

music by Alexander Wu

text by Kieun Song

December 2023

# The Water Method

for mezzo-soprano, piano, and fixed media

duration: 7'30 "



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## Technical Notes

### Voice

The voice is *not* amplified, except by the megaphone when indicated in the score. The megaphone's volume should be set to a fairly high level, so that a soft croon can still be heard even when the piano and fixed media are loud. When loud, operatic singing is amplified through the megaphone, it should be highly distorted.

In general, the singer does not need to stay synchronized with the fixed media; the technician will follow the singer. There are a few exceptions to this, as indicated in the score: the section starting in m. 67 requires the singer to shadow the fixed media as if they were trying to follow the recording of an unfamiliar song; in m. 72, the three quarter notes in fixed media set the tempo for the following section; and starting from the pick-up to m. 88, the singer again sings along with the tape for three measures.

### Fixed media

This piece requires a set of speakers placed on the sides of the stage, a fader to control the overall level of the playback, and a button, key, or foot switch to trigger the cues. The technician only needs to pay attention to the cue numbers and dynamic markings; instructions such as "fade" or "xfade" can be ignored as they are baked into the fixed media.

The notation for the fixed media is only meant to be a rough representation of the sound and not an exact transcription. The technician should, however, trigger the cues and ride the fader as precisely as possible according to the score.

### Piano

Preparations:

The paper clips should be allowed to freely bounce and move on the strings during the performance. For C $\sharp$ 4 and A4, place Blu-Tack on all three strings as close to the agraffes as possible (both notes should still sustain for at least five seconds when played in a mezzo dynamic); for B $\flat$ 5 and G6, place Blu-Tack on two of the three strings past the dampers. The desired effect is similar to una corda. For G $\sharp$ 6 and all the notes above it, place a cloth and an object that is large enough to cover the strings and weighs around 1 kg (2.2 lbs) on the strings (the notes between C7 and B $\flat$ 7 are unused, so they can be covered by this object as well; book(s) usually work). The desired sound is still pitched but has a very short sustain and quiet overtones.

Even though the perceived loudness of a note is altered by the preparations, play the prepared notes with the same strength applied to the unprepared ones. For instance, the muted A4 is much softer than the unprepared G4, and the metallic-sounding B $\flat$ 4 is somewhat louder, but they should all be played with the same strength given the same dynamic marking.

## Text

I lie here flat backed beneath the surface  
 legs straight and arms arisen  
 There is no where to go and no where to be had  
 I hang mid-water, the currents slipping unfeeling

I curl inwards from the water  
 a warm splotch on my abdomen  
 limbs clutching cross stitched  
 I protect and depend now where I am

## Breathe

where I want                                   if I say what's on my mind  
 and I want                                      if I could spit out this thing rotting under  
 my tongue into your mouth, infect the dry sweet crust of dribble  
 crush the shell pick out the flesh from the bones and spoon-feed them to you

and my love is not love  
 my heart is not a heart

and I do not care  
 I wish to sit in this famine alone  
 carry out the empty crates and let them flotsam  
 away  
 from       me

[extract from "The Water Method" by Kieun Song]

# The Water Method

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**Fragile** ♩ = 50

Mezzo-soprano: Treble clef, 3/4 time.

Fixed media: Bass clef, 3/4 time. Articulation: **pp**. Voice: ① [ai] replaces [ʌ] over time.

Piano: Bass clef, 3/4 time. Articulation: **ppp** (loco). Dynamics: **sforzando**, **very dry**, **(senza ped.)**. Pedal markings: 3, X, 2, X, 3.

Follow ped. markings as closely as possible

Mezzo-soprano: Treble clef, 3/4 time.

Piano: Bass clef, 3/4 time. Articulation: **mf**, **pp**. Dynamics: **pp**, **ppp**, **p**, **ppp**. Pedal markings: 3, X, 2, X, 3, 6. Measure 6: Articulation: **mf**. Measure c. 3": Articulation: **p**.

I lie here

11

flat backed          be - neathe the sur-fa(ce) [s] legs straight and arms

[ai][ai][ai] [ar] [ai][ai] [ar][ai] [ai] [ai] [ar][ai][ar][ai] [ai][ai][ai][ai] [ai][ai] [ai][ai] [ar][ai][ar][ai] *(xfade)*

<sup>2</sup> [ai][ai] [ar][ai] [ai][ai] [ar][ai] [ai] [ai] [ar][ai][ar][ai] [ai][ai][ai][ai] [ai][ai] [ai][ai] [ar][ai][ar][ai]

3

3

3

15

a - ris - en\_ there is          no-where to go and no-where to be ha(d)

*[s]* f

5

*Re.* 5

3

18

[d]

