

Jessica Rudman

Trigger

for Soprano and Piano

2016
ca. 10:00

Trigger

for Soprano (range: C4-B5) and Piano

Program Notes

In the spring of 2014, a woman in Nova Scotia filed a domestic assault complaint against her boyfriend. A local law enforcement officer accidentally left a voicemail message at the victim's number where officers can be heard discussing the case. In the recording (which is available online), an officer can be heard disparaging the woman, implying that she may be lying about her injuries, and asking if she deserved to get hit.

I first learned about this event when I was researching potential topics for a work to performed at the 2016 Opera from Scratch workshop in Nova Scotia. I was very disturbed by the incident, and my reactions to it ultimately became realized in *Trigger*.

Composer Contact Information

Jessica Rudman

Email: jessica_rudman@yahoo.com

Website: www.jessicarudman.com

Characters

Soprano - a woman old enough to have a child but not old enough that her child would be grown up

Libretto

I.

“Gas prices plunge across Nova Scotia.”

“Missing Eastern Shore boy found safe.”

“Halifax seeks designer,

Doctors weigh in on recruitment,

Police warns Nova Scotians to watch out for bears while driving.”

“Officer jokes on voicemail left for alleged victim of domestic assault.”

“The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is apologizing today

to an alleged victim of domestic violence

after her voicemail system recorded an officer joking about the case.

In the recording, the officer is heard asking with a laugh

‘So did she deserve to get hit?’”

“Did she deserve to get hit?!”

That's what they ask?

That's their reaction?

His boss told reporters the comments he made were
“unprofessional, unacceptable and insensitive.”
What about all the comments we never heard?
Was it *her* fault?
Was *he* justified?
What could she have done to deserve to get hit?

II.

“She provoked me
She was crazy
She owed me money
She’s so stupid
She thought she was smart
She didn’t know when to shut up

She’s a slut
She wouldn’t put out
She was messing with me
She looked at another man
She talked to another man

She provoked me
She knew what would happen if she did
What other choice did I have?
I had to hit her.”

Maybe it was the booze
Maybe it was the drugs
Maybe it was an abusive father, mother, uncle, brother, sister -
Maybe it was the whole system
Maybe it was everyone else's fault

So did she deserve to get hit?
Did I?

III.

The first time I thought, “Is this really happening?”
It couldn't be real -
It must be happening to someone else.
I wonder if she thought that, too.

We had argued before.
You always knew what to say to hurt me, to control me.
I didn't realize how far you would go.

You made me think no one would ever love me.
No one would want someone like me,
someone who forced you to do what you did.

I loved you, but I was afraid of you.
I hated you, and I hated myself for believing you,
for not being able to leave you.

When I spoke, when I questioned,
when I tried to be myself, when I lived -
did I somehow make this happen?
Did I deserve to get hit?
Did she?

IV.

I thought this was behind me.
It's been so many years.
But it never really goes away, I guess.
There's always something to remind me.

When she remembers, what will be worse -
the abuse or the aftermath?
The one who hit her
or the ones who laughed instead of helping?
The ones who asked "So, did she deserve to get hit"
Instead of seeing that no one ever does?

How can we keep this from happening?
What can we teach our daughters that our mothers didn't try to teach us?
What can we teach our sons that he never learned?
How can we —

Written for Opera from Scratch 2016

Trigger

Music and Words by
Jessica Rudman (b. 1982)

A woman walks on stage holding a phone and begins reading news headlines.

spoken absentmindedly:

“Gas prices plunge across Nova Scotia.”

“Missing Eastern Shore boy found safe.”

“Halifax seeks designer,

Doctors weigh in on recruitment,

Police warn Nova Scotians to watch out for bears while driving.”

starting off in a similar tone, but trailing off as she finishes reading this headline

“Officer jokes on voicemail left for alleged victim of domestic assault”

murmuring to herself as she reads

Solemn ♩=66 *p freely*

Soprano

The Ro - yal Ca - na - di - an Mount - ed Po - lice is a -

Solemn ♩=66 *p*

Piano

Red.

