

PERUSAL SCORE - NOT FOR PERFORMANCE USE

People Talk

for symphony orchestra
part of *Letters from the Aftermath*

Eris DeJarnett

eris

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I've told a lot of stories about sexual assault.

They aren't about the assaults themselves; rather, I tend to focus on what comes after. The victim-blaming. The self-loathing. The questions without answers. The deliberations over what, exactly, is supposed to come next. The unease of new relationships and the darkness that invades when a friend turns out not to be so friendly. The ways an assault alters memory, self-perception, and public reputation.

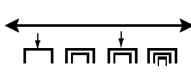
That said, each of these stories changes once there's more than a person or two on the stage. Each of these stories changes once someone who could fit the bill of a predator, or a judgmental mob, or a family member, or a lover joins the performance. When it's clear everyone onstage is a victim, the audience's minds follow us in one very specific direction. When there's a small army of people behind them who could play almost any role, they start asking different questions. More than in most musical performances, each member of the ensemble becomes a nontrivial part of the story being told. It's almost a musical whodunit, except you're not left wondering where or with what weapon.

I think this perceived presence of the mob is part of what steers us away from bringing honest discussions of sexual assault into institutional and ensemble settings. When you stack that unwillingness next to assault stats, like how one in five women are assaulted before graduating college or how approximately 61% of bisexual women are assaulted in their lifetimes or how your odds of being assaulted are significantly higher if you're queer and/or Native American and/or Middle Eastern and/or Black and/or multiracial, it's clear we aren't doing enough to bring these topics to the community at large. And when you stack it against James Levine's string of misdeeds and the chronic harassment and assault at Berklee and Julliard and CIM's hiring of Massimo La Rosa despite prior reports of sexual misconduct, it's clear we aren't doing enough to bring these topics to our own peers, colleagues, friends, and students. Why? Because in each of these cases, other people in power had heard the whispers. They'd heard the stories. And in each of these cases, for whatever reason, they did nothing. And their students and colleagues suffered because of it.

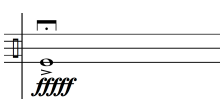
That inherent involvement of others is my main focus in *People Talk*. After an assault, deciding who to tell (if anyone) is a pressing choice. Society likes to instill in us an urge to tell *someone*, be it a friend, a family member, a mentor, or someone higher up the professional food chain, but in the reality survivors live in, coming forward isn't necessarily the right choice. It's almost never the safe one.

People Talk attempts to walk the audience through the ramifications of that choice in a way I've never approached before. It's very easy to relegate the mysterious "other" of the mob to faceless, voiceless people we never see or hear from; it's another beast entirely to have that force in the room, on the stage, commenting musically and verbally on the narrator's actions, thoughts, and decisions. Ensembles who perform this piece should expect each performer to develop their own sense of character within the work. Everyone on stage should feel like they're part of the story. As with each work in *Letters from the Aftermath*, *People Talk*'s parent project, I hope to appeal to the audience's sense of empathy and interest in one another's wellbeing. Unlike many of my other works, however, *People Talk* ties into motives and themes from a number of preexisting and ongoing pieces under the *Letters* umbrella. To learn more about these, please visit <https://erisdejarnett.com>.

Techniques:

 These symbols are from Nicholas Deyoe's string overpressure system (modeled after Grisey's). As Nicholas explains, "The single bracket with an arrow should be seen simply as an edgy or gritty sound. The pitch should still be stable. The triple bracket is a full overpressure, with heavy distortion. There should be little or no trace of actual pitch with this technique. The symbols in between are steps between these two states and should be interpreted by the performer depending on the context. They are not absolute, but rather, are meant to be treated as a scale of possible levels of pressure to be used at any given moment. Bow pressure symbols apply only to the note above which they appear, unless there is an arrow, or additional bracket extending from the symbol. Please see below for additional comments on the production of these techniques written by Ashley Walters."


From cellist Ashley Walters: "There is no formula for how to physically achieve the variations in color that Nicholas Deyoe's bow pressure indications require. However, I will offer strategies for how to discover timbres within crunch tones. First, approach each crunch tone as a single entity; do not attempt to create three uniform crunch tones that you insert into the music where indicated. Instead, every crunch tone (even those with similar indications) should reflect the timbral experience of the music at that point. The following suggestions will provide some ideas about how to achieve crunch tone variation through experimentation 1) Experiment with the contact point (sul pont, sul tasto, normale, etc). All three types of crunch tones can be played at a variety of contact points. 2) Experiment with where in the bow (frog, middle, tip) you play the crunch. 3) Experiment with the speed of the bow. 4) Experiment with how the bow moves. For example, the bow can move vertically to the strings, diagonally or, of course, perpendicular to the strings. 5) Experiment with how much hair (half hair or full hair) you play with. 6) Experiment with down bows versus up bows."

