

# **This is Water!**

*for flute, clarinet, drum kit, string quartet and tape*

# **Chris Swithinbank**



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Approximate Duration: 6-7 minutes

*This is Water!* was composed in January 2010 for the inaugural concert of the Raise Your Voice Ensemble — Sunday, February 28 2010 at Centro Bar, Manchester, UK. It takes its name from the book of the same title by David Foster Wallace, subtitled ‘Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life’ (Little, Brown & co., New York, 2009). Here is the passage, which gives that book its name:

*There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys. How’s the water?”  
And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?”*

[...]

*The immediate point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about.*

## The FREE SPACE

The work leads into and away from a central, freely improvised section. One suggested method of performance is to include the work twice in a programme and to invite the audience to participate in performing this section with the on-stage musicians. If this is to be attempted, the audience should be provided with instruction cards similar to the requests made in the wavy box on p.5.

During this section the tape part, which consists of an environment of quiet and tactile sounds, is played and the players are requested to react in some way to it, potentially using the guidelines set out on p.5 of the score. One parameter that **must** be adhered to is the dynamic range of this section — please explore a wide range of sounds, but only those feasible at **pppp-pp**. Extended techniques and instrumental explorations with which the players themselves are not familiar are encouraged.

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Chris Swithinbank (2010)

Very still, with shocks, c. ♩ = 60

Piccolo *ppp* *poco cresc.* *mf*

Clarinet in Eb *ppp poco cresc.*

Drum Kit *snare, hard* *sffz* *cym., soft l.v.* *p*

Violin I *sffz* *sffz* *sffz* *mf*

Violin II *sffz* *ppp* *poco cresc.* *mf*

Viola *pp* *p* *poco cresc.* *mf*

Violoncello *sffz* *sffz* *pp poco cresc.*

8

Picc. *sub. ppp* *ppp* *cresc.*

to B $\flat$  Cl. Clarinet in B $\flat$  *mf* *ppp* *cresc.*

Kit *snare, hard* *cym., soft* *pp* *snare, hard* *sffz* *sfz*

Vln. I *pizz.* *sfz* *arco s.p. molto vib. ord. senza vib.* *ppp* *sfz*

Vln. II *pizz.* *sfz* *arco s.p. molto vib. ord. senza vib.* *ppp* *sfz*

Vla. *pp* *poco cresc.* *p* *s.p.* *(s.p.)*

Vc. *mf* *s.p. molto vib. ord. senza vib.* *ppp* *poco cresc.* *p*

lip slowly up to produce beats with cl.

Double speed (c. ♩ = 120)

← ♩ = ♩ →

13

Picc. *p cresc.* *f* *p* *lip*

B♭ Cl. *f* *p dim.* *al niente* *to E♭ Cl.*

Kit *cym., middle, hard* *mf* *cym., hard* *snare, hard* *soft* *hard* *cym., soft* *l.v.* *pp*

Vln. I *p senza cresc.* *s.p.* *ff* *p* *scratchy gliss.*

Vln. II *s.p.* *pp* *f* *p* *ord.* *s.p.* *excess pressure* *ord.* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *f* *p* *ord.* *s.p.* *excess pressure* *ord.* *pp* *poco s.p.* *ppp sotto voce*

Vc. *(ord.)* *pp* *p* *s.p.* *ff* *balzando, 1/2 col legno* *arco ord.* *s.p.* *p* [*<>*]

Half speed (c. ♩ = 60)

← ♩ = ♩ →

17

Picc. *p* *p* *mf* *ppp*

B♭ Cl. *mf* *ppp*

Kit *pp* *trilling of index & middle finger of both hands on snare drum skin*

Vln. I *pp* *(quasi echo)* *p* *ff ord.*

Vln. II *poco s.p.* *ppp sotto voce* *s.p.* *mf* *ff ord. (in one bow)*

Vla. *pp* *I, jeté* *pp* *5* *fff in the string* *(poco)*

Vc. *ord.* *ff*

<> etc. ad lib. ]

23

Picc. G.P. *pp*

E♭ Cl. G.P. *pp*

Kit G.P. *p* *ffp* *f* *p* *snare, hard* *fffz*

Vln. I *poco s.p.* G.P. ord. *s.p. molto vib.* *meno f* *più f* *p* *f* *fffz*

Vln. II (in one bow) G.P. *sim. → s.p. → ord.* *fffz ff in the string* *(poco)* *fffz mf ff* *ff* *fffz p* *mf* *p* *fffz*

