Medium

for quartet

Mark Applebaum, 2008

Study Score

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Commissioned by the Quiet Music Festival, Cork, Ireland with funds provided by the Arts Council of Ireland.
To Sarah O' Halloran and the Quiet Music Ensemble.

Duration

The duration depends on decisions made by the ensemble.

Players

Any combination of four instrumentalists or vocalists may perform *Medium*, the only requirement being that at least three of the four players can perform while standing and easily change their location on stage.

The score consists of pictographs. These are not an invitation to improvise. They should be performed with conventional exactitude, albeit according to an interpretation mediated by the ensemble—by the *interpreters*. The exegesis of glyphs may be communal or individual, provided it is thoughtful and formal.

Contents of the Performance Score

Landscape Orientation:

- Canon Images (8 pages: two sets of 4 leaves—*circle*, *triangle*, *square*, *star*)
- Canon Durations (8 pages: two sets of 4 leaves—*10"*, *15"*, *20"*, *25"*)
- Accompaniment Images (10 pages: two sets of 5 leaves—*A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, *ABCD*)

Portrait Orientation:

- Quartet Score—Players 1 & 2 (four bound sets of 16 continuous leaves with odd-numbered pages on the left and even on the right)
- Quartet Score—Players 3 & 4 (four bound sets of 16 continuous leaves with even-numbered pages on the left and odd on the right)

The Study Score

A reference score is also available as a single bound unit containing one copy of each of the aforementioned materials.

Prior to the Performance

Prior to the performance the canon pages are shuffled (within each set—but not mixed) and distributed at random to particular locations:

- One set of canon durations is placed on four adjacent "ingress" stands, one page per stand.
- The second set of canon durations is placed on four adjacent "egress" stands, one page per stand.
- One set of canon images is placed on top of the canon durations on the ingress stands (the durations appearing in the oval windows).
- The second set of canon images is placed on top of the canon durations on the egress stands (the durations appearing in the oval windows).

The other pages are distributed as follows:

- Copies of the quartet score are placed on each player's primary and secondary stands.
- Accompaniment image *ABCD* is placed on the "stationary" player's primary stand (in front of the quartet score) and on the secondary stand (behind the quartet score). Note: one performer may serve as "stationary" player during the beginning of the piece and at the conclusion of the piece. Alternatively, one performer may serve as stationary player at the beginning of the piece while a different performer serves as stationary player at the conclusion; in this case the latter stationary player should have accompaniment image *ABCD* set on his or her secondary stand.
- One set of accompaniment pages (*A*, *B*, *C*, & *D*) are shuffled and placed face down on the accompaniment desk. Three of these four pages will be selected by the players who are not the beginning stationary player. One of the pages will not be used.
- The second set of accompaniment pages (*A*, *B*, *C*, & *D*) are shuffled and distributed randomly to each secondary stand (one page per stand, placed behind the quartet score) except that of the stationary player. One of the pages will not be used.

Form

The piece begins with one player—the stationary player—performing accompaniment image *ABCD* from his or her primary stand. The stationary player need not be capable of playing from a standing position or of relocating with his or her instrument. As such, stationary instruments (e.g. cello, piano, harp, drumset) can participate in this capacity.

After a period of time predetermined by the ensemble, the other three players enter, one at a time, from stage left. The order of their appearance should be randomly determined before each performance. Upon entering the stage they perform an ingress canon, all the while accompanied by the stationary player. This works as follows: the first player to enter performs the canon image appearing on the first stand, scaled to the duration determined by the corresponding canon duration. After completing the first canon image, the first player moves immediately to the second canon image on the next stand, and so on. Each successive player enters after the preceding player completes the first canon image. Thus, when the first player begins the second canon image (on the second stand), the second player enters and performs the first canon image on the first stand. The durations are such that two players may find themselves performing from the same stand simultaneously, the former player finishing the image while the latter is beginning it. As such, it may prove prudent to space the stands slightly in order to accommodate the bunching of players.

After a player finishes the fourth and final ingress canon image, he or she takes the top accompaniment image from the accompaniment desk, walks to his or her primary stand, and begins to articulate the image. After the last player to enter finishes the ingress canon, he or she takes an accompaniment image from the accompaniment desk and begins to articulate the image from his or her primary stand. After a modest duration predetermined by the ensemble, the stationary player stops his or her performance of accompaniment image *ABCD* and begins the performance of the quartet score, the others following suit accordingly, making their own entrances as suggested by the quartet score. As such, there will be a cross fade from the accompaniment music to the quartet music.

In regard to the quartet score, the four players agree on the assignation of their parts, the beginning stationary player taking the highest line; these assignations need not change from performance to performance. The order of the players in the ingress canon need not have any relation to their assignation in the quartet score. For example, the last player to enter the stage might play part 2, 3, *or* 4 in the quartet score.

At various times the players are called upon to relocate, without their instruments, and continue performing the quartet score from secondary positions. From these positions they play alternate instruments that await them. The alternate instrumentation may be related to the primary instrument or it may be radically different. Thus a clarinetist might later perform on bass clarinet, a battery of small percussion objects, or an electronic instrument. The alternate instruments should again be portable, except for the concluding stationary player whose position will remain fixed.

The secondary quartet location can be anywhere in the performance space.

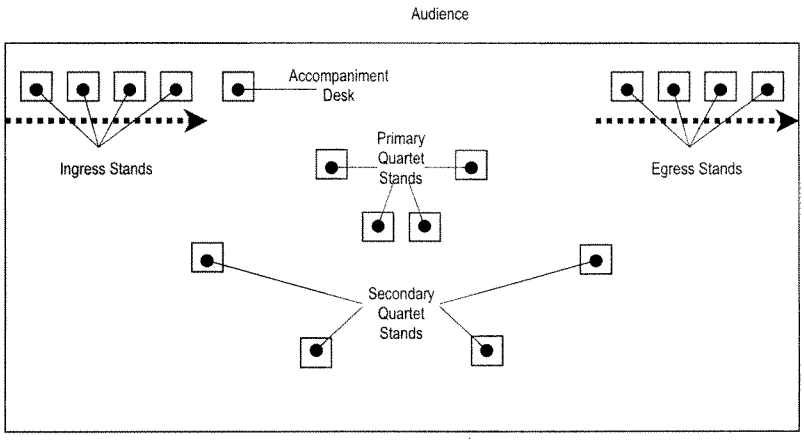
At given moments on the last page of the quartet score the indication "A" cues the players to perform again, one by one, from accompaniment images, this time using their alternate instruments. Eventually all four players will play accompaniment images. After a duration predetermined by the ensemble—and not too lengthy—one player will relocate to the stands on stage right, performing the egress canon with the alternate instrument. When this player finishes the first stand and moves to the second stand, the second player begins the egress canon, and so forth. The order of the players should also be randomized beforehand, and different from the order of the ingress canon. However, like the ingress canon, the stationary player does not participate in the egress canon.

When a player finishes the fourth and final page of the egress canon he or she quietly exits stage right. The next two players follow, leaving only the stationary player on stage. The stationary player continues to perform accompaniment page *ABCD* for a period of time on the alternate instrument. The piece concludes when the stationary player stops.

The players are reminded that silences are to be played with focus and conviction. There are no moments during which music is not being performed, only passages in which one's instrument (or voice) is not sounding.

Stage Layout

The proposed stage layout can be modified to suit the needs of the performers.



Quotations—page 14

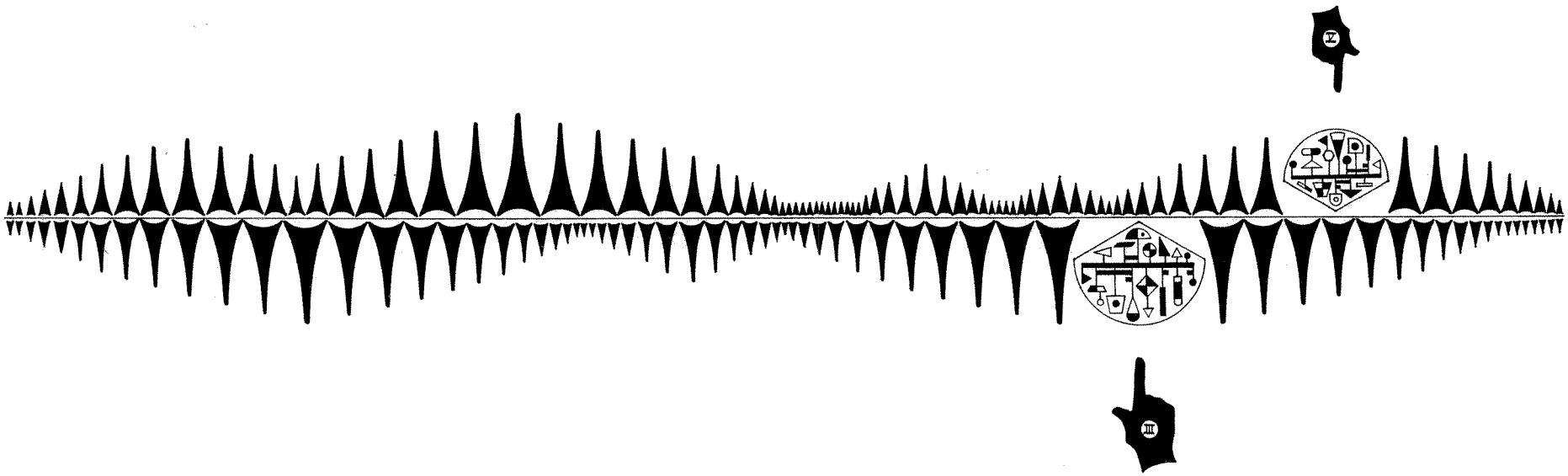
A number of pieces are "quoted" (traced literally) on page 14. These quotations, explicitly referenced below (for the purpose of tribute and by way of acknowledging a kind of residual intellectual property), need not (and possibly *should not*) engender the realization of sounds or physical actions associated with the performance tradition of those pieces. Instead, the resulting graphic quotations present new—if genealogically enriched—visual gestalt to be understood within the creative space *Medium* implies.

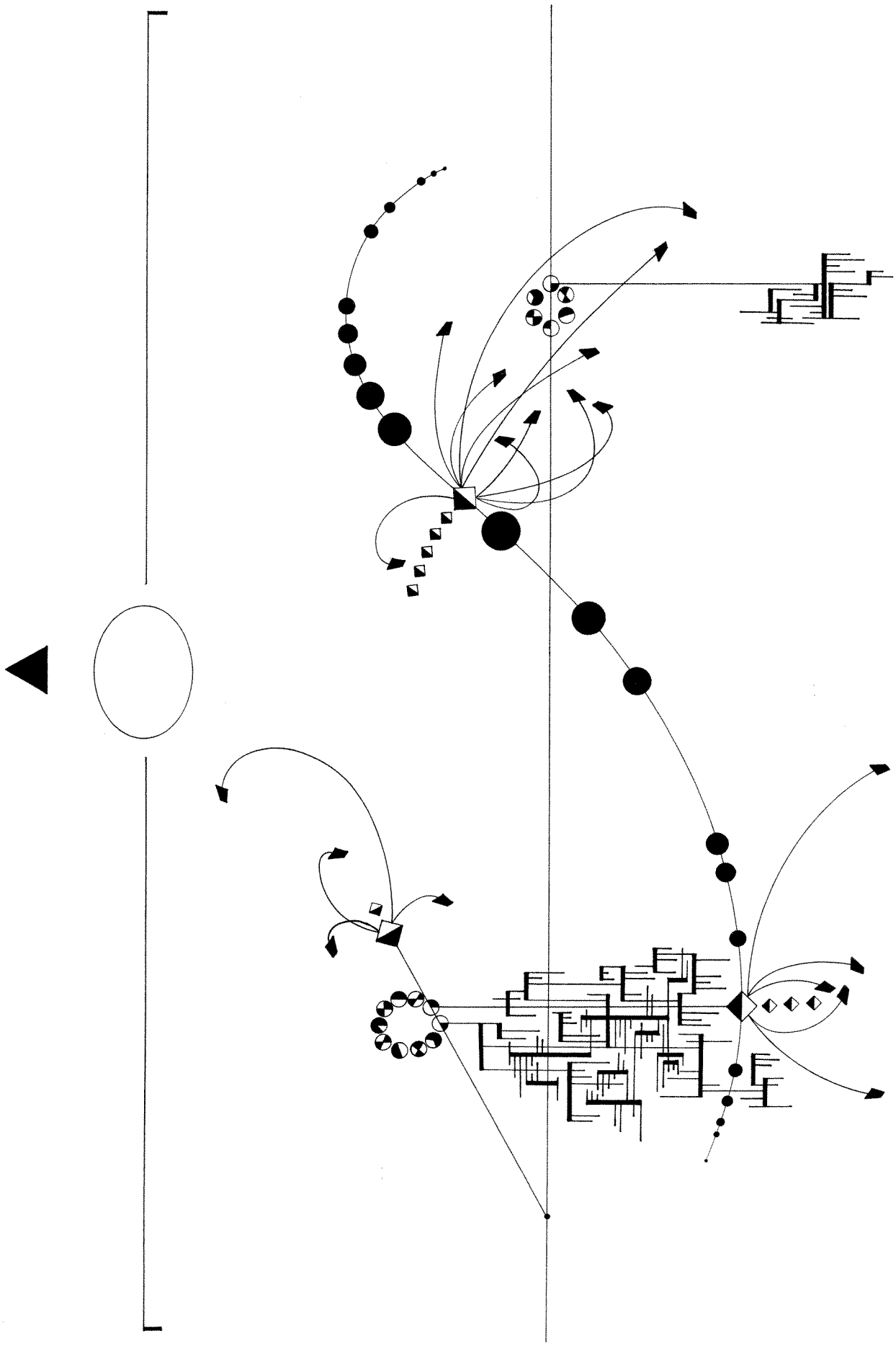
1. Cornelius Cardew: *Treatise*—score border.
2. György Ligeti: *Poème Symphonique*—metronome.
3. Jonathan Harvey: *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco*—1/2" multi-channel magnetic tape reel.
4. Brian Ferneyhough: *Firecycle Beta*—score border.
5. Conlon Nancarrow: signed player piano roll (a gift to the composer).
6. Nam June Paik: *Young Penis Symphony*—paper hole.
7. Karlheinz Stockhausen: *Tierkreis: 9 Waage-Libra*—music box.
8. Karlheinz Stockhausen: *Klavierstücke XI*—score support frame.
9. Henri Pousseur: *Miroir de Votre Faust: I. Le Tarot d'Henri*—score windowpane.
10. Marcel Duchamp: *The Entire Musical Work of Marcel Duchamp*—compact disc.
11. Karlheinz Essl: *Lexikon-Sonate*—disklavier frame.
12. John Cage: *Fontana Mix*—transparent graph.
13. Liza Lim: *The Tree of Life*—silence at mm. 140-142 (itself a quotation of a six-second silence in Franco Donatoni's *Prom*).

