James Whittle

peakspeak
(2015-6)

for voices and mixed ensemble

devised with and for Sloop Group

for Castaway Goole Accessible Music Theatre

peakspeak (2015-6)
for voices and mixed ensemble

devised with and for Sloop Group
as Composer-in-Residence with Castaway Goole Accessible Music Theatre

Instrumentation: voices, 2 pianos (or keyboards), marimba, drums, unpitched percussion (shakers), guitar(s)/ukulele(s), bass guitar

Duration: c. 7 minutes

A second version of the piece is available with spaces for music to be devised by an open instrumentation ensemble.

peakspeak was first performed by Sloop Group on 13th February 2016.

Programme note
peakspeak began as the seventh Postcard Piece I made at The Banff Centre, Canada, where I was a Musician-in-Residence during December 2015. I made one Postcard Piece per day of the residency, documenting either a thought, idea or experience I'd had that day. The *peakspeak* Postcard Piece had two halves: a poem, and five musical fragments. It was a reflection partly on being surrounded by the imposing mountains of the Canadian Rockies, that always seem to speak to you, partly on a need for speech, a need to be heard. You can't avoid a mountain!
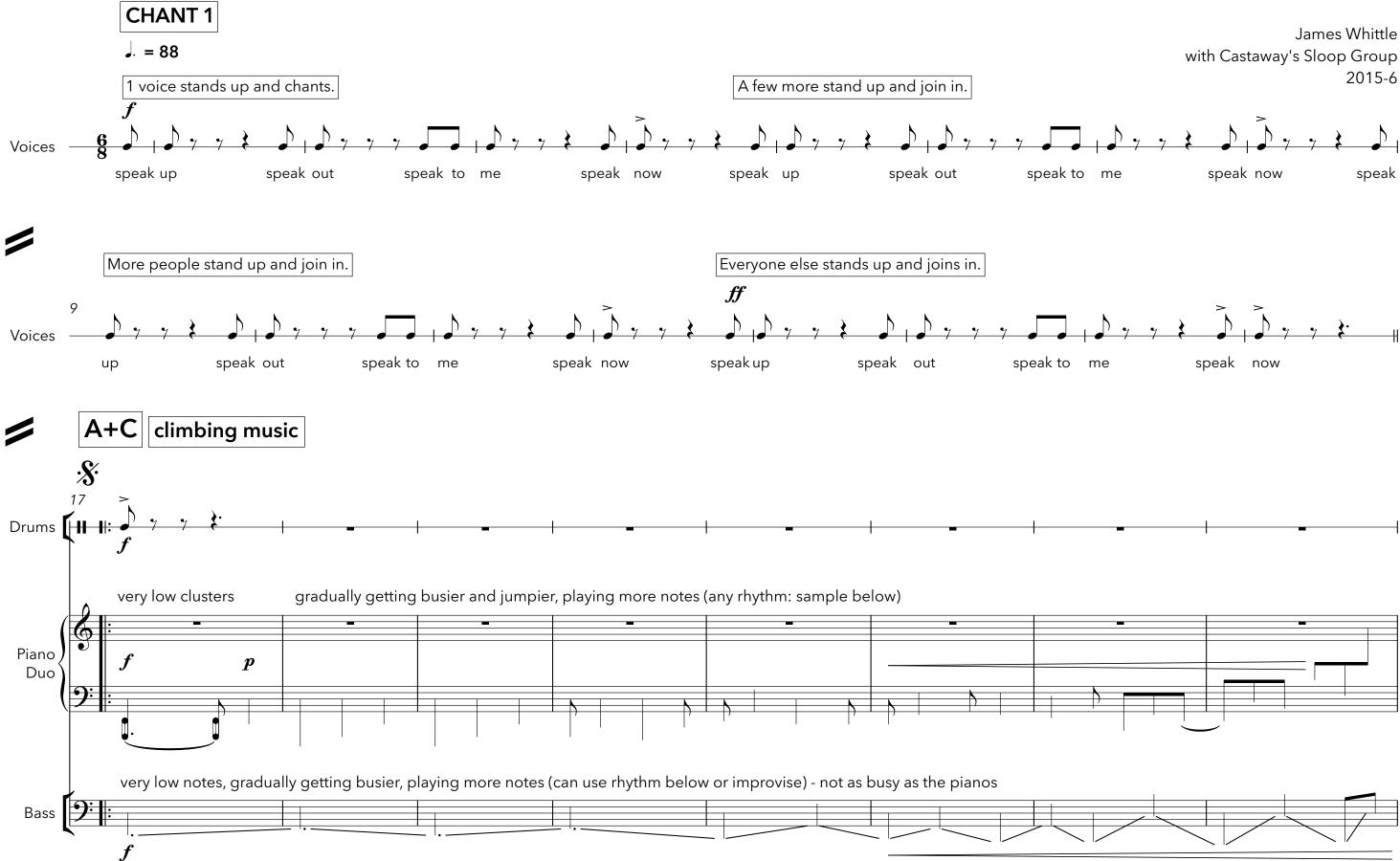
For this version, made with Castaway Goole's Sloop Group, I ignored the musical fragments and adapted the words:

