

panicpanicpanic

for speaking chorus

Perusal Score
Not for performance

AJ Harbison

Muse Room Press

This is a perusal score only.
For performance materials, please send a request to store@ajharbison.com.
Thank you for your interest in my music!

panicpanicpanic
(2019)

for speaking chorus

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Program Notes

The poem "Panic," by my brother Mark Harbison, is an evocative and visceral description of a panic attack. The way he was able to put into such vivid language a particular experience of his that was intensely personal, and yet rang true and resonated with my own experience, was immediately compelling to me. When I first read the poem, I knew right away I wanted to use it as the text for a concert music piece.

The experience of having a panic attack may seem like a strange topic for a piece of music. But music-making is primarily a communal practice, and sharing such a painful experience gives us a greater understanding of each other, and even a better understanding of ourselves. In the poem, at the crucial moment when all seems lost, the line "you'reminenow" is interrupted with "Then you see it." The rest of the poem leads to the realization in the last line that "THIS TOO IS GRACE."

The realization doesn't invalidate what's come before, and doesn't mean peace just yet. But it reflects a sense of clarity and purpose that even a panic attack is leading somewhere and is making us into who we are meant to be.

The poem suggested to me a piece consisting of speaking, whispering, breathing and sound effects, rather than pitch. I composed it for a "speaking chorus" divided into five equal sections, unlike a traditional chorus divided by pitch into higher and lower parts. After a short introduction, the piece follows the structure of the poem, with two primary sections describing the panic attack separated by a brief interlude of respite ("Then, you breathe. In. Out. In. Out."). The second panic section ends with "you'reminenow" interrupted by "Then you see it," leading into the final part of the poem and the realization of grace. The last line, "THIS TOO IS GRACE," is the only line in the piece that is sung.

Performance Notes

This piece can be performed by a men's chorus, a women's chorus, or a mixed chorus. If the chorus is mixed, men and women should be more or less evenly distributed between the five sections.

All divisions should be equal divisions of the section. Multiple solos in a part (e.g., Section IV, measures 80 and 85-86) may be performed by the same performer or by different performers.

Whenever any section has a long held sound effect, or a long passage of continuous speaking, performers should stagger (silent!) breaths as needed. This is noted in the score only in the first instance of such a passage for each section, but should be done throughout the piece.

Each section is given a three-line (rather than a five-line) staff. The three lines denote speech inflections (for spoken and whispered text) and relative pitch (for breathing and sound effects); the middle line denotes a normal/medium inflection or pitch, the upper line a higher inflection or pitch, and the lower line a lower inflection or pitch.

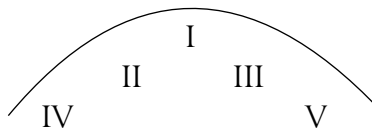
Text within a box should be spoken (or whispered, if set in italics) in a normal speaking rhythm, with no attempt made to align the text with any musical rhythm. As noted in measures 15 and 16, the length of the box around spoken text indicates the approximate length of time it should take the performer or section to speak the text (regardless of where the text ends within the box).

Spoken text should always begin slightly after the downbeat of the measure and finish approximately where the box ends.

Spoken or whispered text within a box followed by a wavy line, as noted in measures 18 and following, should be spoken or whispered asynchronously by each individual performer in the section and repeated *ad lib* until the end of the wavy line. Whispered repeated text may be spoken while inhaling, as well as normally, to avoid having to pause for breath.

The marking **n.** (for *niente*), in conjunction with a diminuendo, denotes fading out to silence.

The five sections should be laid out in this way on stage in performance:



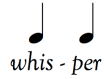
Alternatively, the chorus may surround the audience in this way:



Key



Speaking, metered (roman text)



Whispering, metered (italic text)

Spoken text

Speaking, normal speaking rhythm (roman text)

Whispered text

Whispering, normal speaking rhythm (italic text)

- ⊗ Sound effects (“ksh,” “sh,” “ss”)
- △ Inhaling; vowel given as “lyrics” should be shaped with the mouth while inhaling
- ▽ Exhaling; vowel given as “lyrics” should be shaped with the mouth while exhaling

Care should be taken that no vocalization is made while inhaling or exhaling at mezzo forte or forte.

Duration

ca. 5 minutes 30 seconds

Panic

by Mark Harbison

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

contracting, seizing, freezing, straining,
pushing, pulling, noyoucan'tthink
noyoucan'tbreathe
noyoucan't
nonononono

Then, you breathe.

In. Out.

In. Out.

as you lose feeling in your fingers
and you lie prostrate
and your mouth doesn't move and your eyes don't see and you're shakingshakingshaking
noyoucan'tlive
noyoucan'tmove
you'renotincontrol
you'reminenowThen you see it

Or feel it, maybe, more than see
Undergirding, underlining it all
Hovering in the space between your gasping, shallow breaths
Four words:

THIS TOO IS GRACE

panicpanicpanic

Mark Harbison (2018)

AJ Harbison (2019)

$\text{♩} = 140$
fp (stagger breaths as needed) (div.)