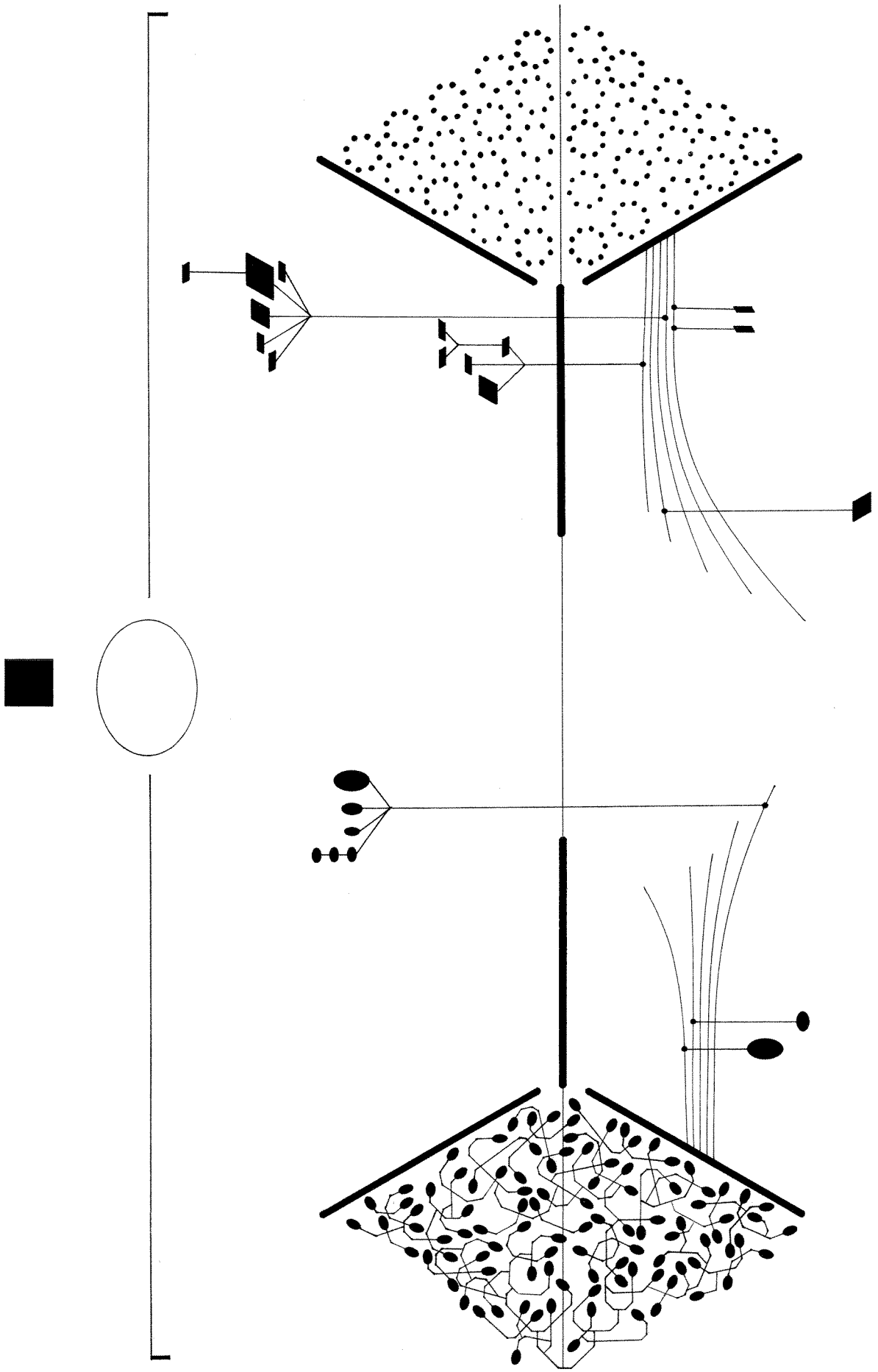
Program Note

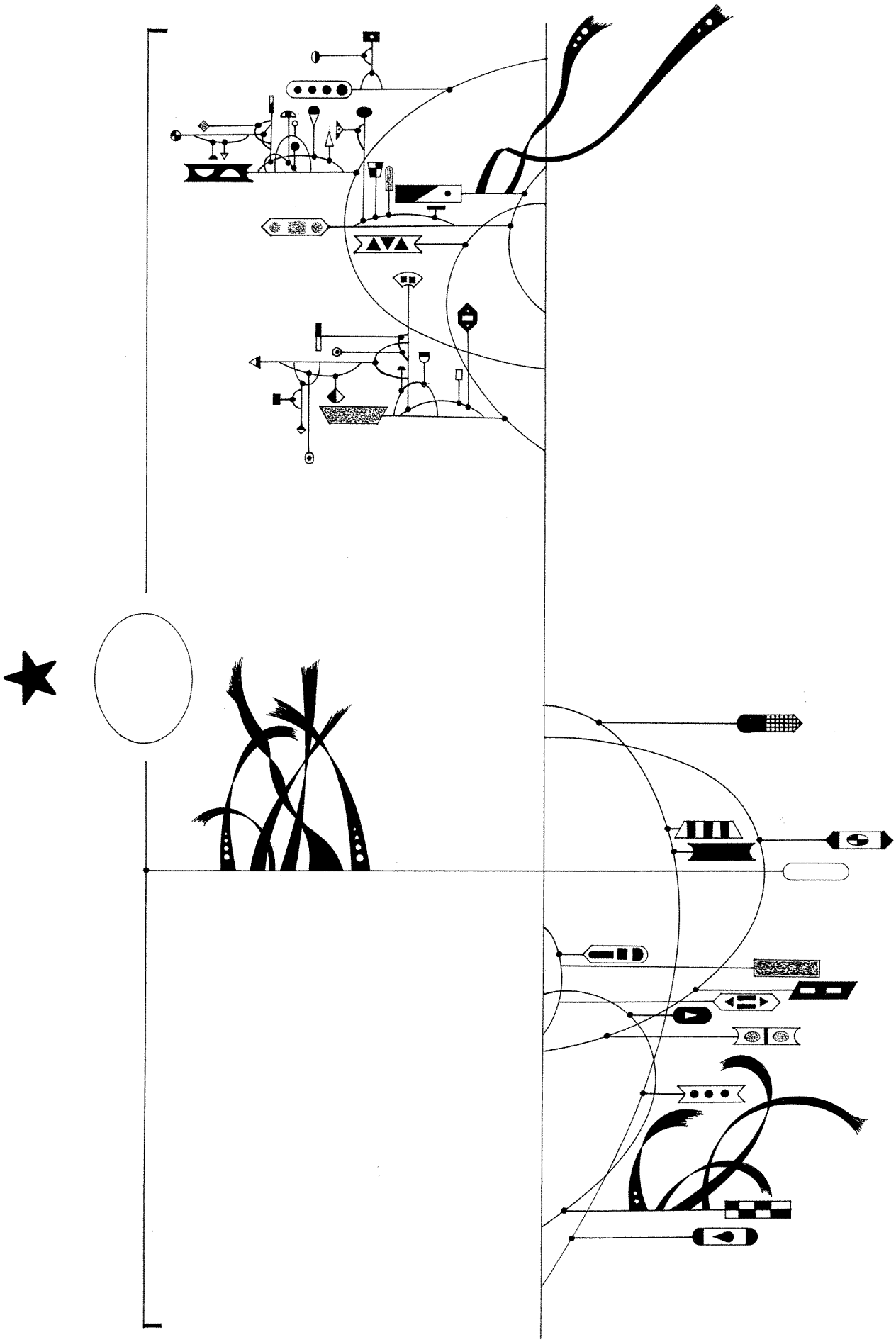
Commissioned by the Quiet Music Festival 2008, Cork, Ireland with funds provided by the Arts Council of Ireland, *Medium* is a musical work for a quartet of any four instrumentalists or vocalists who rigorously interpret its score—a mercurial spray of pictographs whose precise definition as musical specifications is left entirely up to its performers. The work consists of a number of separate leaves—pages hand-drawn using pens, drafting templates, French curves, and straight edges. Some of the leaves serve as accompaniment figures while others are arranged in any order and function as ingress and egress canons during which players enter and exit the stage. The main section of the piece, however, is its "quartet," a series of sixteen bound pages that suggest a continuous musical discourse. The score, while unconventional, does not invite improvisation; instead, players are charged with the task of predetermining a thoughtful means to sonify (with exactitude) an inferred musicality.

There are several mediums at play: the work is *multi-media* as it resides equally in the realms of visual art and music. The score itself is a *medium*—it presents a conceptual substance through which the expressive energy of creative musicians must pass; and, as a non-standard notation presented to imaginative, inventive performers, it is as much a musical filter as a musical prescription. A performance might loosely evoke the realm of idiosyncratic ritual (the result of imagistic, alchemical proposals) akin to the eccentricities of an *intermediary* vehicle through which the dead are (allegedly) channeled. And lastly, the work represents a *middle* state between spatial right and left, between the ceremony of performance and the routine of not performance.









10"

15"

20"

25"

A
A
A
A

A
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B
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C
A
A
C

D
A
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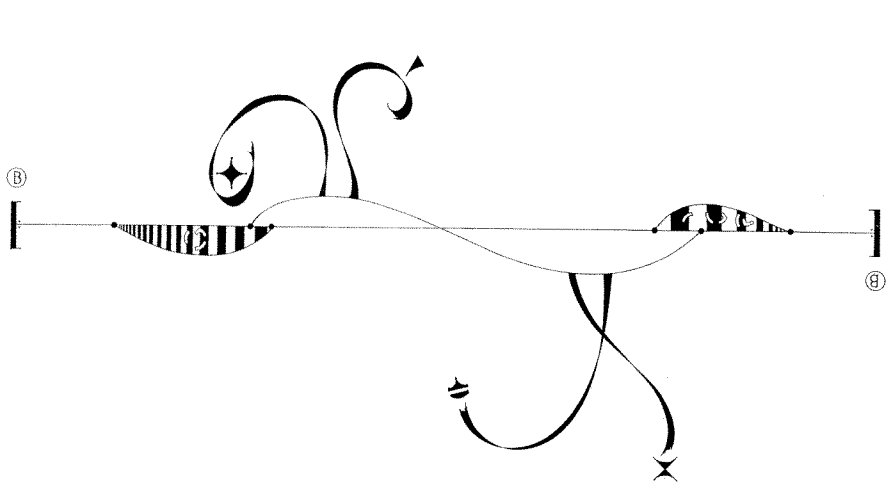
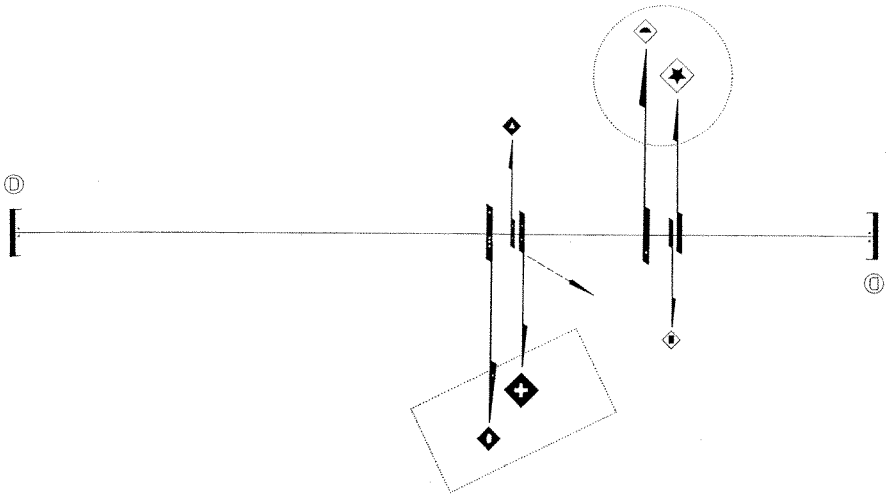
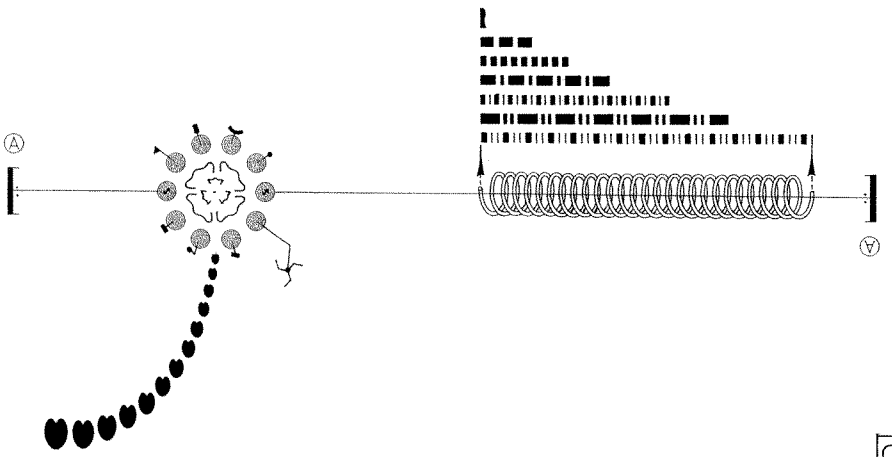
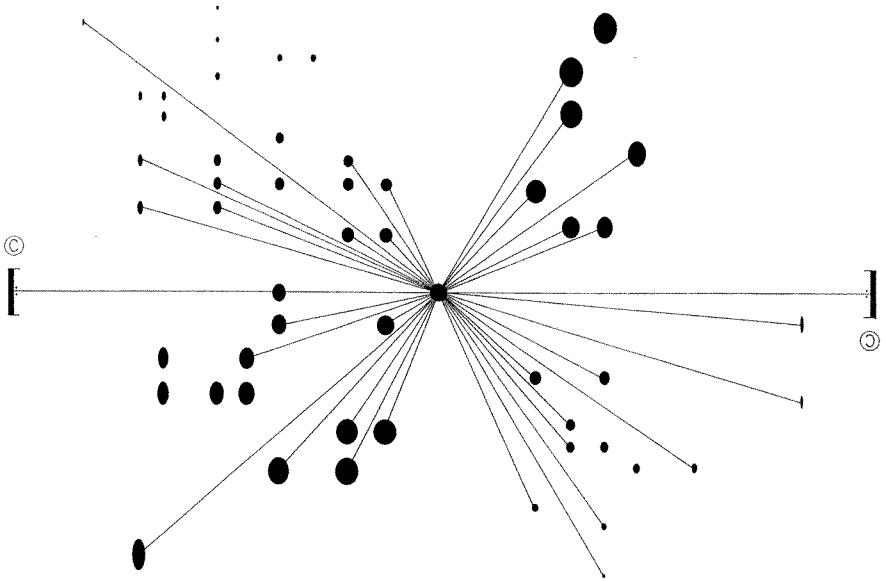
ABCD
ABCD

