

Bruce

# ADOLPHE

## Water Songs for Soprano and Piano

Poems by

*Rumi*

*Katherine Barrett Swett*

*William Shakespeare*

*Emily Dickinson*

*James Joyce*

*(and government water statistics)*



# Bruce ADOLPHE

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## Water Songs

for Soprano and Piano

*Poems by*

**Rumi, Katherine Barrett Swett, Shakespeare,  
Emily Dickinson, & James Joyce**

*(and government water statistics)*

*Water Songs* was premiered by soprano Angel Blue and pianist Bryan Wagorn at Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center, New York on May 15th, 2021, as part of Restart Stages.

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Duration ca 17'



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# ***Water Songs***

Music by Bruce Adolphe  
Composed for Angel Blue

## **I. *You Are Water* by Rumi**

We are the boat,  
We are the sea,  
I sail in you,  
You sail in me.

You are water, whirling water,  
Yet still water trapped within,  
Come, submerge yourself within us,  
We who are the flowing stream.

We are the boat,  
We are the sea,  
I sail in you,  
You sail in me.

## **II. *Song in Flood Time* by Katherine Barrett Swett\***

All night we thought of tides  
and winds and what they bring  
and take and what survives.  
We could not sing.

If we had stopped the flood  
that covered everything  
in salt and mud,  
could we have sung?

If we had blocked the breeze  
that made the church bells ring  
and knocked down all the trees,  
could we have sung?

Once when we climbed the hill  
for water from the spring  
we took our little fall;  
then we could sing.

### **III. *Feste's Song* from *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare**

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
By swaggering could I never thrive,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day.

### **IV. Water Facts (gathered from various websites)**

To create one pint of beer  
Takes twenty gallons of water.  
A jellyfish and a cucumber  
Are each ninety-five percent water.  
The Earth's temperature  
Is regulated by water.  
Sixty-six percent of the human body is water.  
Seventy-three percent of the human brain is water.

**V. *Like Rain it sounded till it curved* by Emily Dickinson**

Like Rain it sounded till it curved  
And then I new 'twas Wind --  
It walked as wet as any Wave  
But swept as dry as sand --  
When it had pushed itself away  
To some remotest Plain  
A coming as of Hosts was heard  
It filled the Wells, it pleased the Pools  
It warbled in the Road --  
It pulled the spigot from the Hills  
And let the Floods abroad --  
It loosened acres, lifted seas  
The sites of Centres stirred  
Then like Elijah rode away  
Upon a Wheel of Cloud.

**VI. *All Day I Hear the Noise of Waters* by James Joyce**

All day I hear the noise of waters  
Making moan,  
Sad as the sea-bird is when, going  
Forth alone,  
He hears the winds cry to the water's  
Monotone.

The grey winds, the cold winds are blowing  
Where I go.  
I hear the noise of many waters  
Far below.  
All day, all night, I hear them flowing  
To and fro.

\*The Katherine Barrett Swett poem is used with the poet's permission. All other texts featured are in the public domain.

## **WATER SONGS (2019) *world premiere***

*Water Songs* is a group of six songs about water in various forms, from rain to the human brain. The poems range from the lyrical poetry of Katherine Barrett Swett, Emily Dickinson, and James Joyce to a comical verse by Shakespeare, a spiritual meditation by the Persian poet Rumi, and a thought-provoking list of water facts and statistics.

After discovering that the wonderful soprano Angel Blue had been singing my music, including frequent performances of the song *Valley Girl in Love* from *A Thousand Years of Love* (a song cycle commissioned twenty-three years ago by the Millennium Consortium/Music Accord and presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center), I contacted Angel to ask if she might be interested in my composing something especially for her. This song cycle is the result.

Angel Blue planned several recitals in 2020 that were to include *Water Songs*, but, of course, the concerts were cancelled due to the pandemic. So, it was an especially profound pleasure to have the opportunity to return to live performance in New York, and to hear Angel Blue sing the premiere of *Water Songs* with pianist Bryan Wagorn, presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center on May 15, 2021.