4

S.

po - lo - gi - zing to - day

3

to an a - lled - ed vic - tim of do - mes - tic

Pno.

8 9 **poco rit.**

S.

Pno.

12 16 **a tempo** ♩.=66 *pp* *p*

S.

Pno.

17

Pno.

20 *mp* throatily and smirking **poco accel.**

S. "So did she de - serve to get hit?" **poco accel.**

Pno.

8^{vb}

23 **a tempo** (♩=66) *mf* angrily **f**

S. *3* Did she de-serve to get hit?!? That's what they ask? _____

Pno. **f** **ff**

8^{vb}

26 **poco accel.** **a tempo** (♩=66) *p*

S. _____ That's their re - ac - tion? His **a tempo** (♩=66) **ff**

Pno. **f** **ff**

8^{vb}
Ped.

reading from the news story again

29 *mocking*

S. boss told re por-ters the com-ments he made were "un - pro-fes-sion al, un - ac-cept a - ble,

Pno.

33 *poco accel.*

S. and in - sen - si - tive."

Pno.

poco accel.

f

8^{vb}

36 *a tempo* (♩=66) *pp*

S. What a - bout all the com - ments we ne - ver heard?

Pno.

36 *a tempo* (♩=66)

f

Red.

poco accel.

39 *f*

S. Was it her fault? Was he jus - ti - fied?

Pno. *poco accel.*

cresc.

ff

8^{vb}

a tempo (♩=66)

43 *ff* *emphatic*

S. What could she have done to de - serve to get hit?

Pno. **a tempo (♩=66)**

ff

8^{va}

ATTACCA

II.

p conversational, seemingly reasonable
sempre staccato

47 Off-balanced ♩=120

S. *p* *mp*

"She pro voked me. She was

47 Off-balanced ♩=120

Pno. *p* *mp*

53 **54** *cresc. poco a poco, increasingly angry*

S. cra - zy. She owed me mo - ney. She's so stu - pid, she

54 *cresc. poco a poco*

Pno.

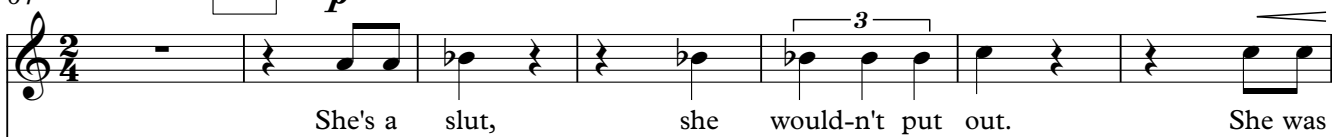
59 *f*

S. *f* *p*

thought she was smart. She did-n't know when to shut up.

Pno. *f* *p*


64 65 *p* poco accel.

S. 

She's a slut, she would-n't put out. She was

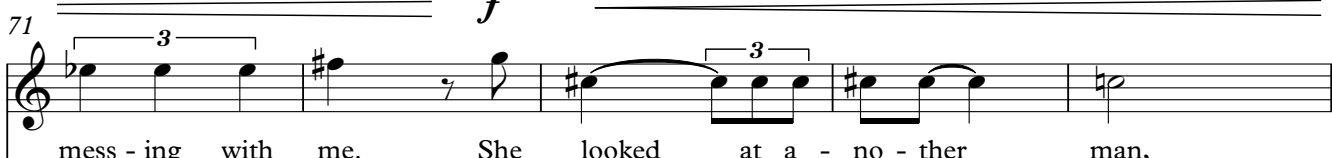
Pno. 65 poco accel.

cresc. poco a poco




73

71 *f*


S. 

mess - ing with me. She looked at a - no - ther man,

Pno. 73




76 *ff*

S. 

she talked to a - no - ther man.