ABCD







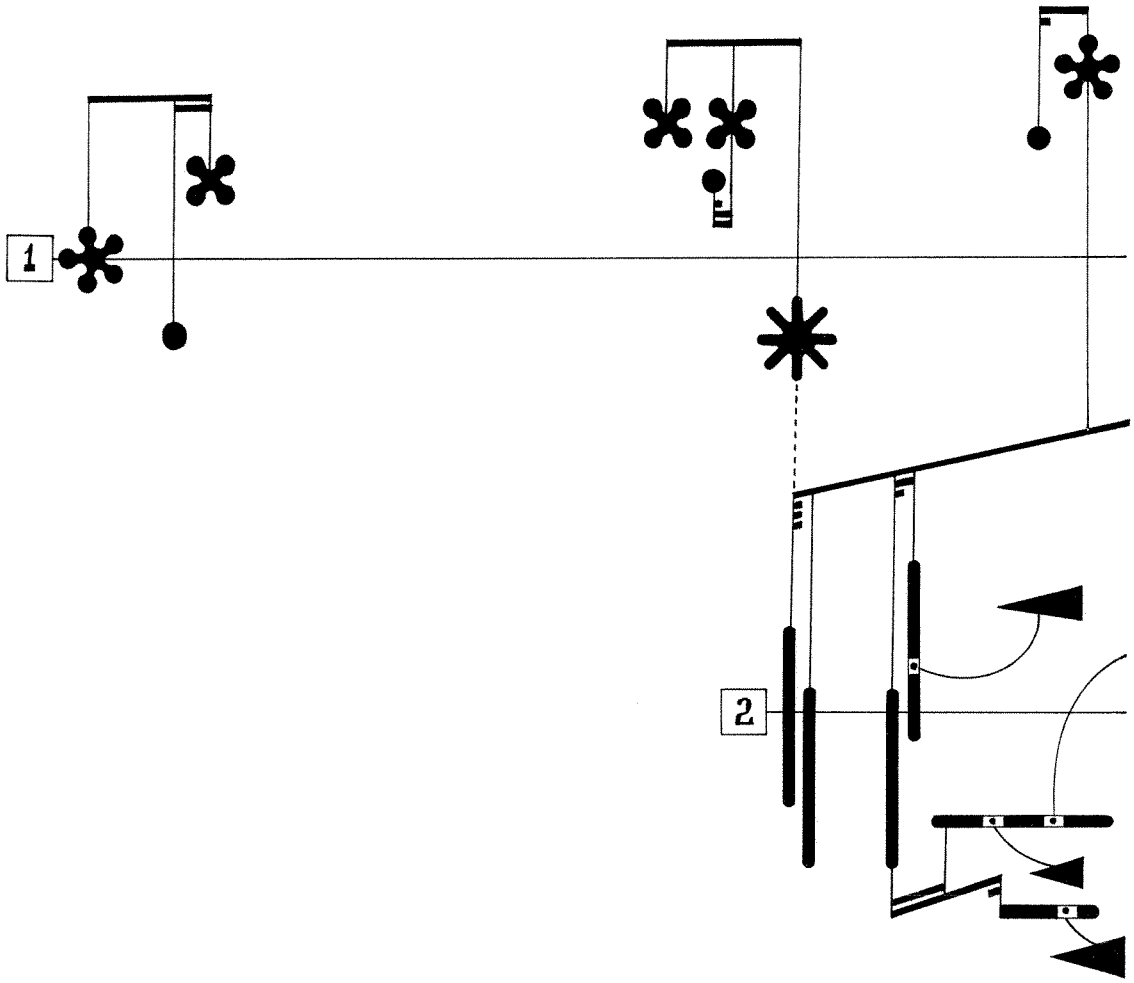


ABCD

Medium

Mark Applebaum, 2008

Quartet Score
Players 1 & 2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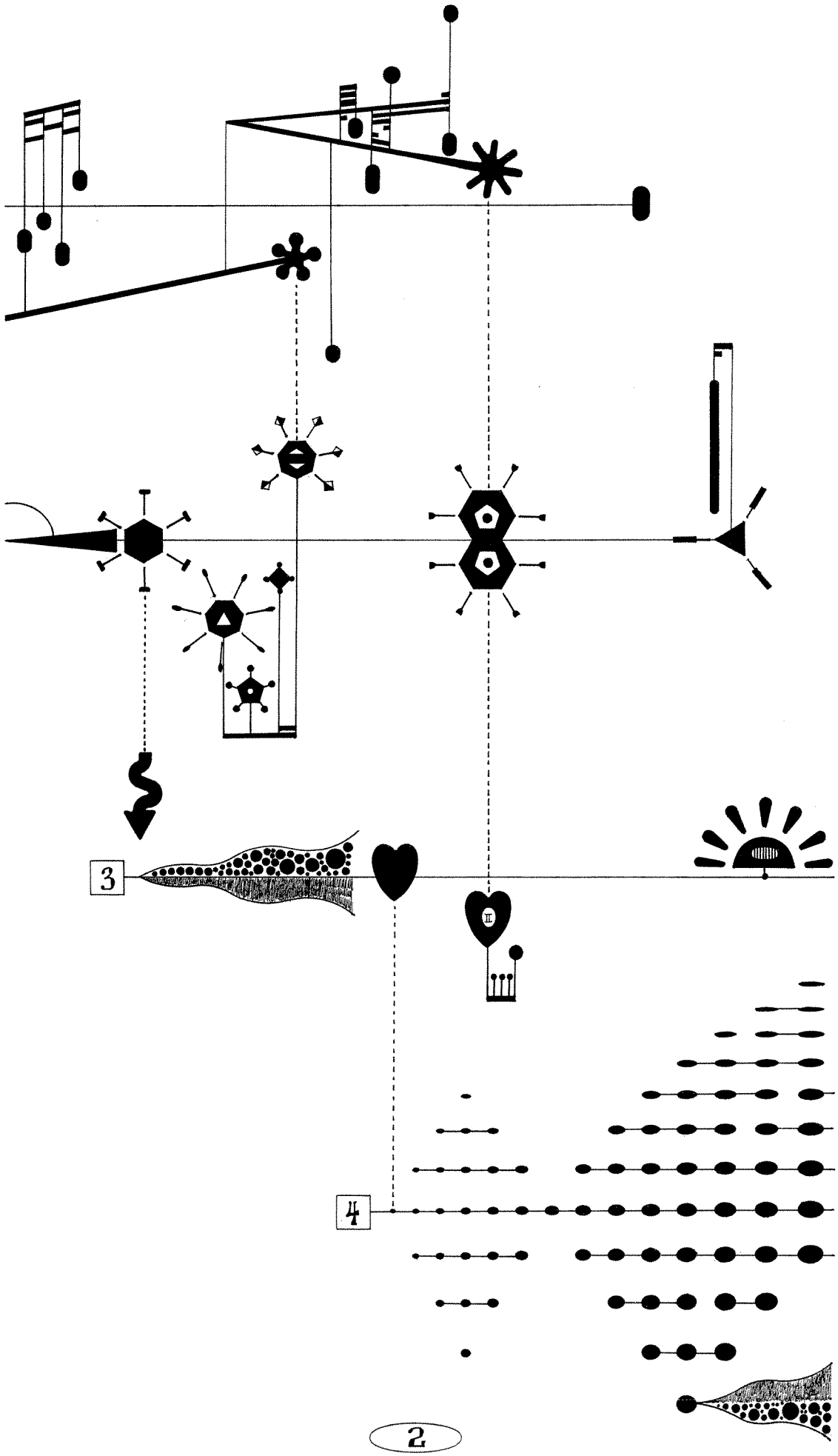
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