

Commissioned by the Washington ACDA 2019 Summer Institute Choral Commissioning Project.

What is Water?

Unison (opt. 2-Part), Piano

Dedicated to my students at Charles Wright Academy

The world turns softly not to spill its lakes and rivers
The water is held in its arms,
And the sky is held in the water.
What is water that pours silver and can hold the sky? ...HC

Hilda Conkling

Judith Herrington

Andante ♩ = 82-86 *poco rit.*

Piano *mp*

Ped. *simile*

Detailed description: This block contains the piano introduction. It is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a metronome marking of ♩ = 82-86. The dynamics are mezzo-piano (mp). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass and a more melodic line in the treble. There are four measures shown, with measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. A 'poco rit.' (slightly ritardando) marking is placed above the final measure. Pedal markings are present at the beginning and middle.

All voices
a tempo
mp

5 6 7 8

What is wa - ter that holds the sky? What is

a tempo
mp

Detailed description: This block contains the first line of the vocal melody and its piano accompaniment. The vocal line is on a single treble clef staff, and the piano accompaniment is on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is 'a tempo' and the dynamics are mezzo-piano (mp). The lyrics are: 'What is wa - ter that holds the sky? What is'. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated above the vocal staff. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar eighth-note pattern as in the introduction.

poco rit. *mf* *mp*

9 10 11 12

wa - ter, that holds the sky? The

poco rit. *mf* *mp*

Detailed description: This block contains the second line of the vocal melody and its piano accompaniment. The vocal line is on a single treble clef staff, and the piano accompaniment is on a grand staff. The tempo is 'poco rit.' (slightly ritardando) and the dynamics are mezzo-forte (mf) and mezzo-piano (mp). The lyrics are: 'wa - ter, that holds the sky? The'. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12 are indicated above the vocal staff. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar eighth-note pattern.

a tempo

13 14 15

world turns soft - ly not to spill its lakes and

a tempo

16 17 18 19

riv - ers, the wa - ter is held in its arms, and the

Part 1

20 21 22 23

sky is held in the wa - - - ter. And the

Part 2 (optional)

sky — is held in the wa - - - ter. And the

24 *f* 25 *f* 26 *poco rit.* 27 *mf*

sky is held in the wa - - ter.

sky is held in the wa - - ter.

f *mf*

poco rit. *mf*

$\text{♩} = 52-56$
mf
unis. 28 29 30

What is wa - ter that pours sil- ver?

$\text{♩} = 52-56$
mf *mp*

31 32 33

What is wa - ter that pours sil- ver?

mf

34 35 36 *mp poco cresc.*

What is wa - ter that

mp *poco cresc.*

37 38 39

holds the sky?

40 *mp poco cresc.* 41 42 *mf*

What is wa - ter that pours sil - ver? what is wa - ter that

mp poco cresc. *mf*

43 44 45

pours sil - ver? What is wa - ter that holds the sky,

46 holds the sky? *f* 47 48

49 *poco rit.* 50 51

Tempo primo

52 *mp* 53 54

Red. *simile*

poco rit. *mp* 56 57 58

The world turns soft - ly not to spill its lakes and

poco rit. *p*

59 60 61 62

riv - ers, the wa - ter is held in its arms, and the

Pt. 1

poco rit.

mf

63 64 65 66

sky is held in the wa - - ter. and the

Pt. 2 (optional)

mf

poco rit.

sky is held in the wa - ter. and the

a tempo

f

68

69

70 **mf**

sky is held in the wa - ter.

f

mf

sky is held in the wa - ter.

a tempo

f

mf

mp

71 72 73 74 *mp*
unis.

What is

mf *mp*

molto rit.

75 76 77 78 *mf* *mp*

wa - ter that holds the sky?

molto rit.

mf *mp*

Ped. *Ped.*

Hilda Conkling (1910-1986)

As a child, Hilda Conkling was an uniquely gifted and extraordinary poet. Her mother, Grace Conkling was a poet, writer, accomplished pianist and a professor at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. Hilda's childhood was filled with experiences walking in nature, reading and imaginative play.

Hilda had a close relationship with her mother and would create poetry to share with her. Her mother recognized Hilda's gift of poetry, and would treasure and record her poems. Amy Lowell, a noted poet, described Hilda's poetry as "uninhibited and instinctive."

Water (What is Water?) was written when she was 5 or 6 years old. Imagine her love of language and keen observation skills at such an early age. As you sing this piece, consider her environment and the experiences that inspired and intrigued her to write these words.

JH



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