Pno. *ff*



Ped. _____

85 ♩=140

81 *fff*

S. She pro-voked me.

Pno. *sim.* 3 3 *fff*

86 *rit.*

S. What choice did I have?

Pno. *rit.*

92

S. She knew what would hap - pen.

Pno.

97 ♩=120

9

S. *ff* *f*

I had to hit her."

97 ♩=120

Pno. *decresc. poco a poco*

104

molto rit.

S.

molto rit.

Pno. *f* *decresc. poco a poco*

Ped.

110 Wryly ♩=96

109

S. *pp* *p*

May-be it was the booze; may-be it was the

110 Wryly ♩=96

Pno. *p* *pp* *p*

118 molto accel.

116 *mp*

S. drugs; _____ may- be _____ an a - bu - sive fa - ther, _____

Pno. *mp*

118 molto accel.

126 ♩=140

123 *cresc. poco a poco*

S. mo - ther, sis - ter, bro - ther, un - cle;

Pno. *cresc. poco a poco*

126 ♩=140

sim.

Red.

subito a tempo (♩=96)

128 *f*

S. may - be it was the whole

Pno. *f* *ff*

subito a tempo (♩=96)

133 Gentler ♩=76

131 *ff* *p*

S. *ff* *p*

sys - tem; may - be it was e - very - one el - se's

Pno. *ff* *pp*

8^{va} 8^{vb}

135

S. fault. So, did she de - serve to get hit?

Pno.

139 *pp*

S. Did I?

Pno.

ATTACCA

III.

143 Contemplative ♩=88

S. *p*
The first time I thought,

Pno. *pp* *p*

147 *mp*
"is this real - ly hap-pen- ing?"

Pno. *mp*

150 *mf* with restrained panic
It could - n't be real. It must be hap-pen - ing to

Pno. *mf*

153

S. some - one else.

Pno.

156

S. *p* I won - der

156

Pno. *p*

159


S. — if she thought that too. We had

Pno. *mp*

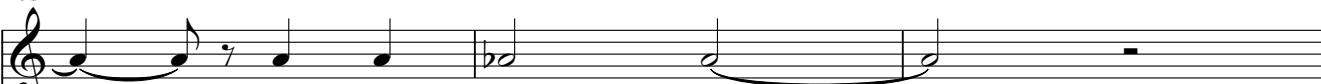
162

S. 
ar - gued be - fore. You al-ways knew what to say to hurt me,

162

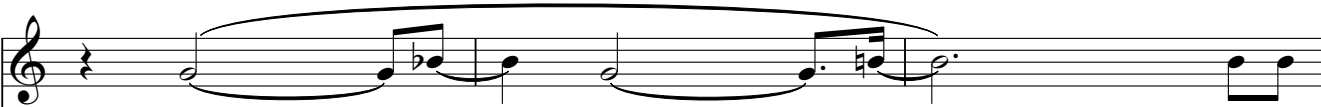
Pno. 
p

165


S. 
to con - trol me.

Pno. 

168

S. 
I did-n't

168

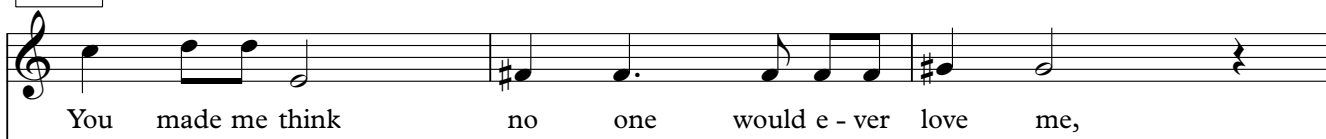
Pno. 
mp *p*


171

S. 