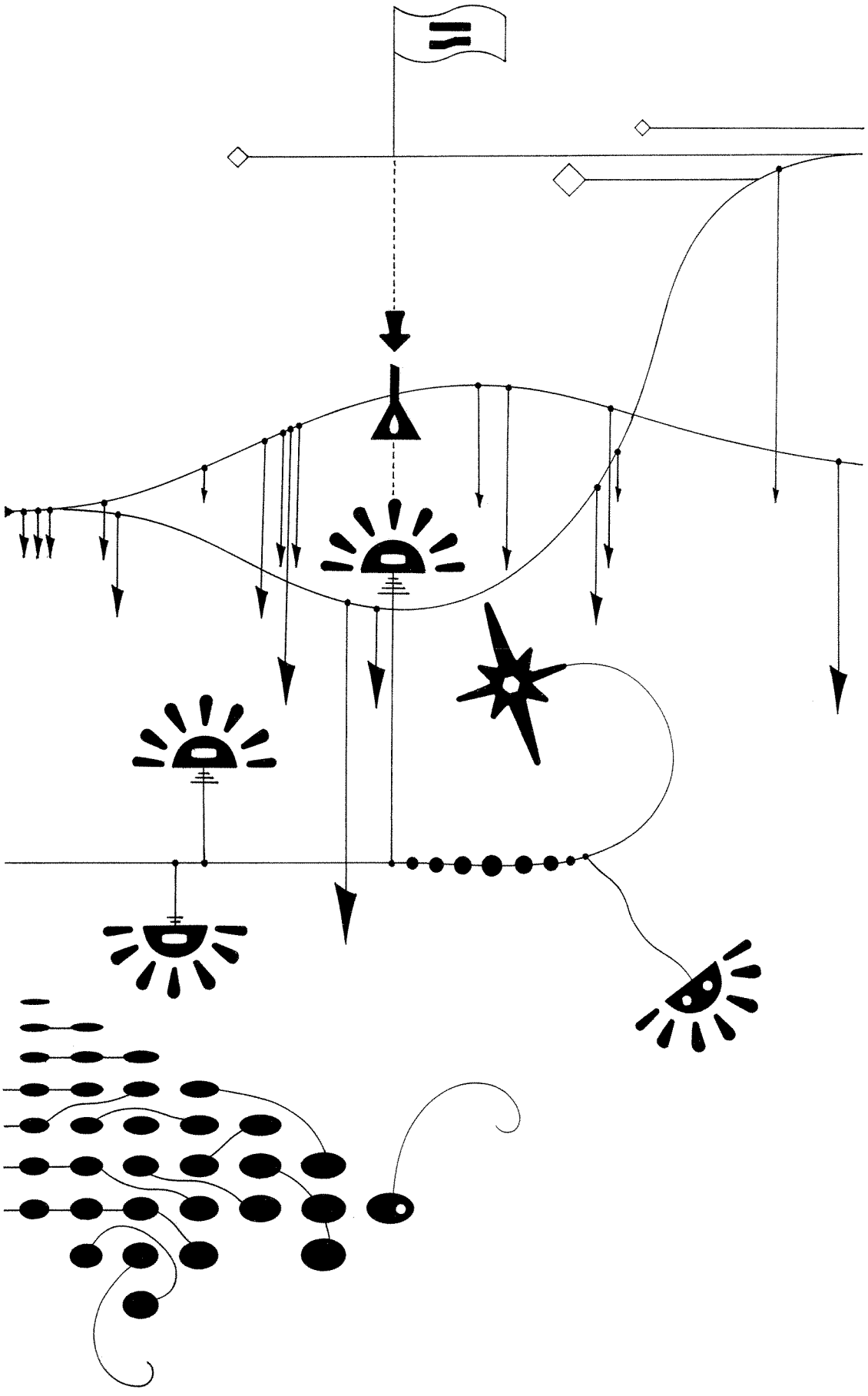
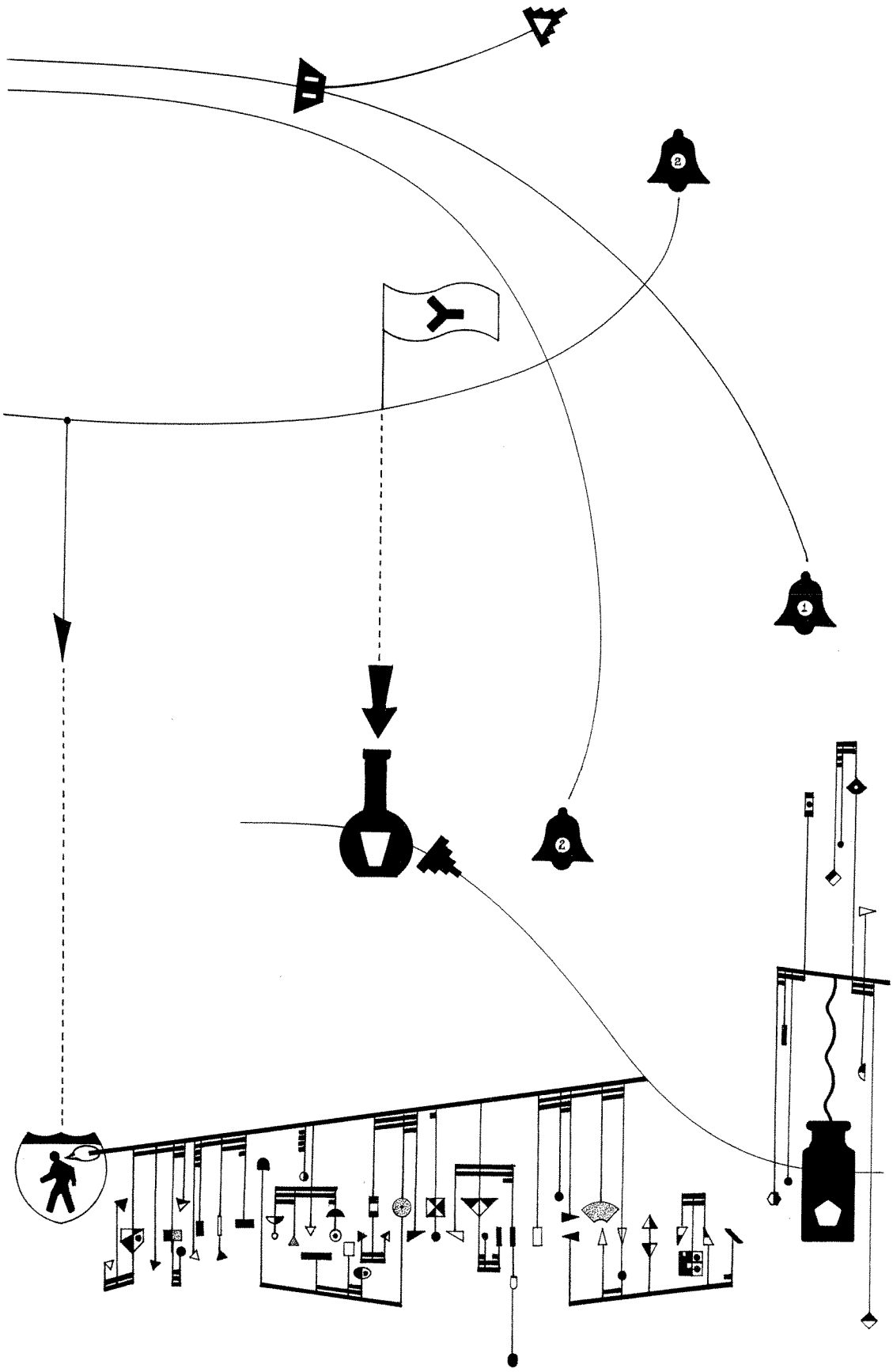
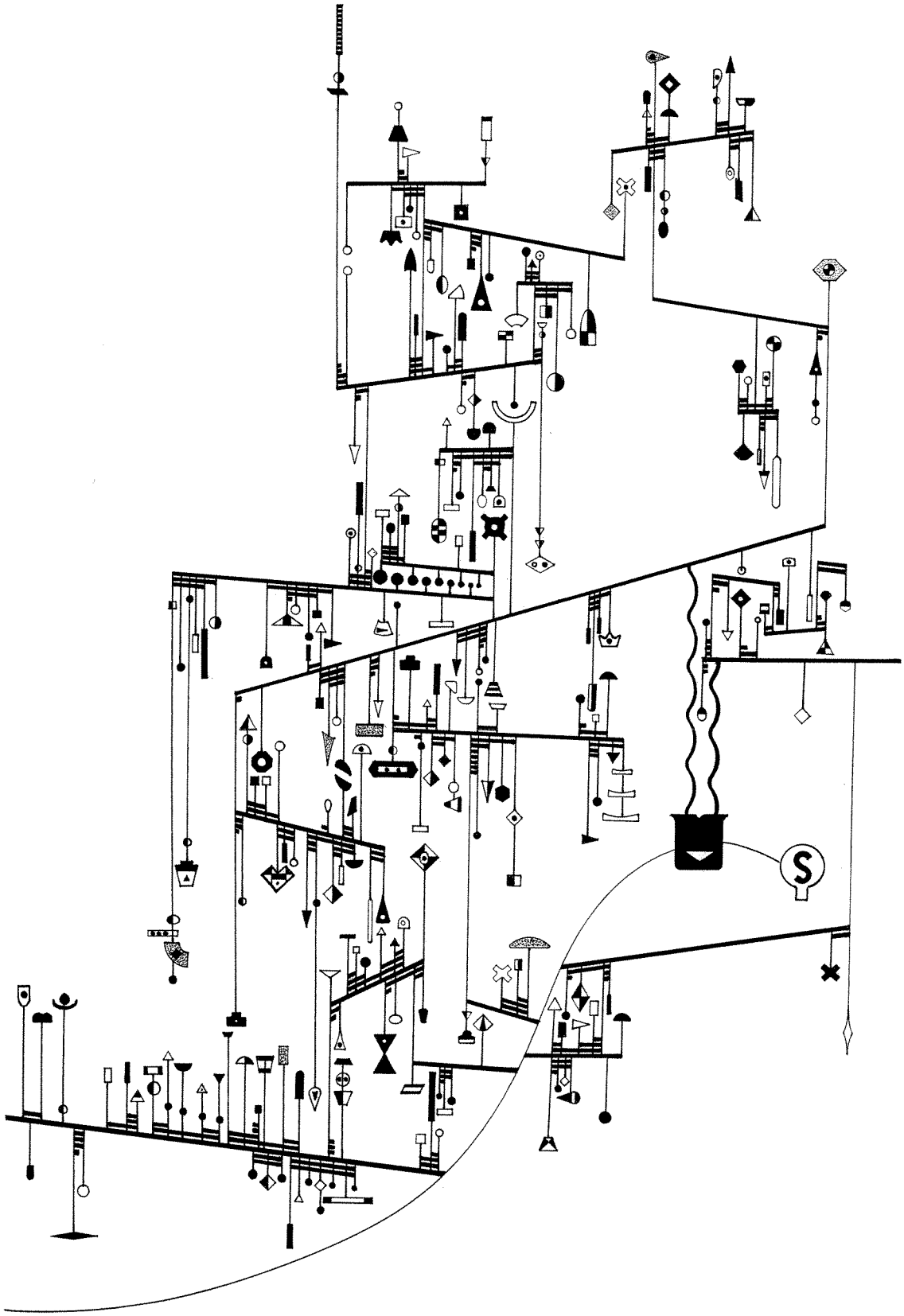
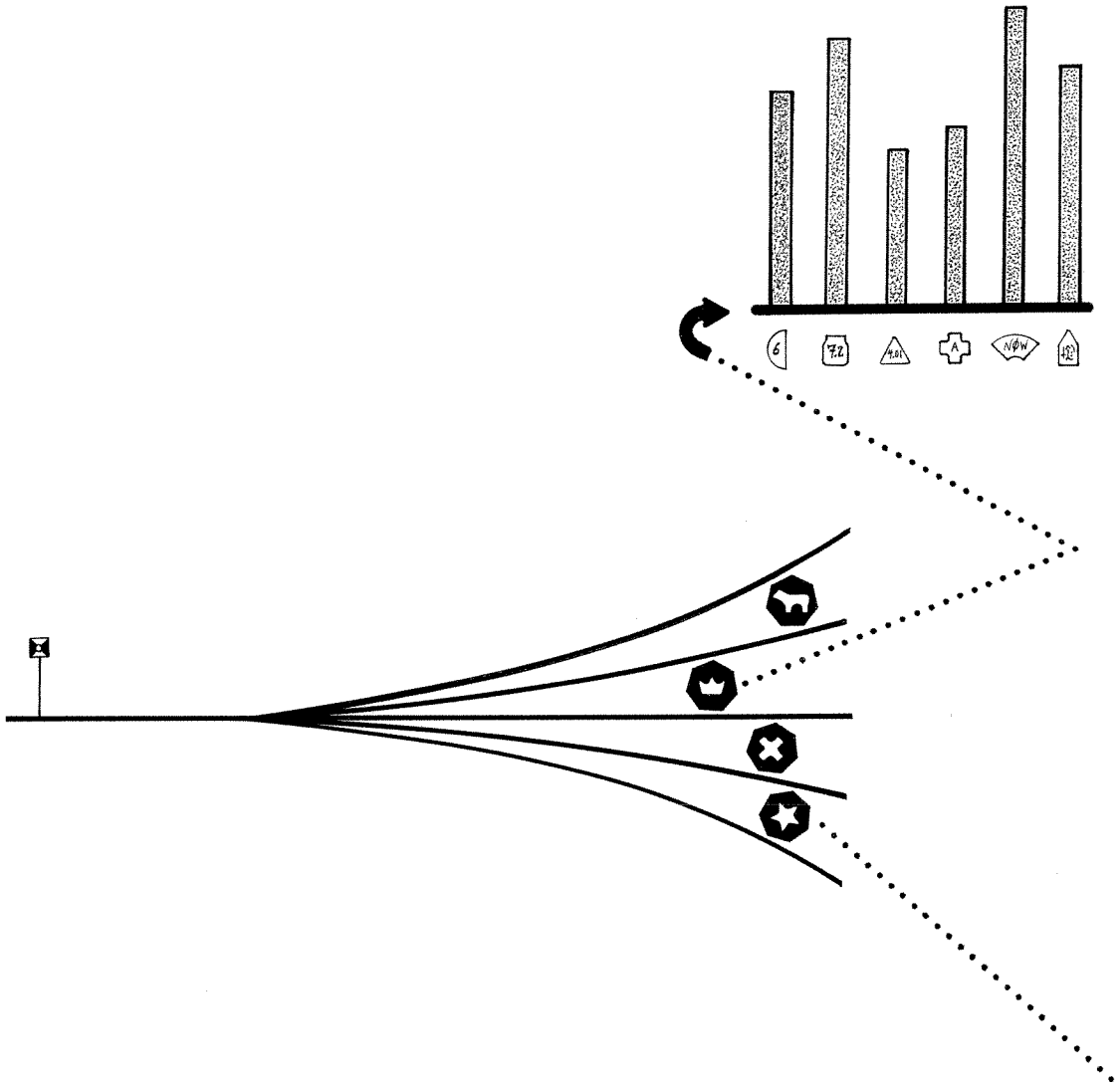
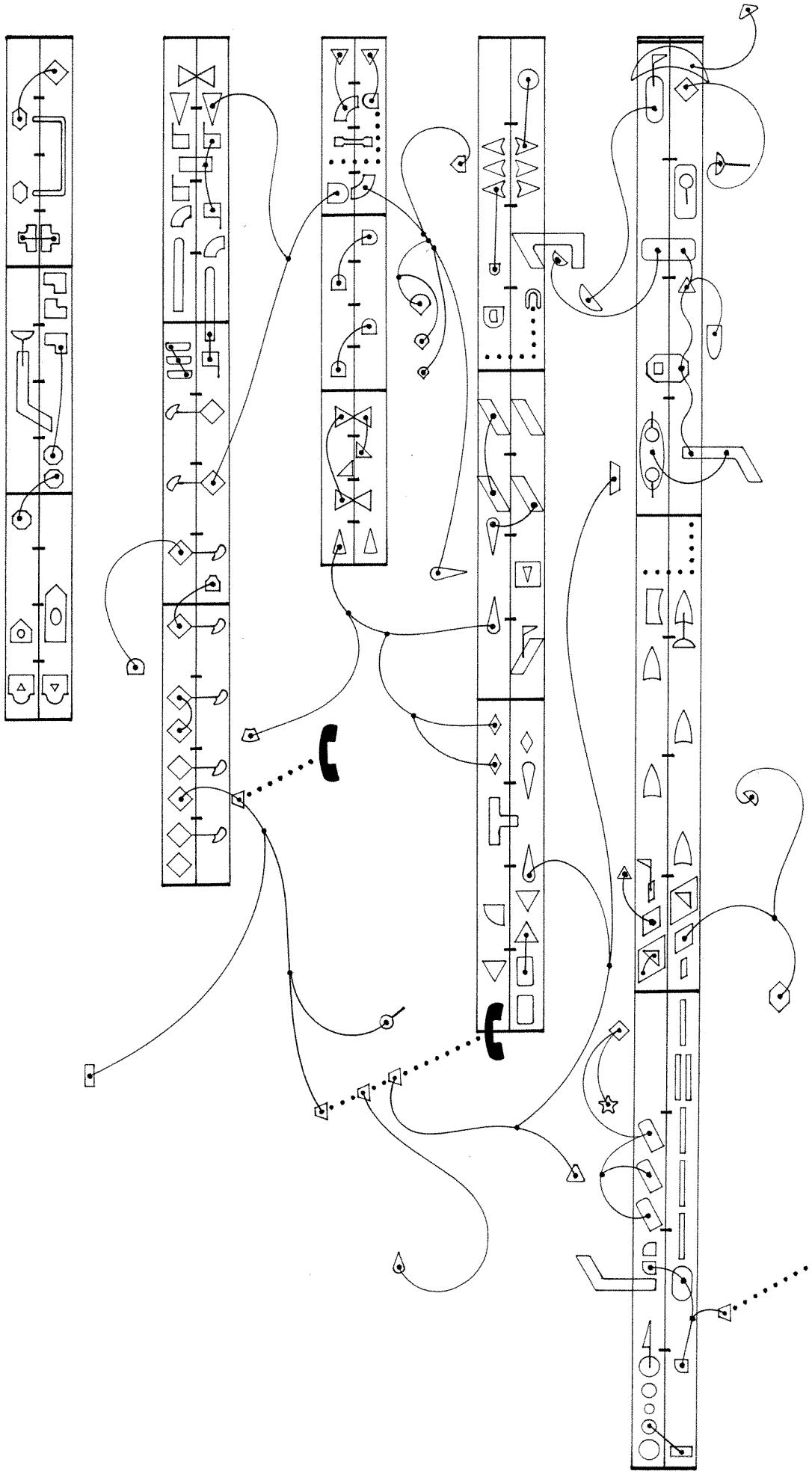
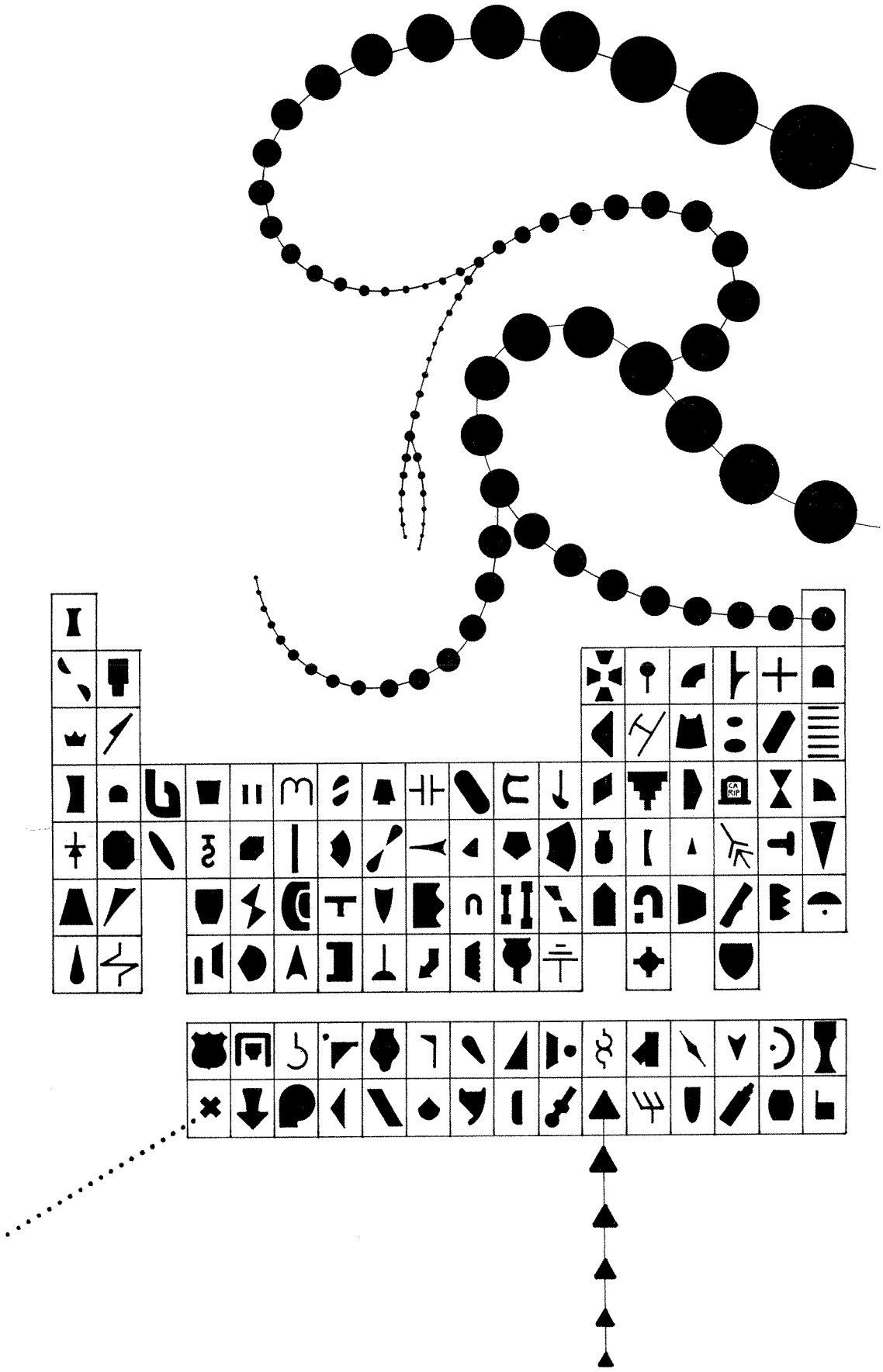