Speaking Section I
 $\frac{4}{4}$
Ksh _____ (sh) _____

Speaking Section II
 $\frac{4}{4}$ (div.)

Speaking Section III
 $\frac{4}{4}$ (div.)

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

Speaking Section IV
 $\frac{4}{4}$
(inhaling) (exhaling)
(ah) _____ (oo) _____

Speaking Section V
 $\frac{4}{4}$
(inhale silently) ***p*** (exhaling) (inhaling)
(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 140 bpm. It consists of five speaking sections. Section I features a melodic line with six notes, each marked with a circled 'x' and a fermata, with the instruction 'stagger breaths as needed'. Section II and III are marked with a circled 'x' and a fermata. Section IV includes two phrases: '(ah)' and '(oo)', each with a slur and a triangle indicating breath control. Section V is marked with a circled 'x' and a fermata, followed by a series of alternating '(oo)' and '(ah)' notes with triangles indicating breath control. The score is labeled 'PERUSAL SCORE ONLY' in large bold letters.

panicpanicpanic - AJ Harbison

7

I a

I b

gradually transition to "ss"

ss

p

II a

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic

p

II b

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO pan-ic

p

III a

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO

p

III b

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic NO

mp

IV

(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

V

(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

15 Solo *mp*

Tutti *p*

I

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles * What if the walls closing in are your own muscles **

II

f *p* *mf*

(stagger breaths as needed) gradually transition to "ss"

Ksh ksh_ ksh_ (sh) ss

III

p (inhaling) (exhaling)

(ah) (oo)

IV

p (whispering)

What if

V

p *f* *pp* (stagger breaths as needed)

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic

21

I

p *mp* *p* *mf*

gradually transition to "sh" gradually transition to "ss"

II

p *mf*

sh ss

III

mp *mf*

(ah) (ah) (ah)

IV

What if the walls What if the walls closing in

V

pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic pan-ic

* The end of the box, rather than the end of the last line of text, indicates where the text should end within the measure.

** Each individual performer in the section should speak the text ad lib, asynchronously, repeating it and following the dynamics until the end of the wavy line.

25 *p* *f*

I

gradually transition to "sh"

mp *f*

sh

f

III

(ah) (oo) (oo)

pp *mp* *f*

IV

What if What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

V

pp *f*

pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic pan - ic

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

28 *sub. pp*
(whispering)

I

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

sub. pp
(whispering)

II

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

sub. pp
(whispering)

III

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

sub. pp
(whispering)

IV

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

sub. pp
(whispering)

V

What if the walls closing in are your own muscles

32

(div.)

I
 II (d) *mf* *p*
 freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing
 III *mf* *p* (stagger breaths as needed)
 seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize
 IV (d) *f*
 strain - ing
 V *mp* *p*
 con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

38

I a *f* *f*
 push-ing pull-ing
 I b *p*
 push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing pull-ing
 II
 freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing
 III
 seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize
 IV *p*
 strain - ing strain - ing strain - ing
 V
 ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing

41 *mp* (inhaling) (exhaling)

I a \triangle ∇ \triangle
 (ah) (oo) (ah)

I b pull-ing pull-ing pull-ing pull-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing push-ing pull-ing pull-ing

II freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing *f*

III seiz-ing seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize

IV ing strain ing strain ing

V ing con-tract-ing con-tract-ing con-tract-ing

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

44 *mf*

I a ∇ \triangle ∇
 (oo) (ah) (oo) (exhaling)

I b pull-ing pull-ing pull-ing pull-ing (ah) (ah) (oo)

II freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing freez-ing *mf*

III seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize seize

IV strain ing strain ing

V ing con-tract-ing con-tract-ing con-tract-ing con-tract-ing

47 *f* *mp*

I no - you - can't - think no - you - can't - think no - you -

II freez - ing freez - ing freez - ing *f* no - you - can't

III seize seize seize seize seize seize *f* no - you - can't - breathe

IV strain - ing *f* no - you - can't - think *mp* no - you - can't - think

V ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing con - tract - ing ting ting like a skipping CD

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

50 *f* *mf* *f* *f* *f*

I can't - think no - you - can't - think no - you no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no -

II no - you - can't no - you - can't no - you - can't no - you - can't no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no -

III no - you - can't - breathe no - you - can't - breathe no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no -

IV no - you - can't - think no - you - can't - think no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no -

V ting ting ting no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no - no -

53 (inhale silently)

I
no - no

II
no - no

III
no - no

IV
no - no

V
no - no

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

59 *p*

I
(oo)

II
(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

III
(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

IV
mp
Then, In.