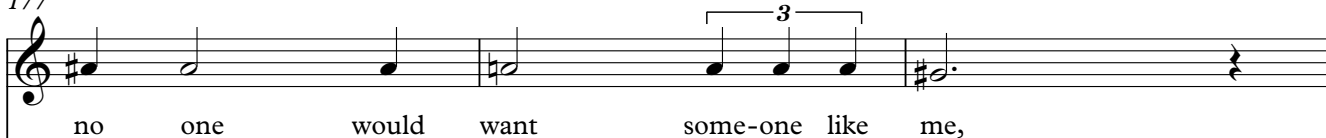
Pno. 


174

S. 

Pno. 

177 **poco accel.**

S. 

Pno. 

180

S. some - one who forced you to do what you did.

Pno.

183 ♩=96 *ff*

S. I

Pno. 183 ♩=96 *ff* 8va

186 *p sub.*

S. loved you but I was a - fraid of you.

Pno. *p*

189 **190** *ff*

S. *I*

Pno. **190** *ff* *8va*

192 *f* **poco rit.**

S. ha - ted you. I ha - ted my -

Pno. *f* **poco rit.**

195 *mf*

S. self for be - liev - ing you, for

Pno. *mf*

198 $\text{♩}=88$ rit. mp $\text{♩}=88$ p

S. not be-ing a - ble__ to leave you. When I

Pno. mp pp

201 **poco accel.** *cresc. poco a poco*

S. spoke, when I ques-tioned, when I tried to be my -

Pno. **201 poco accel.** p *cresc. poco a poco*

204 $\text{♩}=100$ f

S. self, did I some - how__ make this hap - pen?__

Pno. $\text{♩}=100$ f

rit. al fine

207 *ff*

S. 
Did I de - serve to get hit?

rit. al fine

Pno. *ff* 

210 *pp*

S. 
Did she?


Pno. *pp* 

ATTACCA

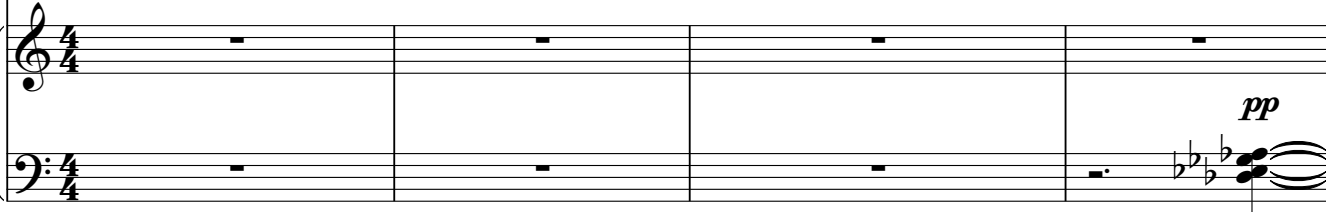
IV.

214 With growing energy ♩=66

p


S. 

I thought this was be-hind me.

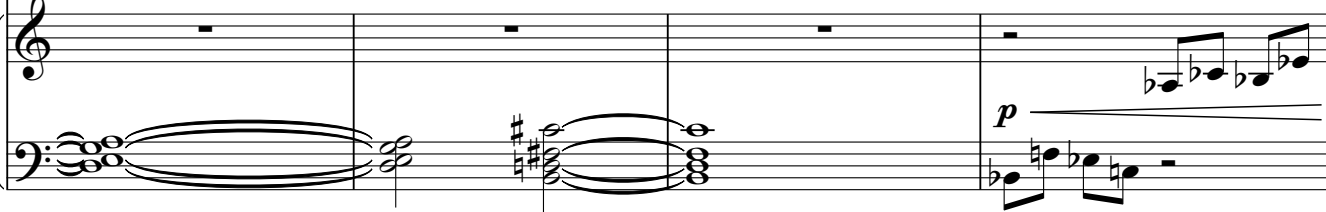
Pno. 

214 With growing energy ♩=66

218

S. 

It's been so ma-ny years, but it ne-ver real-ly goes a - way.

Pno. 


222

poco accel.

pp

S. 