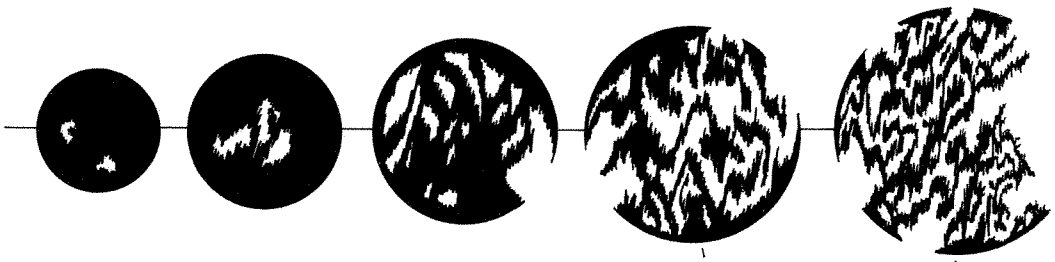


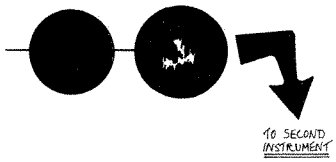


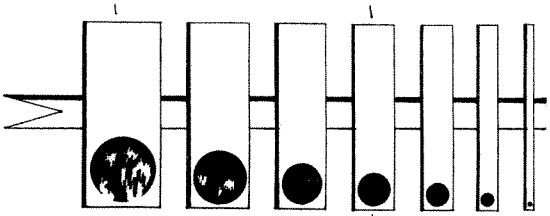


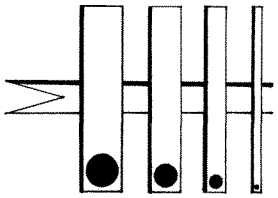


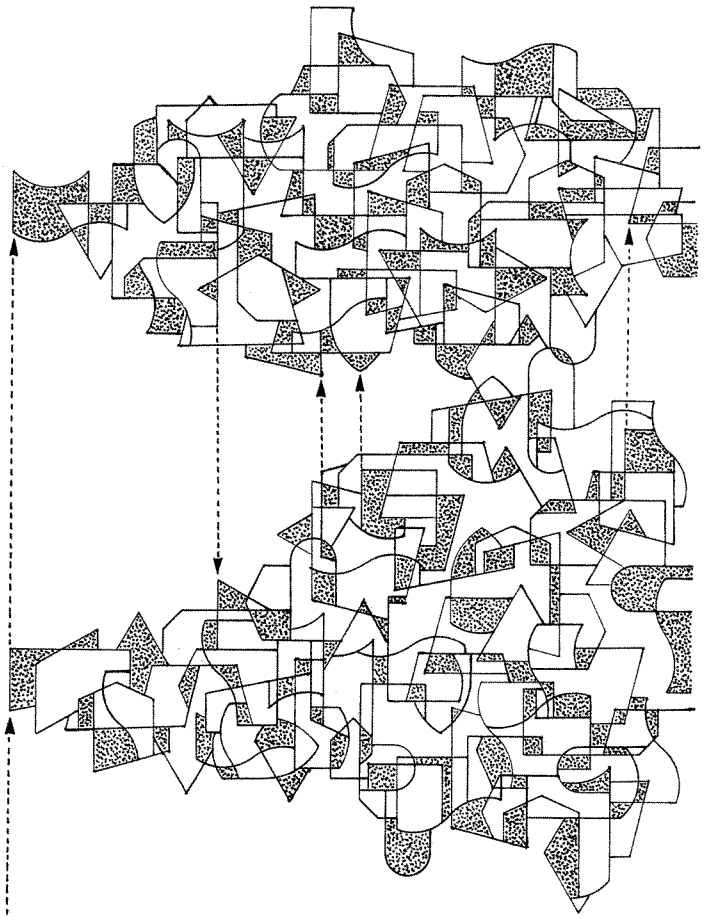


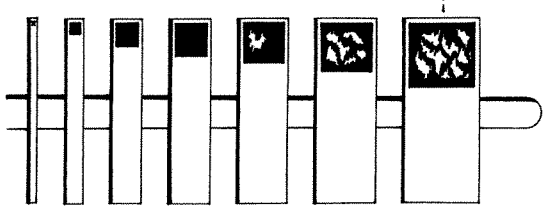


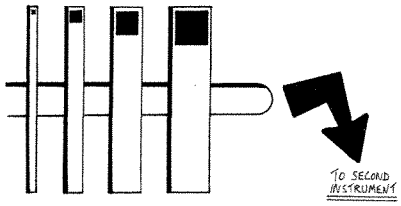

10 SECOND
INSTRUMENT







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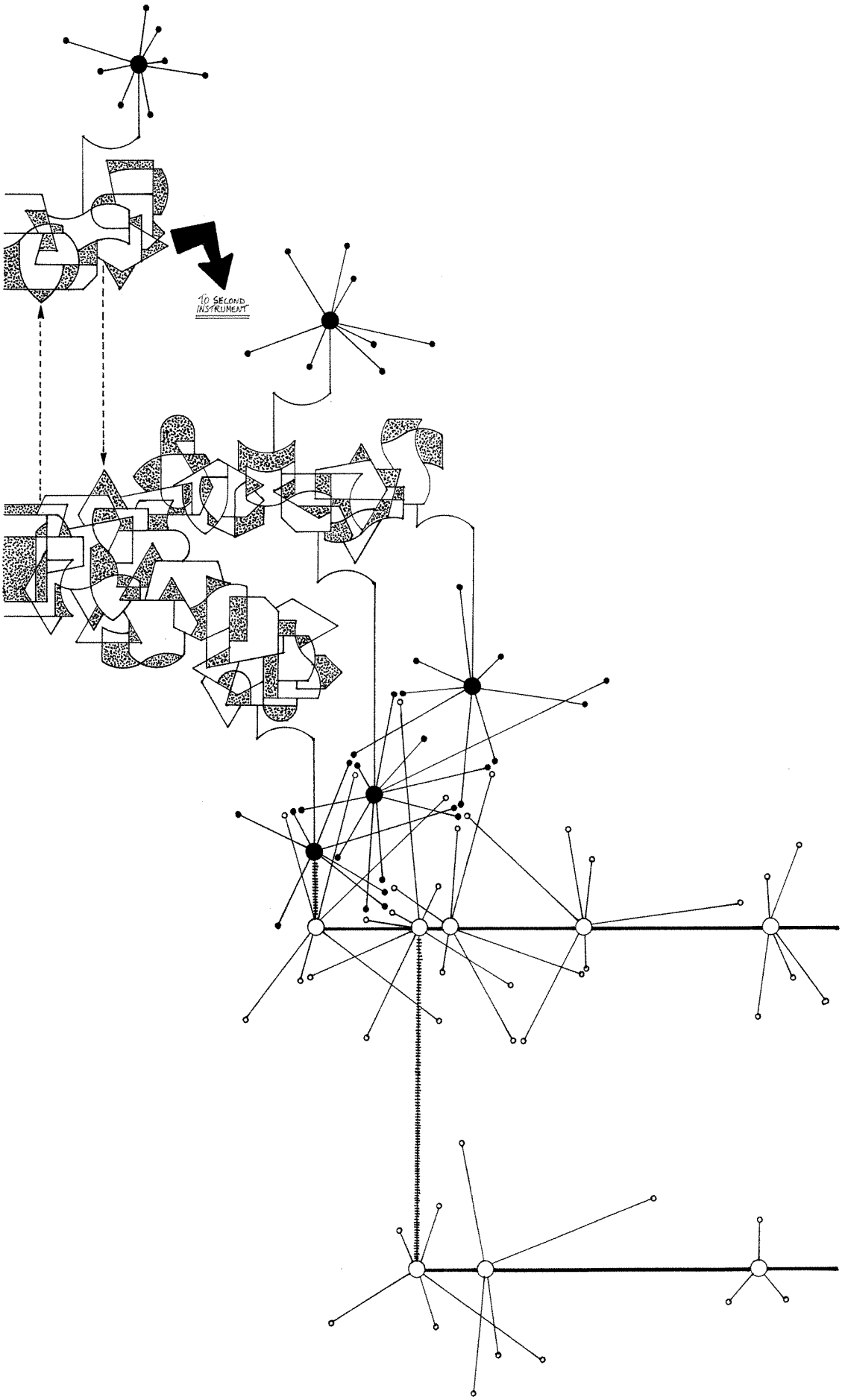
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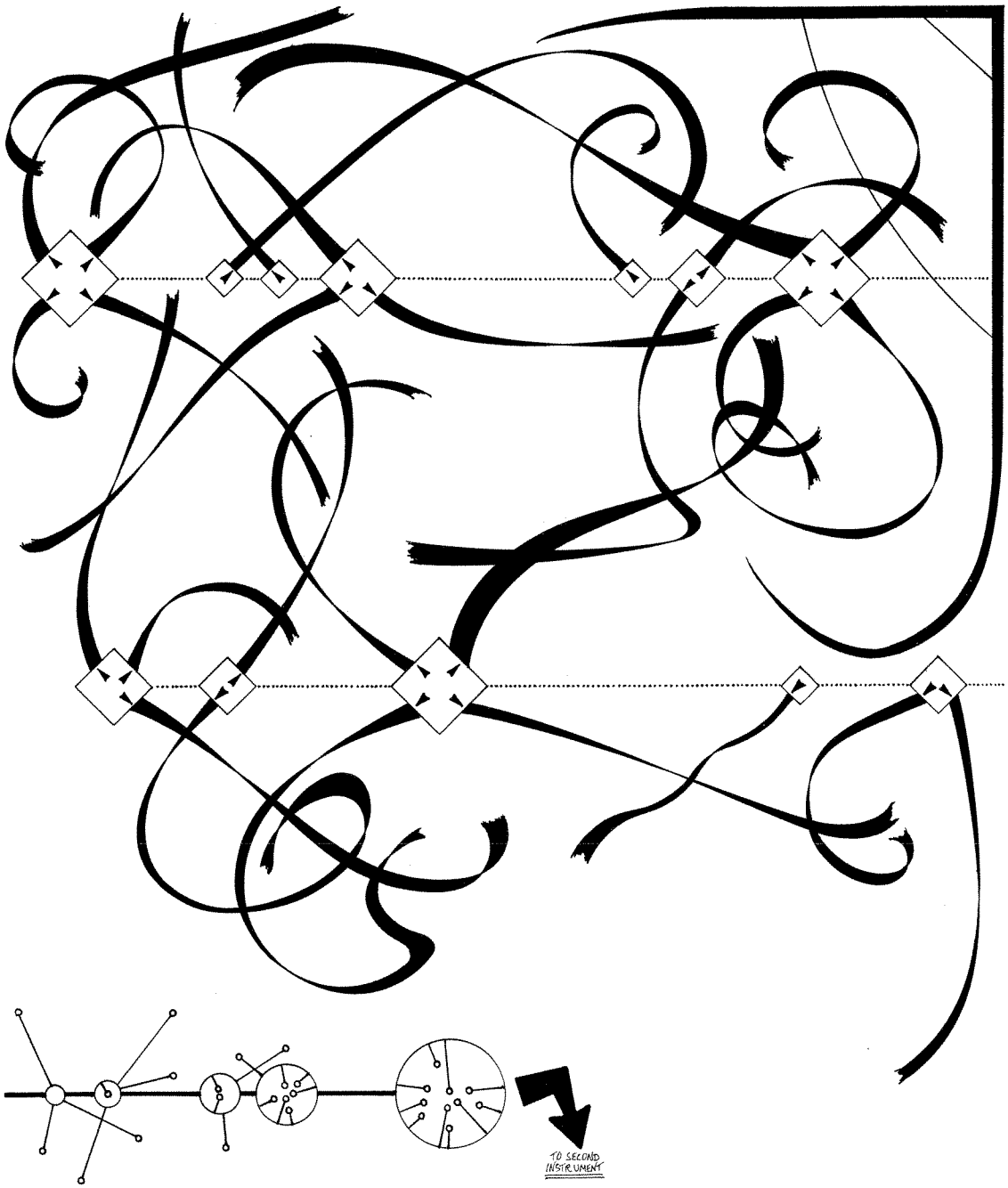

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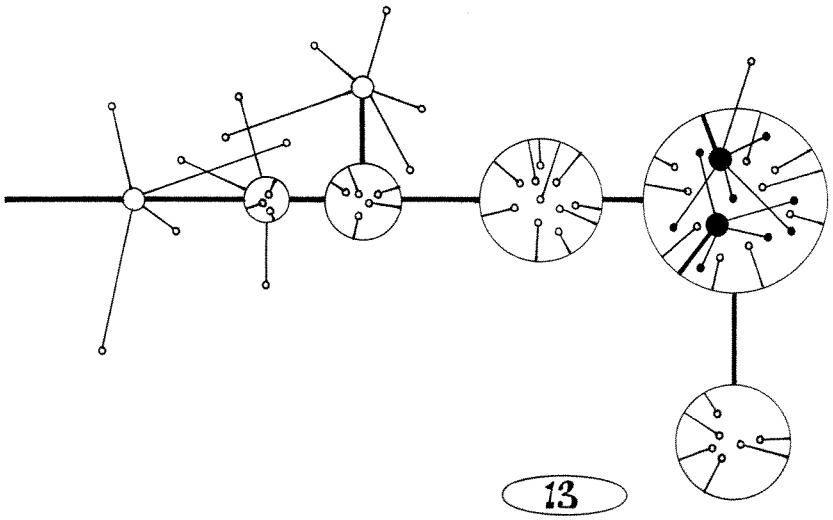

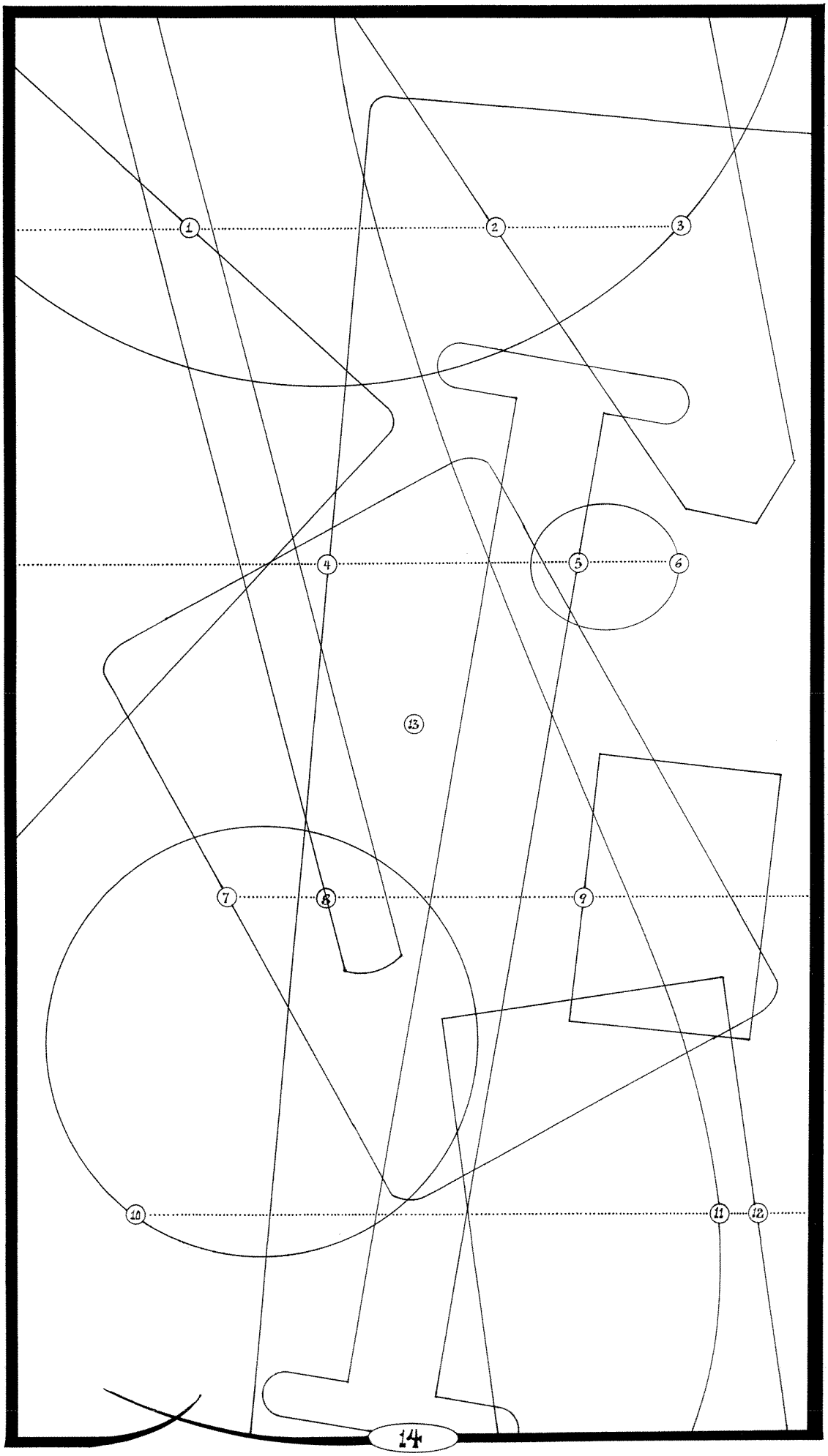
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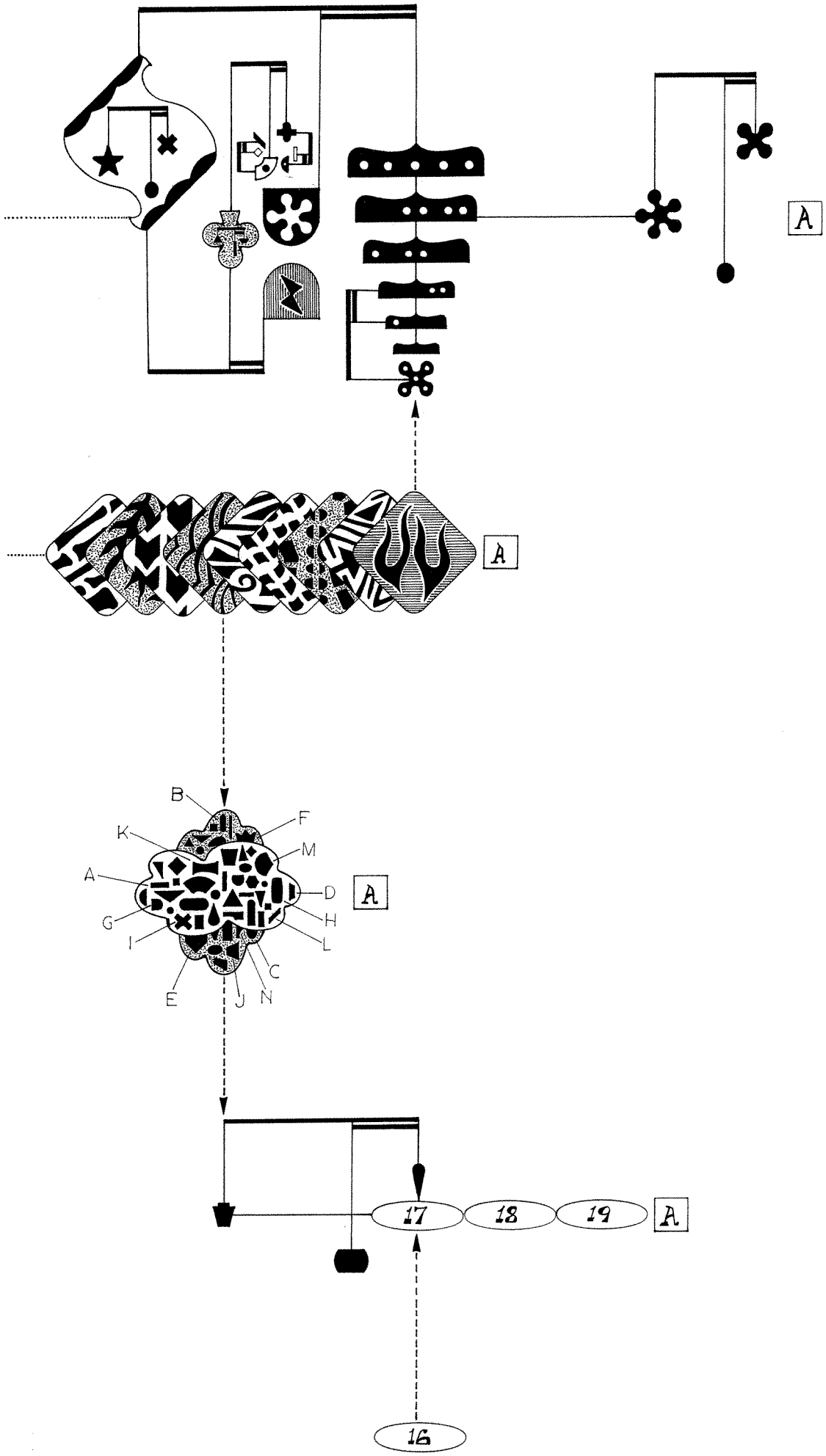
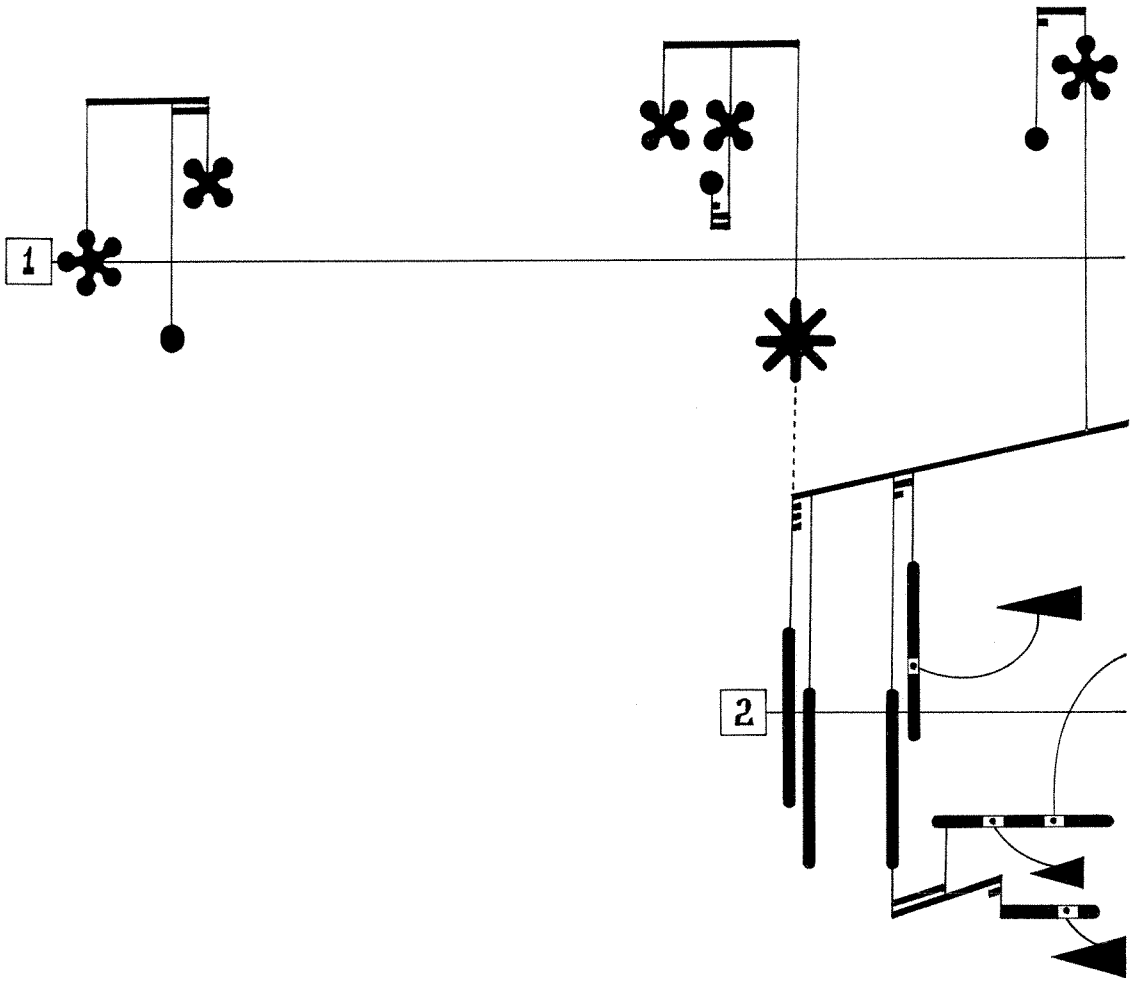


