

How to Talk to People

for solo violin and interactive electronics

by Aidan Gold

duration: 10-12 min.

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Program Note

Once upon a time, a violinist decided to wander onto a stage, perhaps to play some silly new piece of music, or maybe just to improv to their heart's content. However, they quickly discover that they are not alone – they share the stage with several other mysterious creatures: an otter, a porcupine, and a few objects that seem strangely out of place. The violinist eyes them warily. Are these creatures alive? Are they going to do something? Why are they waking up? It just so happens that these characters are in a talkative mood. Now the violinist must navigate the most difficult challenge of them all – social interaction. Each character has their own personality, and their own way of interpreting and responding to what the violinist says and does. Will the violinist be able to connect in conversation with each one? Will the violinist manage to not make any of them upset? Will the violinist be able to control the conversation without accidentally triggering a sonic apocalypse? Find out soon!

Many thanks to Mari Kimura for her mentorship and MUGIC motion sensor used in this piece!

Setup Requirements

Violin with wireless microphone
MUGIC motion sensor
Computer with Max/MSP and audio interface
Speakers
Velcro Straps (attach to right arm of violinist)

Stage Setup (5 "stations" placed in different parts of the stage - exact positioning depends on space logistics, but each "station" should be clearly visible to the audience):

1. Stuffed Animal Otter, on a table or stool
2. Stuffed Animal Porcupine with Velcro Straps, on a table/shelf at shoulder height
3. Chair
4. Projector and Screen for projecting images
5. Small Drum and stand (used only as a prop - no drum playing required)

Performance Directions

This piece requires a second performer to trigger several cues in the Max/MSP patch for this piece. These cues are indicated using circled numbers in the score. This second performer should be able to see and hear the violinist, but should not be on stage, and should be somewhat hidden from the audience, so that the focus is entirely on the violinist and the inanimate characters that they are interacting with.

Throughout the piece, the violinist will move between different characters (the otter, porcupine, chair, projected spotlight, and drum) and interact with them in musical conversation.

Much of the musical material in this piece is meant to sound speech-like and should be played with rhythmic freedom. The violinist should strive to interact and "converse" with these characters as if they were living people, creating the illusion that the sounds that are coming out of the speakers are actually emerging from the characters themselves.

The piece is notated with the violin part in the upper staff, and the electronic part in the lower staff.

Notation

boxed text indicates a physical movement - such as between stations on the stage or the arrival at one of those stations.

italicized text indicates a mood or expression indicator, meant to color the phrasing and interpretation of the passage it is applied to. This can also serve as a prompt for physical acting, such as facial expressions.

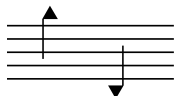
"*quoted italics*" indicates that the musical phrase is supposed to literally invoke the quoted word or sound, and so the performer should color and phrase the passage to try to best invoke that word.


normal text indicates technique markings, such as *sul tasto*, *sul ponticello*, *arco*, *pizz.*, *col legno*, etc.


bold text indicates actions to be performed that are not related to playing techniques, and descriptions of the electronics sounds that will occur

bold italic text indicates tempo markings

① circled numbers indicate cues in the Max/MSP patch, stepped through by the second (hidden) performer using the spacebar.

 play a very high (or very low) note, exact pitch up to the performer

 repeat figure until the end of the solid black line.

 (with no ledger lines) - play a note approximately in this register (exact pitch up to the performer)

Page Map

Stands may be placed at each of the stations for the performer to read off of, but when the performer is moving between stations they will have to play from memory. Which pages should be placed at which stations is indicated on the score:

Station 1: pages 5, 6, 7, 22, 23

Station 2: page 9

Station 3: pages 11, 13, 19

Station 4: pages 15, 20

Station 5: page 17

Memorize: pages 4, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21

How to Talk to People

Aidan Gold

Wandering ♩ = 60

ENTER from offstage. Slowly and aimlessly wander around, grad. find your way to **STATION 1**.

① ~4 sec.