Bruce Adolphe

for Angel Blue  
**Water Songs**

**I. You Are Water**

Rumi

Bruce Adolphe

**Hypnotically** ♩=65

*mp*

We are the boat,

*p*

*lightly pedal*

*mp*

We are the sea, I sail in

*p*

*mf warmly*

*mp*

you, You sail in

## II. Song in Flood Time

Katherine Barrett Swett

Bruce Adolphe

54 **Moving freely, rubato** ♩=64

*mp* All\_\_ night\_\_ we

*f* *p*

57 *mf* thought\_\_ of\_\_ tides\_\_ and\_\_ winds and what they bring\_\_ and\_\_

*mf*

59 *f* take and what sur - vives.



### III. Feste's Song (Twelfth Night)

William Shakespeare

Bruce Adolphe

Quickly, lightly ♩=130

98

*mp*

When that I was and a lit-tle tin-y boy With

*f*

*p*

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

102

hey, ho, the wind and the rain, A fool-ish thing was but a

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

105

toy. For the rain it rain-eth ev' ry - day.

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_ Ped. \_\_\_\_\_ Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. Water Facts

Facts from various websites

Bruce Adolphe

150 Sternly  $\text{♩} = 72$

*mf*

To cre - ate one pint of beer\_\_\_\_\_ takes twen - ty gal - lons of

*mp*

with pedal

153

wa - ter.\_\_\_\_\_ A

*mf*

*f*

*mp*

Ped.\_\_\_\_\_

155

jel - ly - fish\_\_\_\_\_ and a cu - cum - ber\_\_\_\_\_ are each nine - ty - five per - cent

*emphatically*

*f*

Ped.\_\_\_\_\_

## V. Like rain it sounded till it curved

Emily Dickinson

Bruce Adolphe

174 **Light, splashy** ♩=86

*p* Like Rain it sound-ed

Ped. Ped. Ped.

179

till it curved And then I (k)new 'twas Wind

Ped. Ped.

184 **mf**

*mf* It walked as wet as an - y Wave But swept as

Ped. Ped.

# VI. All Day I Hear the Noise of Waters

James Joyce

Bruce Adolphe

234 **Rocking gently** ♩=64

*mp* *pp* *mp*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

238 *mp*

All day I hear the noise of wa - ters mak - ing moan,

*p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

242

Sad as the sea-bird is when, go-ing forth a-lone, He

*mp* *p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

*Water Songs* is a group of six songs about water in various forms, from rain to the human brain. The poems range from the lyrical poetry of Katherine Barrett Swett, Emily Dickinson, and James Joyce to a comical verse by Shakespeare, a spiritual meditation by the Persian poet Rumi, and a thought-provoking list of water facts and statistics.

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- Bruce Adolphe



The New York Classical Review on the premiere:

“Adolphe’s fine new cycle of six songs proved as mutable as the element that inspired it; flowing, dripping and misting its way through moods from passionate to humorous. Composed in 2019 for Angel Blue and her planned, but canceled, 2020 recital tour, *Water Songs* finally made its bow Saturday night with Blue sensitively partnered by pianist Bryan Wagorn.

Adolphe’s choice of open-ended, enigmatic texts, his veiled tonal harmonies and avoidance of obvious watery scene-painting all made imaginative demands on the listener. One could hardly have asked, however, for a more congenial guide through this poetic landscape than Blue, with her full, inviting tone and gorgeously sustained adagio phrases in some songs and sly humor in others.”

- David Wright

Angel Blue has emerged in recent seasons as one of the most important sopranos before the public today. On September 23, 2019 she opened the Metropolitan Opera’s 2019/2020 season as Bess in a new production of George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*. These performances followed her internationally praised French Opera debut and role debut as Floria Tosca at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July of 2019.



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