

A box of vegetables :

AM Narrator :

The inert body of Laili.

[Life restarts in her]

Laili : [SUNG]

Majnun ...

AM Narrator :

Laili coils her arms around him, lovingly.

The Poet :

Perhaps I am
the prolongation of her dream ...

*[The Kas are deeply moved,
they wipe away their tears
and deliver Ekhnaten's kiss]*

AM Narrator :

They all sit on the ground around a silver samovar.
Their images reflect on its silver surface.

[END OF SCENE]

[END OF LIBRETTO]