Mark Hogan 4-20-08 MENLO PARK

Medium

Mark Applebaum, 2008

Quartet Score
Players 3 & 4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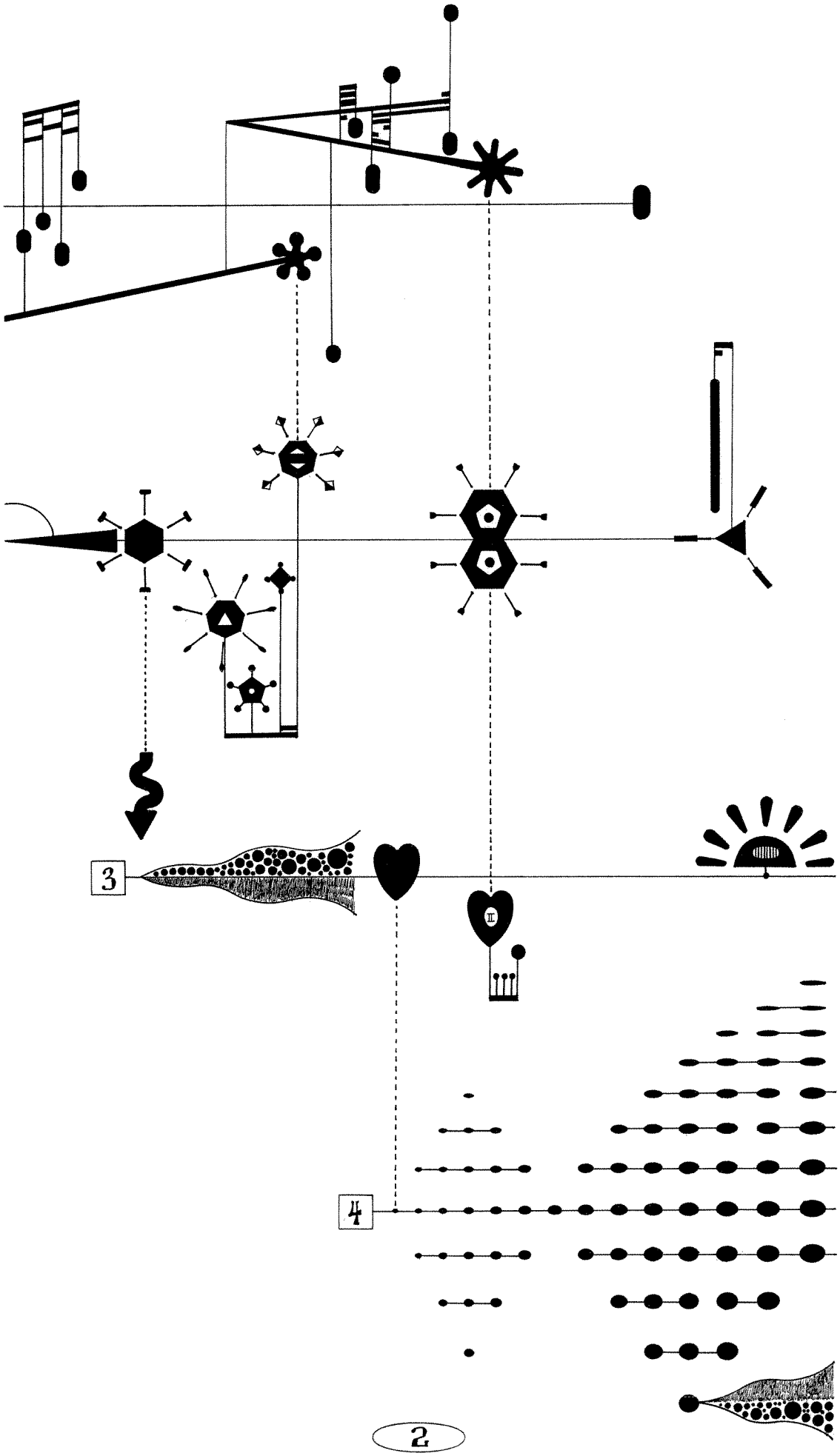
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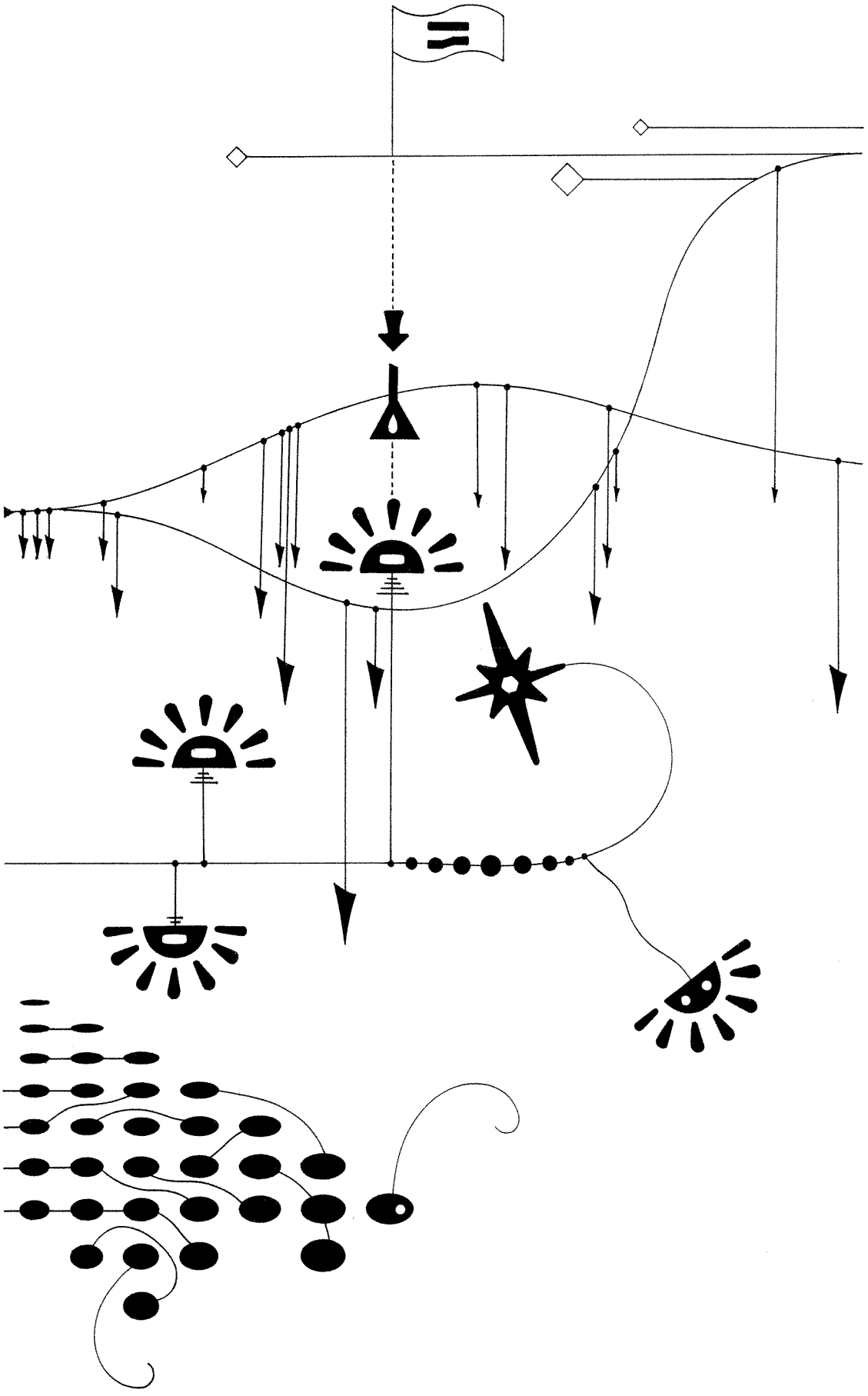