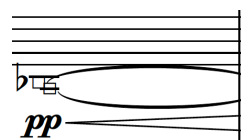
 The trombones, bass trombone, and tuba will need one standard mouthpiece and one mouthpiece with a bassoon reed inside (plastic is best), inserted with a reusable adhesive. When playing the bassoon reed, performers will read from a three-line, movable percussion clef designed to allow the freedom to choose notes or timbres well within their comfortable range. Though it is intuitive to interpret these three lines as high, middle, and


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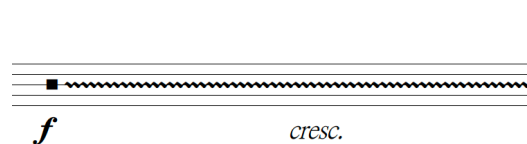
low pitches, performers can opt to change parameters such as the number of audible overtones instead of or in addition to changing pitch.

Noteheads:

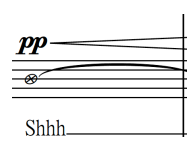
 A notehead pointing down indicates the performer should play the lowest possible pitch. This is found in the low brass parts.

 In the trumpet and trombone parts, a square notehead (unless otherwise notated) indicates air sounds. Performers should use the appropriate fingering or slide position and blow air through their instruments.


 Cell notation is used in various sections of this piece. Performers should play the pitches or motives found within each cell repeatedly. Each instrumentalist may choose their own pace and frequency of repetition. When marked, content may be played out of order.

 Rehearsal K marks the beginning of a chaotic, semi-improvisatory section, in which instrumentalists are instructed to shout, argue, and create an intense soundscape. Because most decisions are left to the conductor and the ensemble, performers engaging in this section will see a square, stemless notehead followed by a wavy line. Performers whose bars are blank should rest during this time but remain engaged with the ensemble around them. Appropriate facial expressions and body language are encouraged.

Traditional spatial notation is utilized alongside the chaos notation briefly at the end of the piece. This is represented by a regular stemless notehead and a normal beam extending from it. Performers should hold their given note for the duration of the timecode, deviating from this if directed in the score.

 On multiple occasions, the woodwinds are asked to contribute “shhhh” sounds to the timbre. This should be done without instruments and is notated by a circled cross notehead with the syllable below it. This notehead also appears in the marimba and harp parts at rehearsal R, when they are asked to scream on a vowel of their choosing. As such, no syllable is specified in that instance.

Other techniques:

 Diminuendos ending in a small circle indicate that performers should progress down to niente. Crescendos from a circle should start from nothing.

In all wind parts, stems with slashes indicate flutter tongue.

When a dynamic range is given (for example, one might encounter a passage marked “mp-mf”), the average dynamic should fall somewhere between the two extremes. If desired by the conductor, each performer may choose to pop out of the texture slightly up to once per given range.

All trills should be half steps.

Beginning after rehearsal R, if one clarinet player is not comfortable holding the entire length of the note, a second player may stagger breathe with them. The goal is a consistent, very quiet sound.

Theatrical considerations:

Depending on the capabilities of your ensemble and narrator and/or your venue, it may be necessary to amplify the narrator. Because the idea of character and the ability of movement is vital to this work, a lapel mic is greatly preferred. The narrator is encouraged to move as they please and may take creative liberties with their part so long as the integrity and intention of the piece is preserved. This applies particularly in rhythmically notated sections; the rhythms exist to give an overall sense of structure, but ultimately, the narrator’s delivery of the words should feel fluid and natural (or intentionally strained). The ensemble should not drown out the narrator at any point other than measure 212 (rehearsal R).

For the conductor’s reference, text cues have been placed throughout the score. These indicate beginnings and endings of significant phrases. They can be found at the top of the staff and above the first sounding voice of each instrument family on each system.

At any point during the performance, instrumentalists who are resting may lean over and whisper to one another. These moments should remain consistent with the topical throughlines of the piece (therefore, it is not wise to spend your rests telling your stand partner accordion jokes) and should not interfere with performers’ ability to reenter at the correct time.

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Whispers should be scarce toward the beginning of the piece, especially before the long fermata in measure 25, but should gradually build until the chaos section at rehearsal K. During these whispers, pointing at the narrator and other similar gestures may help convey to the audience that the ensemble is doing this intentionally.

The “shhhhhh” sections in the woodwinds can be made more effective by looking and leaning toward the narrator and/or putting a finger to one’s lips. It should be clear that performers aren’t simply creating a timbral effect, they’re introducing something meant to be understood as a word.

In measure 46, the cellos and second violins have a gesture, marked considerably quieter than the rest of the ensemble, that is not seen anywhere else in the score. This is foreshadowing the drowning moment at rehearsal R. It should be visibly noticeable that the cellos and second violins are playing a different line than the ensemble; however, the line itself should remain inaudible.