③

(notation not exact)

[d] [d]

*pp*

*pp as an echo*

*ppp*

*ff*

*(senza ped.)*

21

I hang mid - wa - ter the cur-ren - ts

*f*

*c. 5'*

*ff*

*mf*

*ff*

*c. 5'*

22

## **Suddenly panic-struck ↘ = c. 126**

24 ***pp***

slip - ping\_ un - feel - ing\_ ing\_ slip - ping\_

(5) [ts] [ts]

***p sub.***

(6)

1.2.3.4. 5.

every 5-8"

## Suddenly panic-struck ↘ = c. 126

34

*un - [f] slip - ping un - feel - ing*

[ts] [ts]

*mp*

cresc. through repeats to **f**

38

*slip - ping un - [f] slip - ping*

[ts] [ts]

*cresc. through repeats to f*

3x

cresc. through repeats to **f**

*slip - ping un - [f] slip - ping*

[ts] [ts]

*cresc. through repeats to f*

cresc. through repeats to ***ff***

42 ***f*** (*non cresc.*)

slip - ping      un - [f]      slip - ping

[ts] [ts]

***f***      cresc. through repeats to ***ff***

cresc. through repeats to ***ff***

cresc. through repeats to ***ff***

47 With urgency  $\text{J} = 100$ 

molto ***p***      ***pp***

I      curl      in - wards      from the wa - ter

(7) (immediate cutoff)

With urgency  $\text{J} = 100$ 

*8va*

***ppp***      (loco)

*8va*

***ppp***      (loco)

50 *p* *mf* *mp* *f*  
*with audible breaths*

a warm splotch on my ab-do-men  
limbs

(8) not a precise representation of the rhythm  
⑨ limbs

wa - ter wa -

54 *mp* *f* *(f sempre)*  
*clutch - ing* *cross* *stitched* *I*  
*limbs* *limbs* *limbs* *limbs* *limbs* *limbs*

clutch - ing cross stitched I

limbs limbs limbs limbs limbs limbs

wa - ter wa - ter

pp p

Wu, *The Water Method*

57

— pro-tect (10) and de - pend (11)

limbs (f) not entirely in time

wa - ter [t] [t] [d]

3

3

3

mp

59

now where I am

(randomly alternate between the two)

(12) (immediate cutoff)

5

3

3

3

(c. 5")

sf

take megaphone

62

3x —

**Pno: four on the floor, interrupting the silence almost violently  $\text{J} = 132$** 

3x —

*p*  
(play grace notes on the beat)

*f*

**Voice: out of time and slightly out of tune, shadowing the tape  
(not in sync with pno)**

croon into megaphone; keep the notes short and separated, but not stacc.

66

*mf*, , , *pp*, *mf*

where I want if I say what's on my mind mind and I want

[1.2.3.4.]

(13) *f distant*, , , , ,

where I want if I say what's on my mind mind and I want

[1.2.3.4.]

**Pno: cont. four on the floor  $\text{J} = 132$** **(not in sync with voice)**

vamp until the voice has reached the 5th ending

*p*

add the E about 20% of the time

*f*

play the bottom fig. instead  
↓ about 20% of the time

**With clarity, in time ( $\text{J} = 60$ )**

71 5. *p without megaphone, normal singing*

and I want if I could spit out this

**With clarity, in time ( $\text{J} = 60$ )**

(senza ped.)

75

thing rot-ting un-der my tongue in - to your mouth in -

*f*

78

fect the dry sweet crust of drib - ble

*f sempre*

*take megaphone*

*8va*

(D-Eb-Fb cluster)

*sing into megaphone;  
the desired result is like  
a tape being suddenly  
slowed down*

81 *gradually move megaphone closer* → **f**

(8) *Red.*

(*still into  
megaphone*)

83 **ff** *c. 3"*

*8va*

**f poss.**  
*(the resulting sound will still  
be soft due to the preparation)*

*c. 3"*

*Red.*

*without megaphone;  
earnestly, slightly out of time;  
roughly following the tape  
mp*

86

and my love is not love my heart is not a

(14) *mf* soaked with reverb, distant, from the right

and my love is not love my heart is not a

rit.

(keep pedal down)

### Compulsive $\downarrow = 50$

90

heart

heart

Compulsive  $\downarrow = 50$

slow → fast

slow → fast

slow → fast

slow → fast

rit.

94 *f*

and I do not care I wish to sit in this

(tr) (tr)

*p* with audible breaths

*f*

98 *f* *p* *p sempre*

fam - ine a - lone car - ry out the

*f* *mp* *mf*

102 rit.

emp - ty crates and let them float - sam a - way from me

rit.

*f* *ff* *p*