Violin

Dark, distant wind

Electronics

ppp < > < > *sim.*

ppp almost pitchless

extremely slow bow

molto sul pont.
I

molto sul tasto
slow bow

grad. lift finger
molto sul tasto

molto sul pont.

pp < > < > *ppp* < > *p* < > *ppp*

② (continue trill throughout gliss.)

sul tasto
III
tr

ord.

pp < > *mf* < > *pp* < > *pp*

This page should be memorized

Arrive at **STATION 1.**

bump into otter

3 *sf* yelp! *mf* curiously *p* *f* *p* *mp* "hello?" *mf*

Annotations: *l.h. pizz.*, *arco*, *sul pont.*, *ord.*, *vib.*

f *ff* *p* *mf*

Annotations: *vib.*, *ord.*, *molto sul pont.*, *ord.*, *3*, *like a sigh*, *p muttering*

pp disappointed *p* *mf* *pp*

Annotations: *col legno*, *3*, *l.h. pizz.*, *arco*

3 turn and begin to walk away *ppp* *mf*

Annotations: *sul pont.*, *sul tasto*, *trem. rit.*

turn back to face otter *pp* *p* *sf* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *sf*

Annotations: *surprised, excited*, *sul pont.*, *"hip hip hooray"*, *otter turns on*

This page should be placed at **STATION 1**

Lean in to otter;
wait for dictation

Respond to otter
(get it wrong)

incredulous
Speech like ♩ = 80-88 sul pont. *as if waiting for a response*

seagull IV (4) lean in to otter and listen Respond to otter (get it right)

♩ = 80-88 "hip hip hooray" lean in to otter and listen

This page should be placed at STATION 1

16 Respond to otter (get it right) $\text{♩} = 80-88$ lean in to otter and listen

"yes" sound

f celebratory *ff*

Respond - try to get it right
 If you get it right 2x, intentionally
 get it wrong the 3rd time.
 If you get it wrong, move on from the repeat.

19 Otter dictation (pitch set different each time) "yes"/"no" sound

pizz. *p*

22 $\text{♩} = 80-88$ *apologetic* *poco accel.*..... $\text{♩} = 108$
sul tasto *very apologetic*
molto vib. *sul tasto*
arco *sul pont.*
pizz. *ppp meek* *mf* *mp* *pp*
ff "dammit"

23 *a tempo* $\text{♩} = 80-88$ wait for response;
 it doesn't come *sul tasto* ord.
ppp shy *p disappointed*

rit......
col legno
pp resigned

This page should be placed at STATION 1

5 *Wandering* ♩ = 60

walk aimlessly around the stage;
circuitously make your way to **STATION 2**.

sul tasto
ord.
tr

ord. I

grad. press down fingers

ppp *p*

ppp

Dark, distant wind

6 sul tasto
b
tr

3

ord. 3

3

pp *pp* *hesitant* *p* *ppp*

Fragments of a dance ♩ = 60

as if humming to yourself

26

ord. → molto sul tasto

p espr. *pp*

32

ord. → sul pont. → ord.

p espr. *pp* *mp*

rit......*a tempo*

This page should be memorized

7 Arrive at **STATION 2.**

obviously run into porcupine and attach it to your arm

37

p sub.

pp

p

porcupine (echoes/distorts violin)

notice porcupine, try to shake it off

41

ff

p

fff

p

ff

accel......

keep trying to shake porcupine off

48

mf cresc. poco a poco

8

manually take porcupine off arm and put on table

fff

Speech like ♩ = 80-88

50

ff "ugh"

mf flustered, annoyed

f

p

mf yawn

This page should be placed at STATION 2

♩. = 60

51 walk over to *STATION 3.* *rit.*..... *Sleepy* ♩. = 50

p *slow, wide vib.* *ord.*

p yawn *p*

rit...... ♩. = 40

55 9 Arrive at *STATION 3.*

pp lazily *ord.* *sul tasto* *molto sul tasto very slow bounce*

ppp exhausted

This page should be memorized

Agitated ♩ = 120
jump up from chair quickly

collapse down on chair, lower hand

quickly "test" chair 2x

questioning

♩ = 120

chair makes noise when hand is lowered

sffz surprised

f

p < *mf*

quickly test chair

Meno mosso ♩ = 92

molto sul pont.

p curious

mf

ff experimenting

"test" chair 2x (modify angle of hand)

smile, as if you're figuring something out

p "mhmm"

pp

f

p

ord. IV III IV III

♩ = 92

sul tasto

"test" chair 2x (modify angle of hand)

Speech like ♩ = 80-88

f "hip hip hooray"

pp

10

ord. IV III IV III

otter turns on again

This page should be placed at STATION 3

72 *Speech like* ♩ = 80-88
ord. *molto vib.* *col legno* 3 *slowly test chair*

p *apologetic* *mf* *p*

♩ = 80-88
relieved
ord.

74 *p* "pew" *mf* **11** *p* *spotlight appears*

This page should be placed at STATION 3

75

notice spotlight (look towards **STATION 4**)

mp puzzled *p*

sul pont. *mf* "huh"

mf "huh" *sf*

Wandering ♩ = 60

walk towards **STATION 4.**

grad. lift finger

ord. ord. 3 3

arrive at **STATION 4.**

molto sul tasto

low, ominous drone

76

ppp *p*

12

This page should be memorized

Speech like ♩ = 80-88

How to Talk to People

78 *notice your shadow*

f (imitates in reverse)

♩ = 88

begin as the reverse is finishing

80

f fannerved (reverse) *p < f* *f* visibly frightened *fff* sub.

