

SHORT FIVE-ACT PLAYS: # 16441 THEATRICAL TEXTS

By Richard Kostelanetz

WHY WE LIKE IT: *We fell instantly in love with this radical modernist approach to theatre that is transformed into meta-theatre: the process and infrastructure of the drama becomes, in effect, the play. Lines act on the reader/viewer as prompts that automatically trigger images and interactions in the mind that yield private scenarios but the play itself is confined, solely, purely, to what had been set down on the page—theatre reduced to its elementary forms: the play as play that can be no other thing but a play. We're gaga over Kostelanetz's technique where each line in the five play sequence is charged with instruction and each word assumes the exclamatory posture of a command. Minimalist experimental reductionism gets this performance Five Stars. Addenda. The playwright later sent us a uniquely formatted version of #16441 that we liked so much we decided, in a Dadaist tizzy, to publish it, too. This is Version 1. Version 2 is listed in the TOC just below it.*

SHORT FIVE-ACT PLAYS: #16441
THEATRICAL TEXTS

In memory of Michael Kirby (1931-1997),
A major theater mind.

One aim is writing pure plays, much as I've written pure fictions, because they can't be anything other than plays-as-plays about playing before a live audience (or, if in print, texts imagining a performance before a live audience). Producers are invited to stage as many as these ways, in as many ways as they wish (say with speakers distributed over the performance space).

- I. Writing a text.
- II. Rewriting.
- III. Rehearsing.
- IV. Performing.
- V. Remembering.

- I: A sunny beach.
- II: Inside a cabana.
- III: In a detached house.
- IV: Drinking in a living room.
- V: Rolling in a double bed.

- I. Walking.
- II. Running.
- III. Sprinting.
- IV. Struggling.
- V. Stopping.

- I: Ambition.
- II: Inhibition.
- III: Exhibition.
- IV: Failure.
- V: Extinction.

- I. Intercourse.
- II. Impregnating.
- III. Birthing.
- IV. Raising.
- V. Bankrolling.

- I: Standing beneath an American flag.
- II: Military training.

III: A battlefield.

IV: A hospital.

V: A morgue.

I: Dinner with two children.

II: Four children.

III: eight children.

IV: Three children.

V: No children.

I: Delivering a speech.

II: Schmoozing with the audience.

III: Dining in a plush restaurant.

IV: Afterwards drinking to excess in a small group.

V: Falling into a bed with a drunken stranger.

I: On a train.

II: In a spacious terminal.

III: Meeting a stranger in a bathroom.

IV: Making love behind a stall.

V: Returning to the street.

I: Rise.

II: Rose.

III: Restore.

IV: Reoccupy.

V: Refuse.

I: Coming to a baseball park.

II: Taking batting practice.

III: Playing out in the field.

IV: Coming to home plate with a bat in hand.

V: Taking pitches before hitting a home run.

I: Crash.

II: Help.

III: Resume.
IV: Hospital.
V: Recuperation.

I: Returning home after years away.
II: Dinner with one's immediate family.
III: Sleeping in one's childhood bedroom.
IV: Increasing tensions during breakfast with a family that seems estranged.
V: Leaving for an airport, perhaps never to return.

I: Only.
II: Many.
III. Several.
IV: Few.
V: One.

I: A theatrical dressing room.
II: Appearing before an enthusiastic audience.

III: The dressing room again.

IV: Bantering at the stage door with well-wishers, some of them flirtatious.

V: Alone in a tight hotel room.

I: Eating.

II: Dieting.

III: Eating.

IV: Dieting.

V: Wasting.

I: Studying in a small dormitory room.

II: Objecting to a roommate who brings his girl friend into their space.

III: Leaving to a common room while the two probably make love.

IV: Going out into the street.

V: Making love with his girl friend in her space.

I: Interior.
II: Exterior.
III: Posterior.
IV: Ulterior.
V: Interior.

I: Getting fired from a job long held.
II: Revealing disappointment to your family.
III: Searching in vain for other employment.
IV: Settling for a lesser job.
V: Getting fired again.

I: Running
II: Swimming.
III: Climbing.
IV: Skating.
V. Flying.

I: Getting arrested.

II: Meeting a supportive lawyer.

III: Returning to jail.

IV: A court room.

V: Walking home alone.

I: Yes.

II: No.

III: Yes, yes.

IV: No.

V: Yes.

I: One.

II: Two.

III: Three.

IV: Four.

V: Last.

I: to audience: Scream

II: Scream louder

III: Scream yet louder.

IV: Scream weaker.

V: Silence.

- I. Dark.
- II. Light.
- III. Apocalypse.
- IV. Light.
- V. Dark.

- I. Did I know you?
- II. Should I?
- III. Why not?
- IV. Too bad.
- V. No go.

- i. Right side up.
- ii. Upside down.
- iii. Turned sideways.
- iv. Spun around.
- v. Flipped over.

- I. Arriving in a strange city.

- II. Befriending a good Samaritan.
- III. Accepting his hospitality.
- IV. Sleeping continuously through the night.
- V. Purchasing his house.

- I. Writing a script.
- II. Finding a producer.
- III. Hiring actors and a director.
- IV. Making a film.
- V. Screening it to an appreciative audience.

- I. An infant.
- II. A teenager.
- III. An adult.
- IV. A retiree.
- V. A centenarian.

- I. One dollar.
- II. Ten dollars.

- III. One thousand dollars.
- IV. One hundred dollars
- V. One dollar ten cents.

- I. Purchasing a musical instrument
- II. Learning how to play it.
- III. Playing it properly.
- IV. Failing a public recital.
- V. Smashing the instrument.