During improvisatory sections, like the one beginning at rehearsal K, it may be helpful to have some performers making sounds on their instruments to preserve the continuity of timbres. If the conductor decides this is appropriate, extended techniques are highly encouraged. However, in any moment when voices are used (besides the drowning moment at rehearsal R), the instruments should not obliterate them. In most cases, the voices should be reasonably prominent in the larger texture. For more tips on the chaos section, I have created a performer handout included in this file. If you need further guidance, feel free to drop me an email at eris@erisdejarnett.com. (For the world premiere performance, it took the group a solid three or four rehearsals to start to get the hang of this section.)

Beginning at rehearsal S, instrumentalists should begin to turn away from the narrator. This should happen gradually (as rehearsals S, T, and U may span over a minute, depending on the narrator’s speed). Once turned fully away from the narrator (or as far away as is possible given seating arrangements), performers should put their heads in their hands or slouch, hiding as much of their own bodies as possible from the audience without curling up into a ball on their chairs. The solo clarinetist(s) and violinist should be the last performers to turn (after they have cut off).

The final fermata should be long enough that the audience begins to feel uncomfortable. The narrator can decide if they wish to leave the stage before the applause or remain with the ensemble.

The percussion section may find it useful to incorporate additional instruments into the improvisatory sections. This is both accepted and encouraged. The marimbist may choose to bring extra mallets for the moment at rehearsal Q in which all mallets should be thrown across the keyboard and off the low end of the marimba. After this moment, the mallets should not be retrieved until after the piece has ended and the ensemble is in transition.

People Talk is a heavy piece. A content warning should be included on any promotional materials for your performance. It may also be beneficial to discuss these topics and other assault-related subjects with your ensemble before and during the rehearsal process. In my work, I do my best to keep every performer as safe as possible, but the director should be willing to work with performers who may be uncomfortable performing this piece. Please make it clear that your ensemble can come to you with any concerns. Conductors should be especially aware that it is always possible a performer's rapist/abuser is also in the ensemble. Utmost care should be taken to maintain comfort and safety for all performers and audience members. If this is not possible, the piece should not be performed. (If you have questions about this or would like my help, feel free to reach out.)

Concept of sound:

This score creates safe, quiet moments that grow into softly tense and eventually thunderous, *impending doom* kinds of sounds. When considering sound production and ensemble blend, use the narrator’s text and the presence of the large ensemble as a guide. A sentence that might be easy to spit out in the privacy of one’s own company might change entirely with the knowledge of a large, judgmental mob waiting just outside the window (or on the internet). The narrator and conductor should collaborate closely to determine the overall tone of the work; from there, bring it to the ensemble and see what they make of it.

Duration: approx. 15’

People Talk was commissioned by Nicholas Deyoe for The Ensemble at CalArts.
It premiered on March 15, 2019.

*For Nick and The Ensemble,
for taking this journey with me,
but very much for Leila,
for being my voice when I can’t.*

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Eris DeJarnett (2018)

Ambient, ♩ = 60

A "This is a secret..."

Piccolo

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1, 2, 3

Bass Clarinet in B♭

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

Bassoon 1, 2

Contrabassoon

Shhh

tutti

pp

mf

Horn I, II in F

Horn III, IV in F

C Trumpet I, II

C Trumpet III

Trombone 1, 2

Bass Trombone

Tuba

"This is a secret..."

"You'll see it..."
air sounds

pp

mf

Percussion I:
Bass Drum, Tam-Tam

Percussion II:
Suspended Cymbal,
Woodblock, Brake
Drum

on rim of bass drum

p

5

Marimba

Harp

dampen

mp

"This is a secret..."

mp

5

Ambient, ♩ = 60

A "This is a secret..."

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

ppp

pp

IV.

gliss.

gliss.

p

ppp

pp

Complete performance materials available at
<https://erisdejanett.com>

Picc. *pp* *mf* Shhh

Fl. I, II *pp* *mf* Shhh

Ob. I, II *pp* *mf* Shhh

Cl. I, II, III *pp* *mf* Shhh

B. Cl. *pp* *mf* Shhh

Alto Sax. *pp* *mf* Shhh

Ten. Sax. *pp* *mf* Shhh

Bari. Sax. *pp* *mf* Shhh

Bsn. I, II *pp* *mf* Shhh

Cbsn. *pp* *mf* Shhh

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Tpt. I, II *pp* *mf* "through my ribs." "This is..."

Tpt. III *pp* *mf*

Tbn. I, II air sounds *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

B. Tbn. *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

mp
 It's in the flash of my eyes when someone's breath is in my face, the grimace when that man on the train insists on my attention,
 the shudder when a hand at my back feels like a knife through my ribs. This is a secret I carry.

Perc. I *p* *p* *mf* on rim of bass drum

Mar. *mp*

Hp. *mp* hit strings *f*

Vln. I *ppp* *p* "through my ribs." "This is..."