V
mp
you breathe.

67

pp (vary speaking rhythms — no consistent eighth notes!)

panic panic panic

(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

n.

In.

Out. Out.

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

75

Solo *mp*

and you lie prostrate

Solo *mp*

Tutti *mf p mf p sim.*

as you lose feeling in your fingers

(ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah)

83

Score for measures 83-86. The score is for five voices (I-V).
Voice I: Sustained notes with a crescendo hairpin and a fermata.
Voice II: Sustained notes with a crescendo hairpin and a fermata.
Voice III: Melodic line with lyrics: "and your mouth does-n't move shak-ing-"
Voice IV: Melodic line with lyrics: "(ee) and your eyes don't see shak-ing-shak-ing-"
Voice V: Rhythmic accompaniment with lyrics: "(ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) (ah) and you're shak-ing-shak-ing-"
Dynamics: Solo *mp* (measures 83-84), Tutti *mf* (measures 85-86).
Performance markings: Crescendos and fermatas in staves I and II.

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

87

Score for measures 87-90. The score is for five voices (I-V).
Voice I: Melodic line with lyrics: "(ee) (oo) no - you -"
Voice II: Melodic line with lyrics: "shak-ing-shak-ing-shak-ing no-you-can't-move"
Voice III: Melodic line with lyrics: "shak-ing-shak-ing no - you - can't - live"
Voice IV: Melodic line with lyrics: "shak-ing no-you-can't-live"
Voice V: Rhythmic accompaniment with lyrics: "shak-ing shakingshakingshaking"
Dynamics: *mf* (measures 87-88), *p* (measures 89-90).
Performance markings: Crescendos and fermatas in staves I and II. A box around the final accompaniment notes contains the text "shakingshakingshaking".

98 like a skipping CD

mp *mf*

I
king king king king king king king king Then you see it

II
in - con - trol you're - not - in - con - trol you're - mine - now

III
in - con - trol you're - not - in - con - trol you're - mine - now

IV
shak - ing shak - ing shak - ing you're - mine - now (w) ss

V
you're - mine - now (w) sh

harsh whisper *f* harsh whisper *f* harsh whisper *f* harsh whisper *f* close to "w" (stagger breaths as needed) *p*

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY *p*

102

I

II
Solo *mp*
Then you see it

III
Solo *mp*
Or feel it, maybe, more than see

IV
gradually transition to "sh"
sh

V

110 Two soli *mp* *p* Tutti *p* (d) *pp*, slowly and gently

I Undergirding, Hov-er - ing

II Two soli *mp* *p* *pp*, slowly and gently
underlining it all hovering

III Hov-er - ing

IV *n.* *pp*, slowly and gently
in the space

V

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

116 *p* *mf* *mp* *n.* *p*

I (ah) (ah) (ee) (oo)

II (ah)

III *mp* not too fast
Hovering in the space between your gasping, shallow breaths

IV *n.*

V *p* (oo)

123 ***p***

(ah) (oo) (ah) (oo) (ah)

(oo) (ah) (oo) (ah) (oo)

mf ***mp*** ***pp*, slowly and gently**

(oo) (ee) (oo) **in the space**

(oo) (oo)

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

128 ***pp*, slowly and gently**

(oo) **hovering**

mp (oo) (oo)

mp ***pp*, slowly and gently**

Four words: **hovering in the space** ***n.***

(oo)

X **X** **X** **X** **X**

132 10" 10"

(a little slower than the preceding tempo – 2.5 seconds per measure)

(ah) _____ (oo) _____ (ah) _____ (oo) _____

n. *p* THIS THIS THIS sim.

* *p* THIS THIS THIS sim.

10" 10"

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

134 still *pp*, still slow and gentle

hovering in the space

p THIS THIS THIS sim.

n. *p* THIS THIS THIS sim.

* One performer of Section V with a good sense of pitch starts m. 132 by singing “Thi(s)” (the final consonant is not sung until the end of m. 138); the specific pitch is unimportant, but it should be a pitch comfortable for everyone in the chorus to sing. Through the measure, each individual performer in Section V enters asynchronously, singing in unison and holding the note through m. 138. Entrances should not follow any regular rhythm or pattern, and while they need not be inconspicuous they should not be accented. All performers in Section V should enter within 10 seconds. If the chorus is mixed, men and women may sing an octave apart, but unison is preferred. In m. 133, one individual performer in Section III enters, singing in unison with Section V; the rest of the performers follow, entering asynchronously. Sections II, IV and I enter in the same way. Section I’s entrances in m. 137 take place over 13 seconds rather than 10; each performer continues whispering until they begin singing.

136

5" 13"

p

THIS THIS THIS sim.

I

II

III

IV

V

PERUSAL SCORE ONLY

138

3" 2" 3" 4" 5" 8-12"

p

THIS TOO IS GRACE

I

II

III

IV

V