There's al-ways some-thing to re-mind me.

Pno. 

227 $\text{♩}=80$ *mf*

S. 226

When she re - mem - bers, which will be

Pno. 227 $\text{♩}=80$ *mf*

poco accel.

229 *f*

S. worse— the a - buse or the aft - er - math?

poco accel.

Pno. *f*

232 $\text{♩}=96$ *ff*

S. The one

Pno. 232 $\text{♩}=96$ *ff*

234

S. *fff*

who hit her or the

Pno. *fff*

5

3

236

S.

ones who

Pno. *ff* *cresc.*

3

238

S. *f* **240** *mp*

laughed in - stead of help - ing? The

Pno. *fff* **240** *pp*

5

Ped.

poco rit. $\text{♩}=80$ **pp**

241

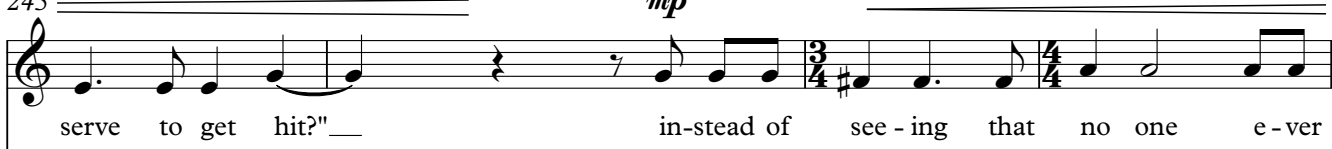
S. 

ones who asked, "So, did she de-

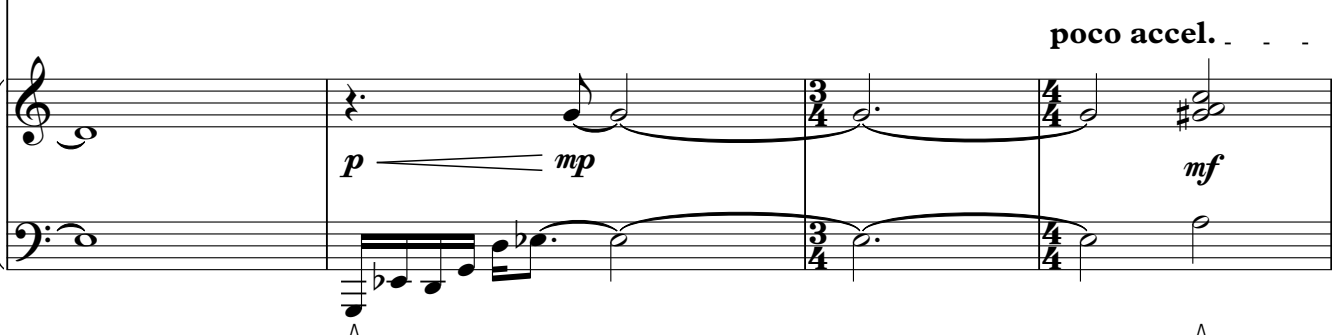
Pno. 

poco rit. $\text{♩}=80$

245 **mp** **poco accel.** . . .

S. 

serve to get hit?" in- stead of see - ing that no one e - ver

Pno. 

poco accel. . . .

p **mp** **mf**

250 $\text{♩}=96$ **f**

249

S. 

does? How can we keep this from

Pno. 

250 $\text{♩}=96$ **f**

accel. poco a poco al fine

252

S. *p*

hap-pen- ing? What can we teach our daugh - ters that our

Pno. *mp* *p*

accel. poco a poco al fine

255

S. *mp*

mo - thers did - n't try to teach us?

Pno. *f*

258

S.

What can we teach our sons that he ne - ver

Pno. *mf*

258

261 *f*

S. learned? How can we_____

Pno. *f*

8^{vb}

both players cut off abruptly when phone rings;
 singer takes a breath and answers the phone in a wavering voice,
 walking off stage