- I. Purchasing a painting.
- II. Purchasing a second painting
- III. Purchasing a dozen paintings.
- IV. Purchasing one hundred paintings.
- V. Mounting an exhibition.

- I. Learning a second language.
- II. Learning a third language.
- III. Learning a fourth and five language.
- IV. Learning a dozen languages.
- V. Forgetting what language one is speaking.

- I. Tying a tie.
- II. Donning a jacket
- III. Fitting into slacks.
- IV. Undressing
- V. Wearing a dress.

- I. Dreaming oneself a princess.
- II. Becoming a queen.
- III. Queen mother.
- IV. Revolution.
- V. Deposed royalty.

- I. Accepts a contract.
- II. Writes a book.
- III. Suffers copyediting and other production challenges.
- IV. Sees it in bookstores.
- V. Learns that it's declared "out of print."

- I. Enters college.
- II. Graduates.

- III. Graduate school.
- IV. Original research.
- V. Teaching unhappily at a junior college.

- I. Cooking.
- II. Serving.
- III. Feasting.
- IV. Cleaning.
- V. Barfing.

- I. One-meter dive.
- ii. Three-meter dive.
- III Ten-meter platform dive.
- IV. Twenty-meter platform dive.
- V.

- I. Upturn.
- II. Downturn.
- III. Left turn.
- IV. Right turn.
- V. U-turn.

- i. First joke.
- ii. Second joke.
- iii. Third joke.
- iv. Fourth joke.
- v. Laughter.

- I. Win.
- II. Lose.
- III. Win.
- IV. Lose.
- V. Loss.

- I. Subsistence farming.
- II. Harvesting.
- III. Produce selling.
- IV. Planting.
- V. More subsistence farming.

- I. Shoplifting.
- II. Carjacking.
- III. Assault.
- IV. Arrest.

V. Deportation.

I. First date.

II. Second date.

III. Third date.

IV. Denial.

V. Score.

I. Accident.

II. Ambulance.

III. Emergency room.

IV. Operation.

V. Recuperation.

I. Swim

II. Dive.

III. Compete.

IV. Lose

V. Coach.

I. Leap.

II. Fall.

III. Recover.

IV. Fall.

V. Recuperate.

I. Earth.

II. Moon.

III. Mars.

IV. Pluto.

V. Gone.

I. Trampoline.

II. Trapeze.

III. Performance.

IV. Adulation.

V. Retirement.

I. Baking.

II. Deserts.

III. Lemon pie.

IV. Eating.

V. Throwing.

I. Balding.

II. Shining.

III. Transplanting.

IV. Seducing.

V. Refusal.

I. Reading.

II. Writing.

III. Reading.

IV. Writings.

V. Reading.

I. First base.

II. Second base.

III. Third base.

IV. Home plate.

V. Out.

I. Punch.

II. Punch.

III. Parry

IV. Punch.

V. Knock out.

I. Ball.

- II. Bat.
- III. Glove.
- IV. Throw.
- V. Out.

- I. Sleep.
- II. Sleep.
- III. Awake.
- IV. Sleep.
- V. Sleep.

- I. Life.
- II. Death
- III. Rebirth.
- IV. Relive.
- V. Redeath.

- I. Plan.
- II. Loan.
- III. Store.
- IV. Losses.
- V. Bankruptcy.

- I. Sleeping.
- II. Dreaming.
- III. Nightmare
- IV. Tossing.
- V. Awaking.

- I. One step.
- II. Two steps.
- III. Three steps.
- IV. Falling.
- V. Recuperating.

- I. Conspiring.
- II. Campaigning.
- III. Electing.
- IV. Governing.
- V. Imprisonment.

- I. Drafting.
- II. Revising.
- III. Rereading
- IV. Disappointment.
- V. Burning.

- I. Igniting.
- II. Seat-belting.
- III. Driving.
- IV. Skidding.
- V. Parking.

- I. Go.
- II. Stop.
- III. Go.
- IV. Stop.
- V. Go.

- I. Eat.
- II. Drink.
- III. Digest.
- IV. Piss.
- V. Poop.

- I. Infallible.
- II. Ingenuity.
- III. Palpable.
- IV. Inspiring.

V. Ineffable.

I. Scale.

II. Tie.

III. Hang.

IV. Swing.

V. Fall.

I. Snore.

II. Sneeze.

III. Decongestant.

IV. Sniffle.

V. Breathe.

I. Above.

II. Around.

III. Diagonal.

IV. Beneath.

V. Beside.

I. Exploitation.

II. Inflation.

III. Indebtedness.

IV. Deaccessioning.

V. Demise.

I. Four lights.

II. Three lights.

III. Two lights.

IV. One light.

V. No light.

I. Lights off.

II. Lights on.

III. Lights off.

IV. Lights on.

V. Lights off.

VI.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The principal influence on my playwriting, of course, is Gertrude Stein. Perhaps these plays extend her radical ideas...*

BIO: *Individual entries on Richard Kostelanetz's work in several fields appear in*

Wikipedia
NNDB.com
Britannica.com
Postmodern Fiction

Contemporary Poets
Who's Who in America
Contemporary Novelists
Who's Who in the World
Directory of American Scholars
Advocates for Self Government
The Chronology of American Literature
The Facts on File Companion to American Poetry
Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of American Writers
Contemporary Jewish-American Dramatists and Poets
Bakers Biographical Dictionary of Musicians
Readers Guide to Twentieth Century Writers
Who's Who in U.S. Writers, Editors and Poets
The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature
International Who's Who of Authors and Writers
The Facts on File Companion to 20th Century Poetry
The Harper-Collins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature
The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Multiethnic American Literature
The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Poets and Poetry
Honor Wall of Distinguished Alumni, Scarsdale High School, NY