Piu mosso ♩ = 100

(begin somewhere during middle of reverse - doesn't have to be exactly at this point)

83

(reverse) *f* scared

(enter approximately around here in the reverse - doesn't need to be exact)

ff (reverse) *fff* outburst

This page should be placed at STATION 4

13 run out of spotlight and around the stage - eventually towards **STATION 2**.

14 Arrive at **STATION 2**.
Collide with porcupine again, (don't notice at first)

molto sul pont.

85

ff panicked

begin trying to shake porcupine off again - keep walking around stage (towards **STATION 5**)

notice porcupine

87

$\text{♩} = 80-88$

mf

sff yelp

(breathe in) scratch → ord.

ff angry sigh → *p*

accel......

p *f*

sul pont. *p*

sul pont. *ff sub.*

sul tasto *p sub.*

sul tasto *ff sub.*

sul pont. *pp sub.* *ff*

15 arrive at **STATION 5**; collide with drum

$\text{♩} = 108$

ord.

ff exasperated

fff

This page should be memorized

(wait for drum to respond) *sffz*

arco I (wait for drum to respond) *ff*

(drum response)

Meno mosso ♩ = 80 *f* *ff*

(porcupine continues throughout)

92 enter on last note of response *f* *sfz* pizz.

93 arco *sffz* *ff* *f*

This page should be placed at STATION 5

walk towards *STATION 3*.

repeat freely, ignoring drum response

16 Arrive at *STATION 3*

pull porcupine off, look around,
and then aggressively throw the
porcupine down onto the chair

94

ff

fff

3

This page should be memorized

96 **17** *Piu mosso* ♩ = 96

(grad. press down finger)

f sarcastically

porcupine and chair begin to make continuous noise

more and more frustrated

wave hand in front of chair, no effect

wave again

p *sf* *ff*

100 *accel.* ♩ = 120

molto sul pont.

short wave

f *ff* *ffp* *fff*

make a gesture of frustration (e.g. aggressively throw your hands up in the air). Then grab the chair with the arm not holding your violin and drag it across the stage to **STATION 4**.

103

This page should be placed at STATION 3

18

arrive at **STATION 4**.
Suddenly the spotlight appears over the violinist, chair, and porcupine

104

ord.

ff panicked

(porcupine and chair continue making noise)

sul pont.

(wait for response)

fp < *ff*

(response)

19

(begin playing about halfway into response) (continue, don't wait for response)

ord.

ff

sul pont.

f

I

accel.....

ff

(response occurs somewhere around here, not in time)

20

suddenly hold out both your arms to the side, stopping the buildup of noise ~3 sec.

fff

~3 sec.

This page should be placed at STATION 4

Hesitating ♩ = 66

Timidly walk over to *STATION 1*.

107 pizz. col legno arco 3 II col legno l.h. pizz. *pp*

21

arrive at *STATION 1*.

sul tasto
ord.

This page should be memorized

lean in to otter and listen

Respond to otter subharmonic

108

pizz. *f* *p* *mf* *3*

arco *ff* *v* *d*

otter turns on

Otter dictation (concludes with low E)

112

22 *confused* *p* *< f* *arco* *mf* *5* *pp* *ff* *sub.* *ffp* *sul pont.* *3* *3* *sff*

notice "character 6" projection; surprised ricochet

ominous boom - projection of "character 6" appears

p

113

23 *increasingly scared* *ord.* *mf* "no" *f* *scratch* *ff* *ord.* *fff* *terrified* *accel.*

interjects random phrases, recordings from other parts of the piece whenever violin makes sound

24

intensifying, turning into random noise

This page should be placed at STATION 1

♩ = 120

fff struggle to be heard
noise begins to overwhelm violin

~8 sec. wildly gliss. and run around stage, trying to stop the noise and make yourself heard

scratch
ffff poss.
molto sul pont.
freeze; hold still
when violin stops, noise slowly dies away

enter once most of the noise has died away

116 *Timid* ♩ = 72
ord. freeze, hold still
pp **mf** **sffz** frustrated
noise returns

freeze

118 enter once most of the noise has died away freeze, don't move until all sound stops
p disappointed
noise returns softer each time
wait until all the noise has died away seagull IV
ppp resigned

This page should be placed at STATION 1