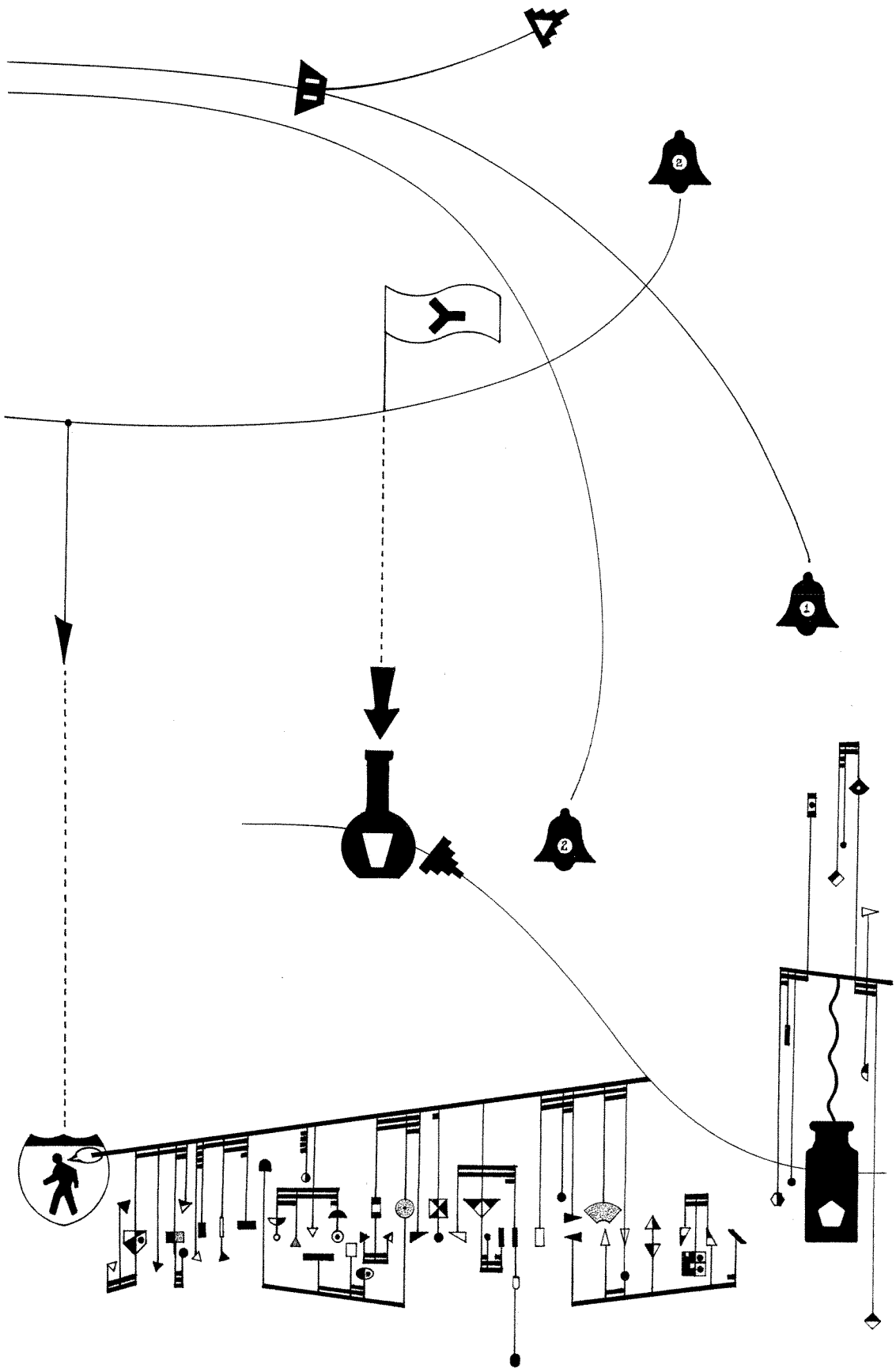

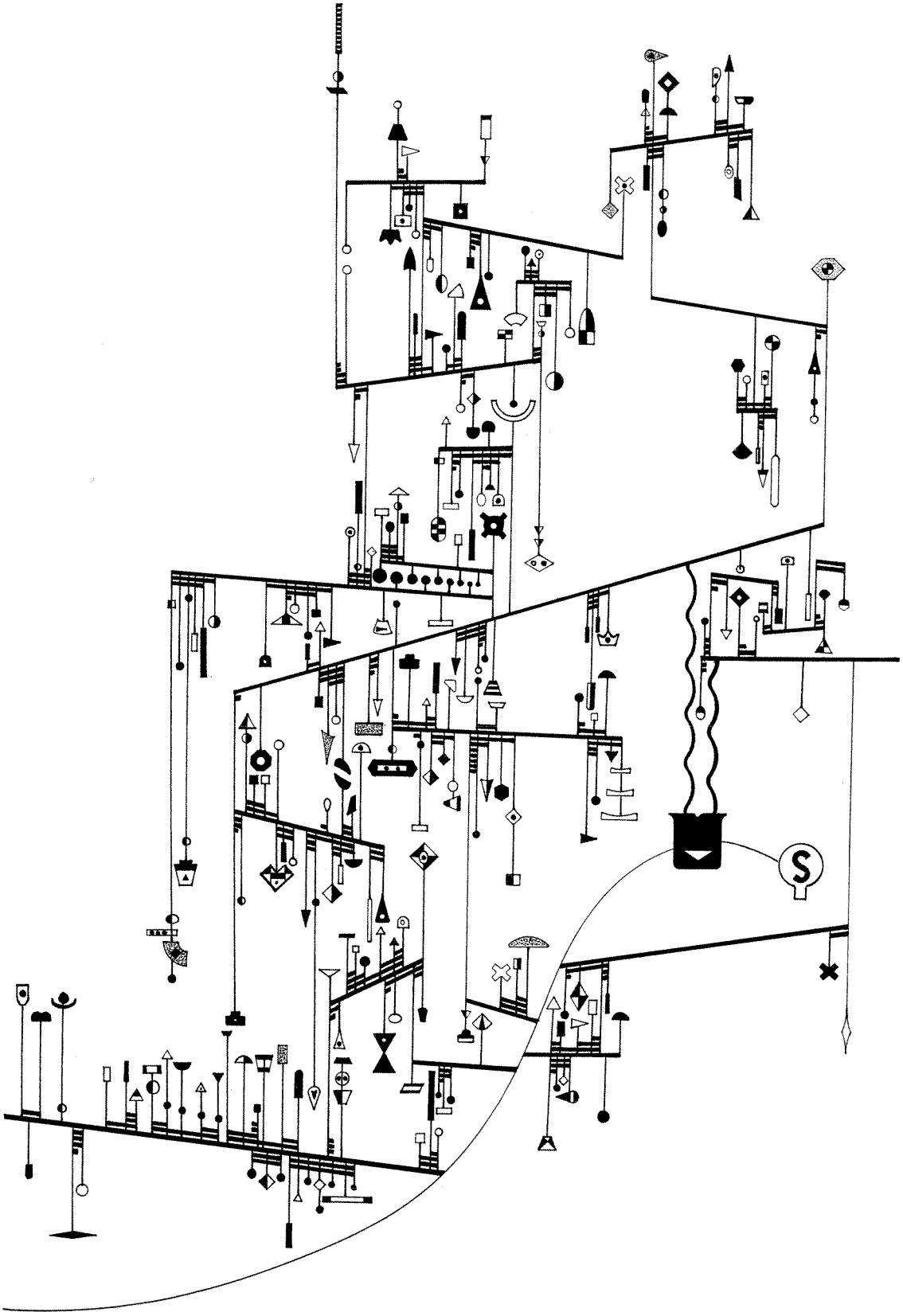

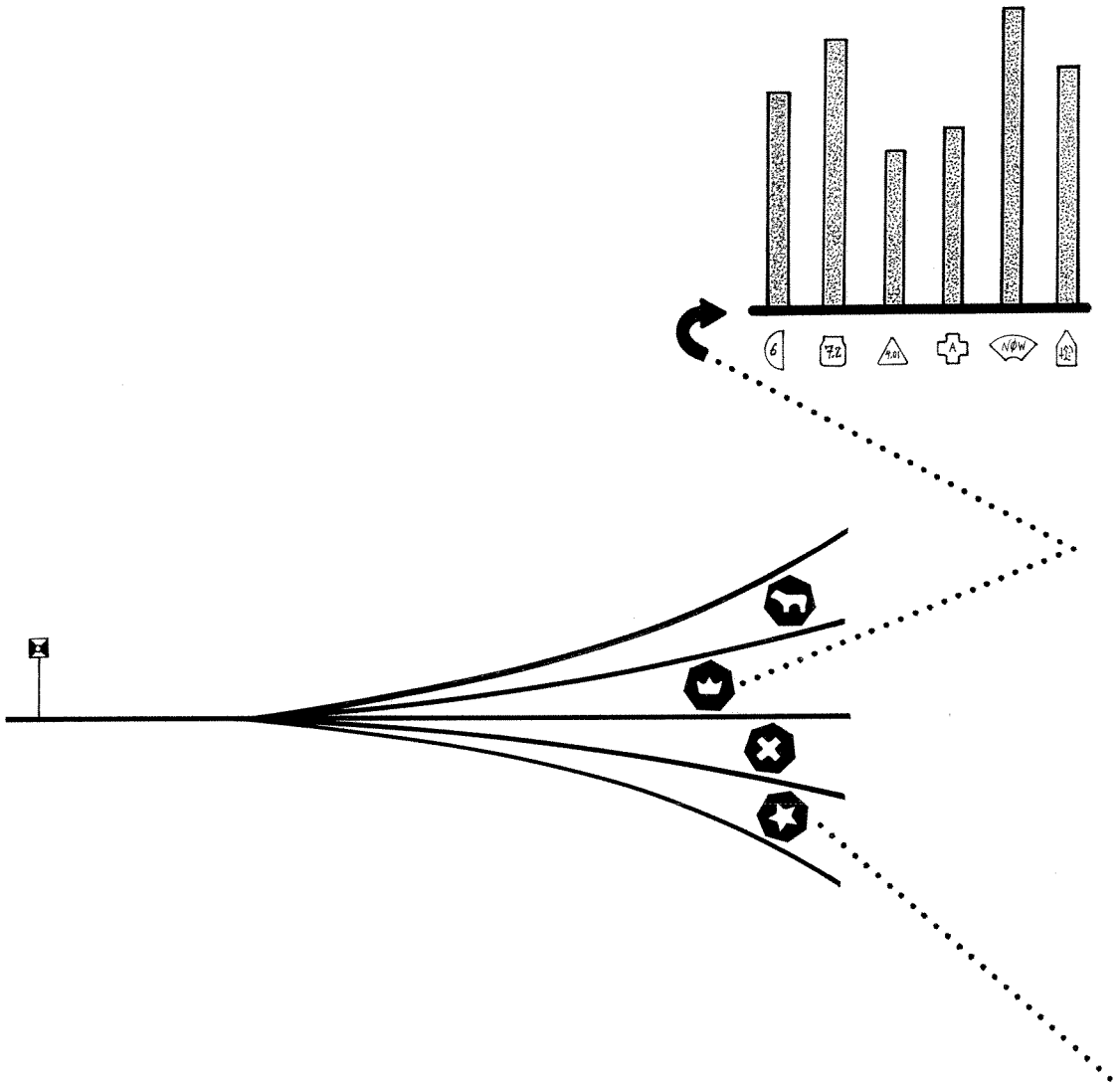

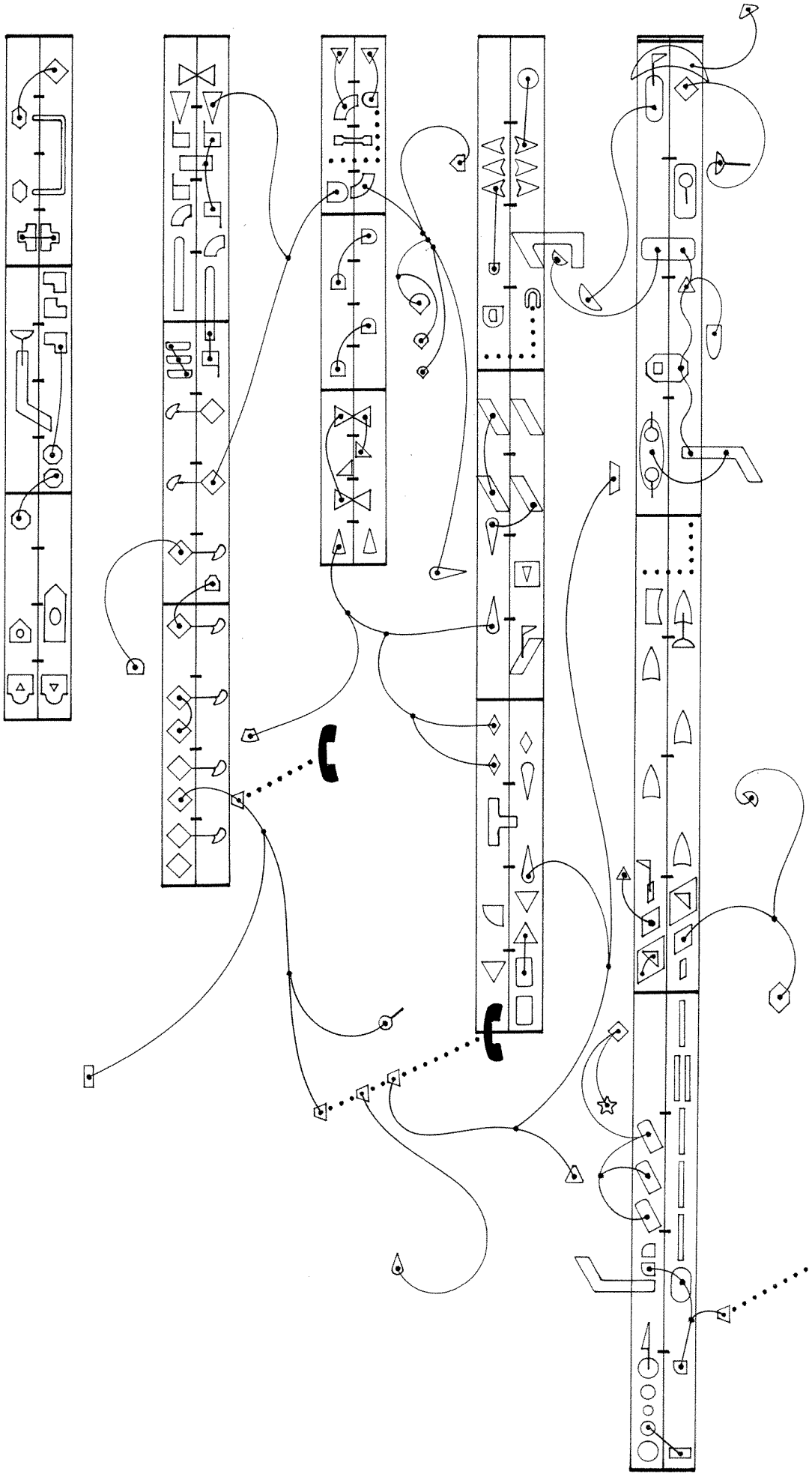

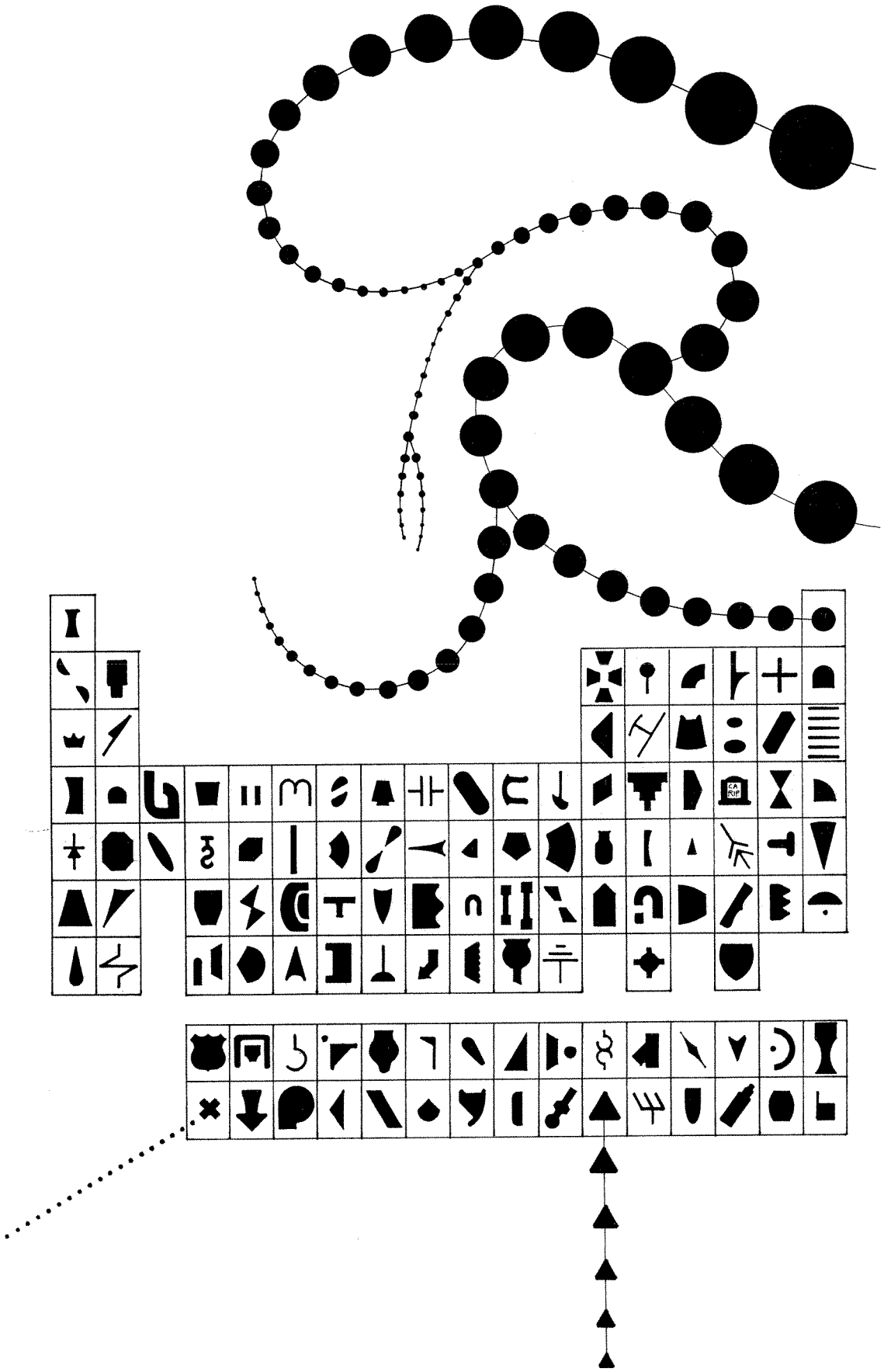

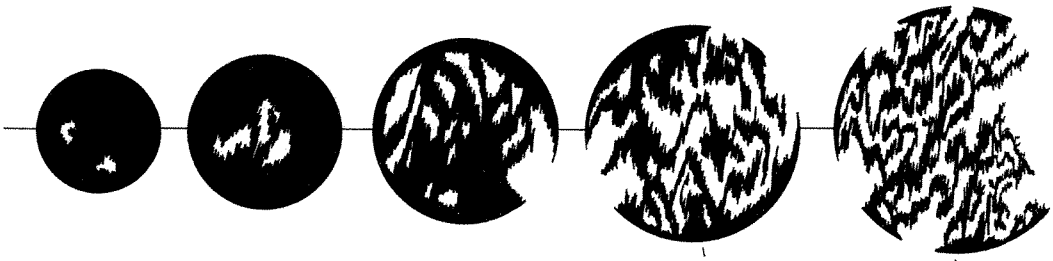

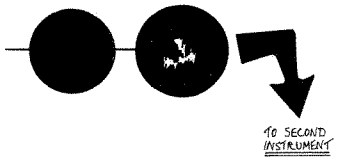
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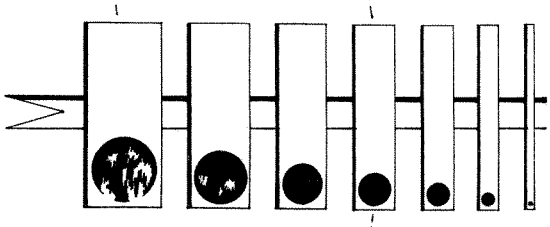