Vln. II *p* *pp* *gliss.*

Vla. *gliss.* *p*

Vc. *pp* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *p*

Db. *ppp* *pp*

Picc. B "It sits just below my heart..." "...and I BURST" *ppp*

Fl. I, II *ppp* *tutti* *p*

Ob. I, II

Cl. I, II, III *ppp* *I. airy* *p*

B. Cl. *ppp* *p* *ppp*

Alto Sax.

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

Bsn. I, II

Cbsn. "...and I BURST" *ppp*

Hn. III, IV "It sits just below my heart..." "...and I BURST" *ppp* **IV.**

Tpt. I, II *p* *sf*

Tpt. III *p* *sf*

Tbn. I, II *p* *sf*

B. Tbn. *p* *sf*

Tba. *p* *sf*

II *accel. through the line* *f*
 It sits just below my heart, between my lungs, like a fist that won't let go,
 and it squeezes and squeezes and squeezes and squeezes and someone puts a hand on my back and I BURST

Perc. I *muffled* *p* "It sits just below my heart..." *cresc.* "...and I BURST"

Perc. II *mp* *Coin on cymbal (uneven, jerky)*

Mar. *mp* *cresc.*

Vln. I B "It sits just below my heart..." "...and I BURST" *mp* *molto tasto* *ppp* *p*

Vln. II *mp* *ppp* *p*

Vla. *mp* *ppp* *p*

Vc. *mp* *ppp* *p*

Db. *mp*

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Picc. "But you'd never be able to tell..." "...a cause for scorn." "Those people wouldn't..."

Fl. I, II *tutti* *pp* *a2*

Ob. I, II *pp* *a2*

Cl. I, II, III *pp* *a3*

B. Cl. *pp*

Alto Sax. *p*

Ten. Sax. *p*

Bari. Sax. *p*

Bsn. I, II *mp* *a2*

Cbsn. *pp*

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Hn. I, II II. "But you'd never be able to tell..." "...a cause for scorn." "Those people wouldn't..."

Hn. III, IV *ppp* *pp*

B. Tbn. *pp*

Tba. *pp*

mp "But you'd never be able to tell..." *mf* *mp* "...a cause for scorn." "Those people wouldn't..." *p* *mf*

II But you'd never be able to tell. This is the secret I carry with me through crowds of people who would call a smile an invitation... ...and a drink an agreement... ...and an admission of weakness a cause for scorn. Those people wouldn't see me; they'd just see my assault.

Perc. II *f* "But you'd never be able to tell..." "...a cause for scorn." "Those people wouldn't..." *p* *mf*

Vc. *mp*

C "So I sit..." "...my space..." "I say nothing..." "Because I hear..." "...people talk..." **D** Faster, ♩ = 110

Picc. *ff*

Fl. I, II *ff*

Ob. I, II *ff*

Cl. I, II, III *ff* *pp* *pp*

B. Cl. *ff*

Alto Sax. *ff*

Ten. Sax. *ff*

Bari. Sax. *ff*

Bsn. I, II *ff*

Cbsn. *ff*

Hn. I, II *ff*

Hn. III, IV *ff*

Tpt. I, II *ff*

Tpt. III *ff*

Tbn. I, II *ff*

B. Tbn. *ff*

Tbn. *ff*

p So I sit on the train with the man who insists on my attention. So I laugh when I flinch at the hand on my back. So I shudder but say nothing to the reek of scotch and potato chips that invades my space. $\frac{2}{4}$

mp I say nothing, because this is a secret I carry with me. $\frac{4}{4}$

f Because I hear the conversations of the people on the train, the people in the workplace, the people outside the restaurant. And people talk. $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

Mar. *pp*

Hp. *pp*

C "So I sit..." "...my space..." "I say nothing..." "Because I hear..." "...people talk..." **D** Faster, ♩ = 110

Vin. I *pp* *ff* *mf* *mf*

Vin. II *mf* *mf* *p* *ff sub.*

Vla. *norm.* *ff* *p* *ff sub.*

Vc. *norm.* *pp* *mf* *p sub.* *ff sub.*

Db. *pp* *ff* *ff*

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Picc. *mf*
 Fl. I, II *mf*
 Ob. I, II *mf*
 Cl. I, II, III *mf* → *f*
 B. Cl. *f*
 Bari. Sax. *f*
 Bsn. I, II *f* tutti
 Cbsn. *f*
 Hn. I, II *mf*
 Hn. III, IV *mf*
 Tpt. I, II *mf*
 Tpt. III *mf*
 Tbn. I, II *mf*
 B. Tbn. *f*
 Tbn. *f*
 Hp. *f*
 Vln. I *f* gliss.
 Vln. II *f* gliss.
 Vc. *f*
 Db. *f*

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