speak up	speak your mind	speak out	speak up
speak out	speak your piece	of turn	speak out
speak to me	speak of the devil	speak louder	speak to me
speak now	speak for yourself	than words	speak now or forever hold your peace

The text first appears as a chant. The group had various ideas for how to read it, so we explored combining these to create different textures. The chant appears round an instrumental refrain (nicknamed 'climbing music'). This is followed by a softer section ('thinking music'), which includes sounds devised by the Sloop Group in musical games we played during my initial sessions with them in November 2015.

peakspeak

James Whittle
with Castaway's Sloop Group
2015-6

CHANT 1

♩. = 88

1 voice stands up and chants.

A few more stand up and join in.

f

Voices

speak up   speak out   speak to me   speak now   speak up   speak out   speak to me   speak now   speak

More people stand up and join in.

Everyone else stands up and joins in.

ff

Voices

up   speak out   speak to me   speak now   speak up   speak out   speak to me   speak now

A+C climbing music

Drums

f

very low clusters   gradually getting busier and jumpier, playing more notes (any rhythm: sample below)

Piano Duo

f   *p*

very low notes, gradually getting busier, playing more notes (can use rhythm below or improvise) - not as busy as the pianos

Bass

f

jumpy erratic clusters with grace notes, any pitch, any rhythm (sample below)

jumpy erratic clusters, low to mid-range in pitch, any rhythm (sample below)

short glissandi dotted with staccato pitches - very busy!

gradually slow down and get softer

fast scratchy glissandi up and down the strings with a plectrum

gradually slow down and get softer

trem. strings on the scroll

gradually slow down and get softer

D

Voices

soft, sustained sounds
(a variety of timbres e.g. tremolo, scratches, slow rubs)

Drums

pp

E thinking music

♩. = ♩

pp

Voices

(sshh)...

Drums

sparse sounds: bells, tambourine

Perc.

pp

Pno 2

pp with sustaining pedal

F repeat any number of times, until the end of Piano 1's improvised melody

Solo Voice/s: *p whisper one phrase (in pairs), freely, slowly, softly, lots of space in between each phrase, not synchronised with other performers*

speak out of turn   speak lou - der than words

Voices: (sshh)...

Drums: slow soft sounds

Perc.: sparse sounds: occasional bells

Pno 1: Improvise a soft melody on these pitches. Often leave silence spaces for listening to the voices and Piano 2 ostinato.
p

Pno 2: *pp*

F

Gtr.: *p*

Uke.: *p*

Bass: (lowest string tuned down to D)   any note on the lowest string
p

senza misura:
all fade out independently

from silence, all start whispering this text:
start sparse and slow, encouraging each other
to build a loud, dense texture speaking over one another

Solo Voice/s

Voices

speak   lou - der

"SPEAK LOUDER!" cue

f

f

Drums

Perc.

Mar.

Piano Duo

Gtr.

Uke.

Bass

H CHANT 1
repeat 4 times

Voices: up speak out speak to me speak now speak now or for - e - ver hold your peace