Vla. *sim.* G.P. *→ s.p. → ord.* *fffz ff* *(poco)* *fffz mf ff* *ff* *fffz p* *mf* *p* *ord. (come primo)* *pp*

Vc. *poco s.p.* G.P. *→ s.p. → ord. → s.p.* *meno f* *ffp ff p* *fff* *mf* *p* *fffz*

Poco meno mosso (c. ♩ = 52)

31

Picc. *come off precisely together* to Fl. G.P. 6-8" *motionless* Flute key clicks *pp*

E♭ Cl. *come off precisely together* G.P. 6-8" *motionless*

Kit G.P. 6-8" *motionless*

Vln. I G.P. 6-8" *motionless* III, jeté *ppp*

Vln. II G.P. 6-8" *motionless*

Vla. *come off precisely together* G.P. 6-8" *motionless* arco balzando (7) *mf* *sim. → (tratto)*

Vc. G.P. 6-8" *motionless* legno salt. *mf* II, arco *ppp*

37

Fl. breathtone closed

open → closed

5

Fl. *pp* *p*

E♭ Cl. breathtone

*mf* *p*

Kit stroke snare drum skin gently in a circular motion sim.

*pp* *pp*

Vln. I IV, arco *ppp* *p*

Vln. II arco balz. *pp* *p* 3 3

Vla. *p*

Vc. IV (pitchless on bridge) *ppp* *p*

43

With electroacoustic accompaniment — c. 2 minutes  
and optionally with audience participation

Use this space to explore. Very quietly. Never more than *pp*.

Look inside yourself and also find the quiet rattling of the world around you.

Find a way of touching your instrument and of your instrument touching you.

There is sound and you are in it. Can you embrace it?

Do you remember a favourite tune? Maybe play it so only two people can hear a part of it. Shh.

When did you last think of home, if you have a place you think to call home?

Is there joy in your heart?

Have you lost something?

Feel free to whistle or to hum. Quietly.

We cannot walk alone.

There are no paths, only walking. Walk.

Use this space to explore. Very quietly.

Use this space for something you wouldn't normally do and in doing it change something.

Don't be afraid.

Use this space to explore.

Very

quietly.

Poco più mosso (c. ♩ = 60)

44

Fl. *sfz*

E♭ Cl. *sfz*

Dr. snare, hard  
*sfz*

Vln. I *ff* *pp*

Vln. II *p* *ff* *pp*

Vla. scratchtone  
*ff* *p* *ff*

Vc. *sfz*

50

Fl. open, flz.  
*ppp* *p* closed

E♭ Cl. *p*

Dr.

Vln. I *p* *sfz* *pp possibile* scratchtone *sim.*

Vln. II *sfz*

Vla. *mp* *sfz* col legno tratto III & IV (m.s.t.)

Vc. *p* *p* *cresc.*



54

Fl. open, flz. to Picc.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc. (s.t.)

*mf* *ff* sub. *mf* *f* *ff* *pp* *f* *fff* *pp* m.s.p. (pitchless)

60

Fl.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc. s.p. (rich in overtones) (sempre s.p.)

*p* *pp* *pp* *ff* *pp* *p*

64

Fl.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*ppp senza cresc.*

*p*

(arco balz.)

*ff*

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*mp*

*mf* < *ff*

67

Piccolo

Fl.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

lip:

*ppp senza cresc.*

*pp*

(arco balz.)

*mf*

*ff*

*mf*

*pp*

*ff*

*mf*

*p* < *ff*

*mf*

*p*

(s.p.) → m.s.p.

III, nat.

*p*

*ff*

69

Picc.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

(a little flat)

*ppp senza cresc.*

*mf*

*mf*

*ff*

*p*

*ff*

*pp*

*p < ff*

*mf*

*p < ff*

*mf*

*ff*

s.p. → m.s.p.

III, nat.

*mf*

*p*

*ff*

71

Picc.

E♭ Cl.

Dr.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p < ff*

*p dolce nobilmente*

*p dolce nobilmente*

*p dolce nobilmente*

*p dolce nobilmente*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*