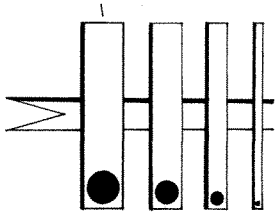

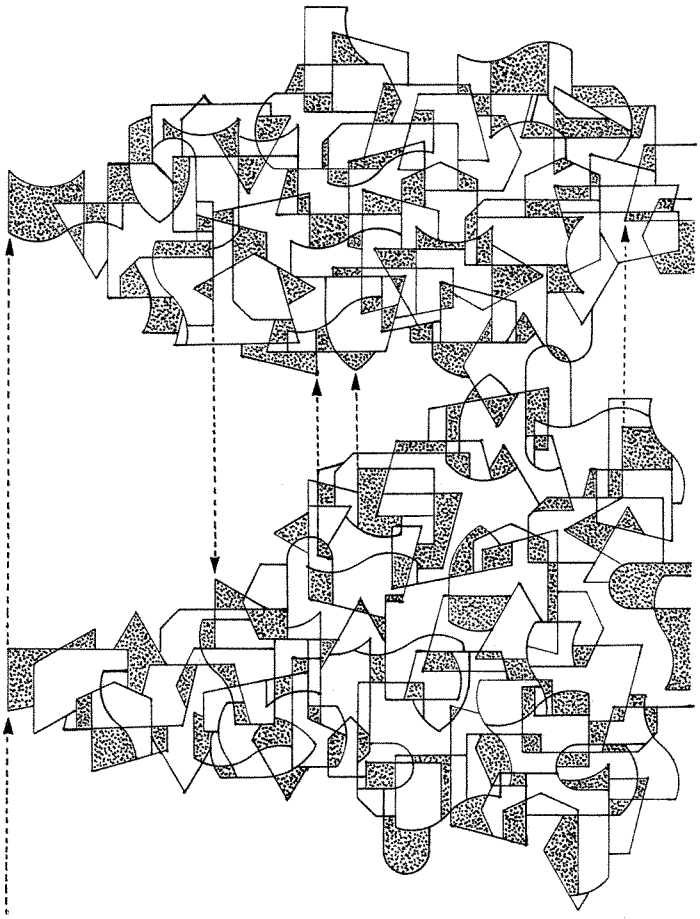

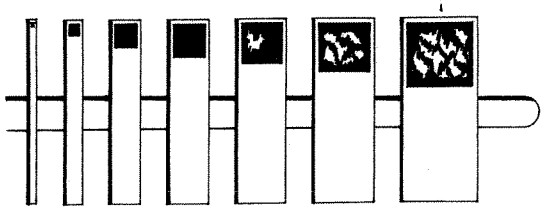

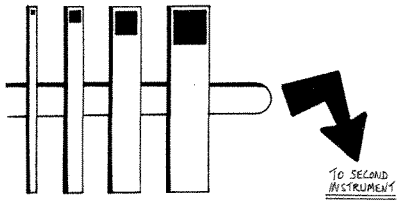
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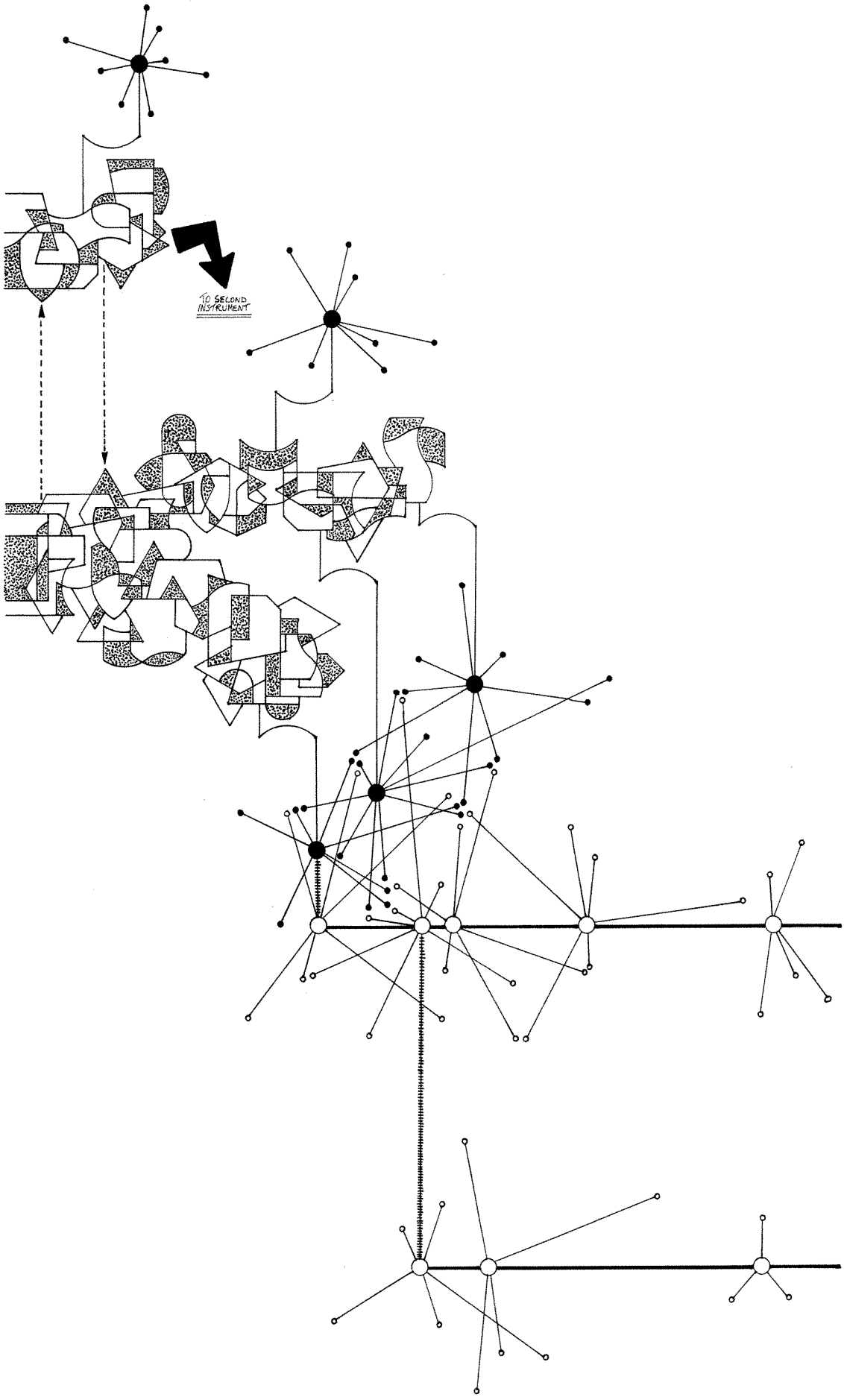
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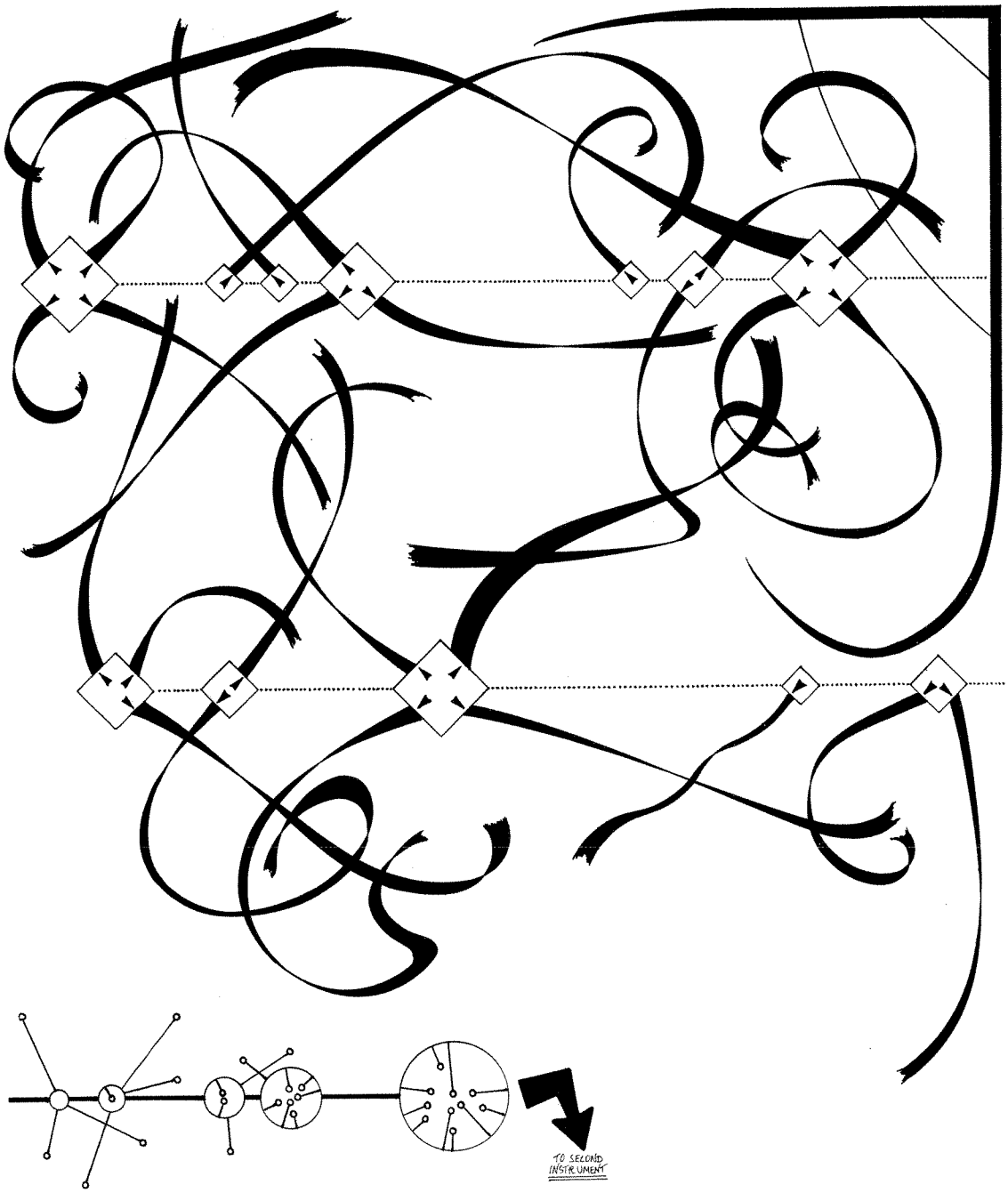

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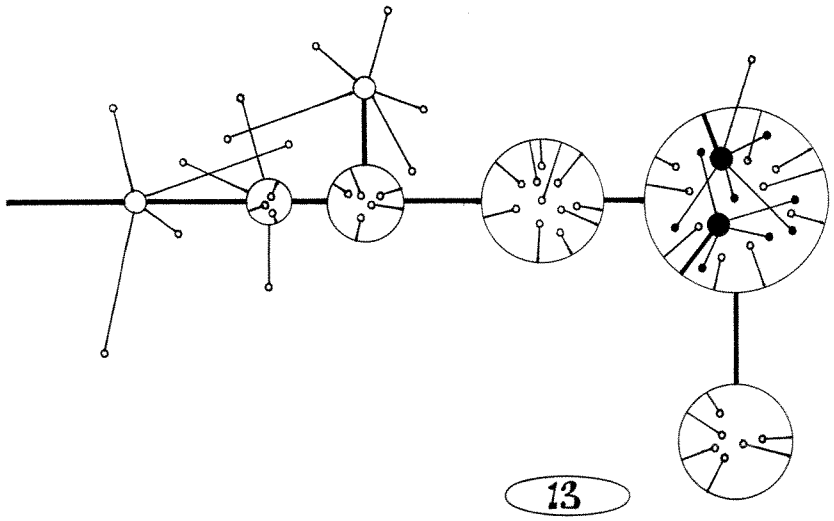

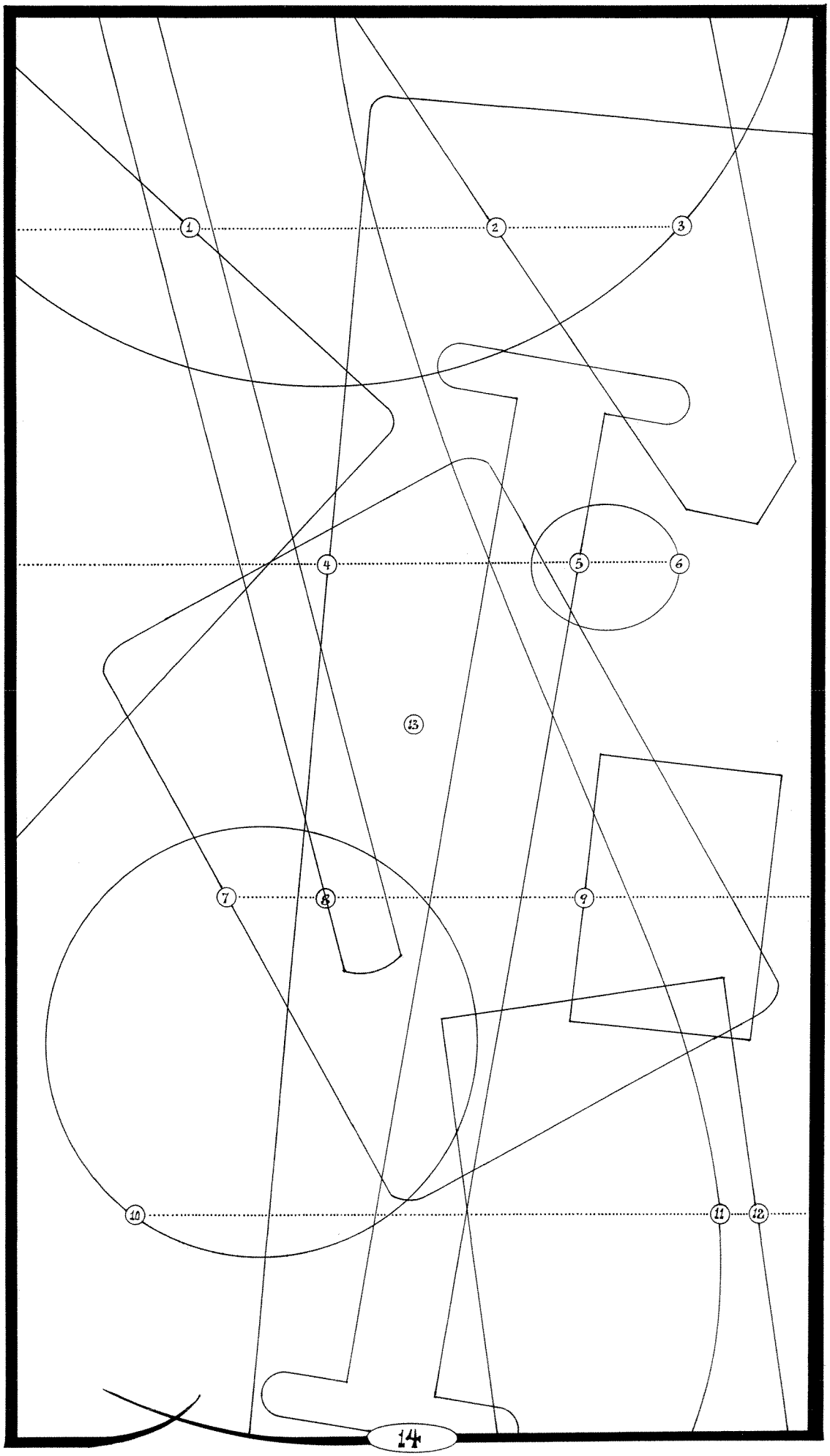
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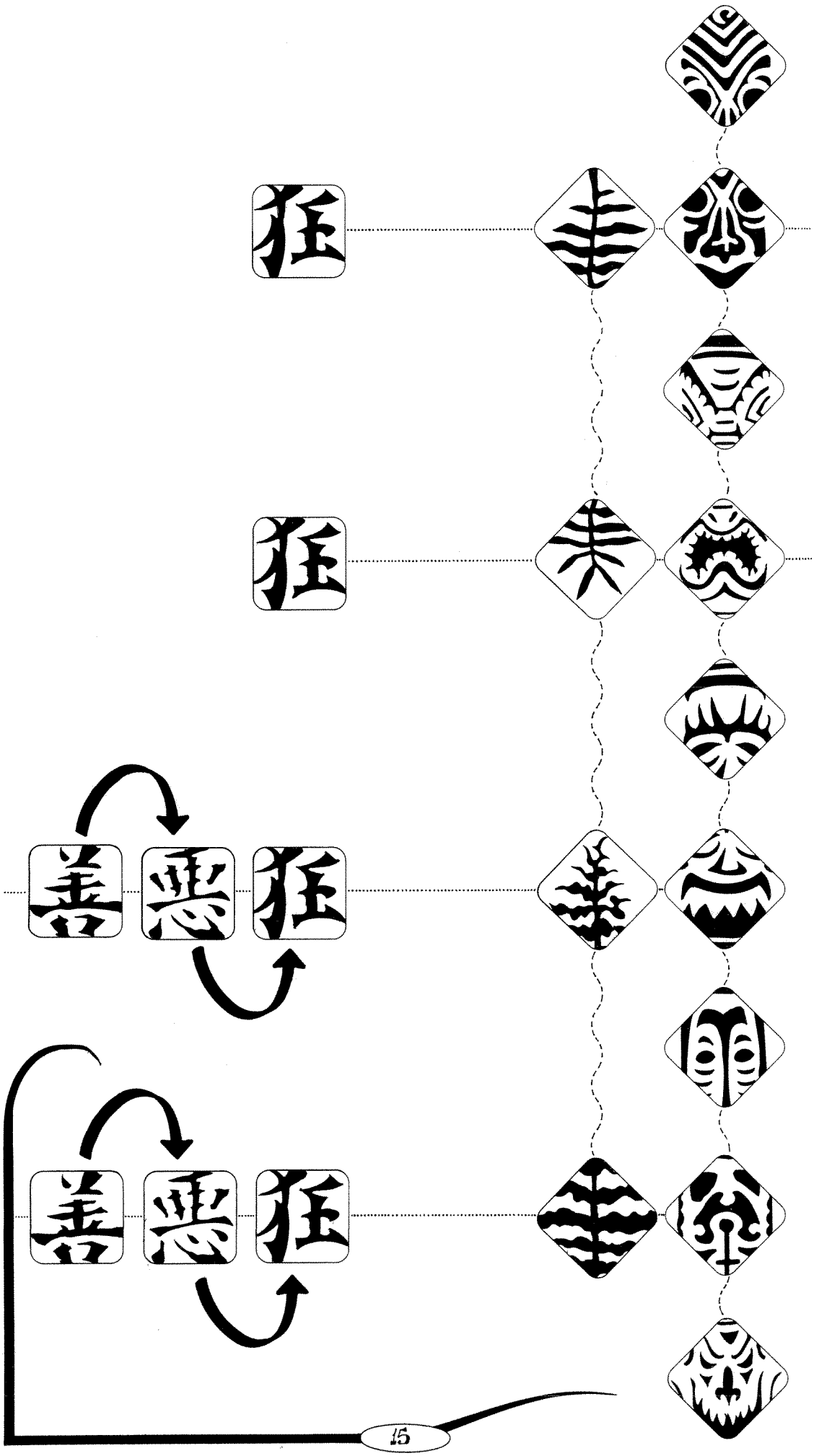
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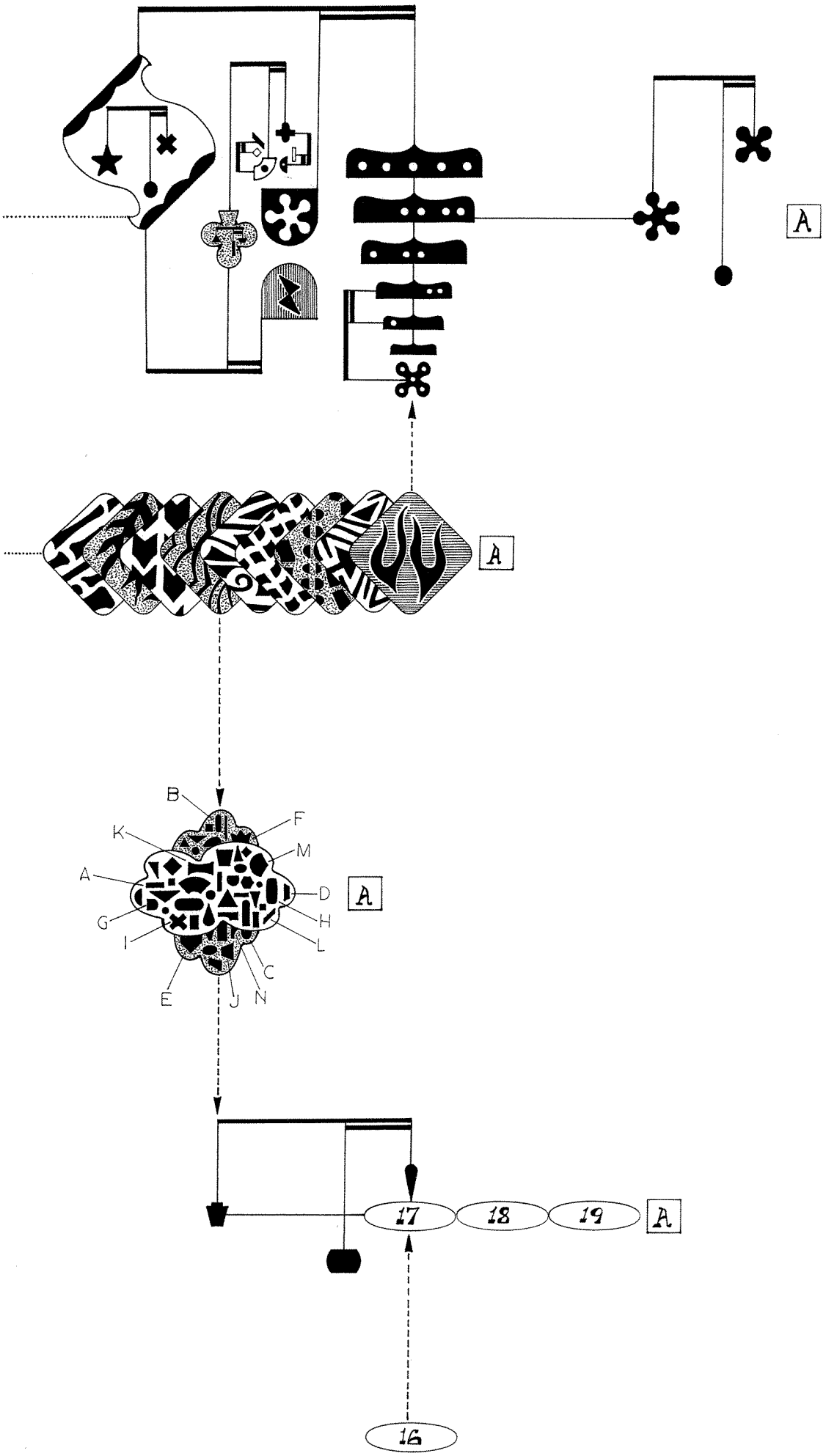

Mark Hopkins 4-20-08 MENLO PARK