

# PREFACE

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The making of *Water Music* began in the mid-1990s, when I increasingly found my camera lens turning toward water. Initially, I photographed water that I happened upon in the course of my travels. But I quickly grew dissatisfied with leaving these encounters to chance, and began to change the itinerary of my trips to include and then to exclusively photograph water.

I was enthralled by the challenge of capturing on film the astonishing breadth of ways in which water presents itself—what I came to think of as water’s *essence*. Yet the more I photographed water, the more I came to realize that water’s appearance knows no limits.

Water has many faces, many forms. Sailors crossing Lake Superior just after sunset can watch the lake’s surface turn from deep blue to gold, copper, blazing red, dusty pink, pewter and—finally—black. Water mirrors archetypal forms: perfect spirals form on the inside edges of waves; tiny precise vortices trail from the end of a canoe paddle’s stroke. Water in flood brings a kind of uncontrolled rage to everything it touches; water in quiet lakes and streams lures and nurtures all living beings.

Water can even be surprising. It is a relatively clear substance that often draws its colors from the surrounding environment. Yet water can also glitter with colors absent in the landscape. On a damp and dark, foggy day in Maine,

the waters I captured through my lens were swirled with streaks of bright turquoise; on a blue-skied and cloudless, sunny day, the deep waters of Washington State’s Puget Sound looked exactly like polished black marble. Pebbles tossed onto a slow-moving tributary of the Mississippi River create rings in the water that expand outward in perfect circles, in spite of the river’s current. And in spite of the fact that the river is flowing downstream, the growing rings seem to remain anchored in place. As they expand even farther, the many rings pass over and through one another, yet somehow retain their shape. It is almost as if the rings and the river are separate entities.

Even now, thousands of negatives and many years later, I continue to encounter visual manifestations of water that are both mysterious and like nothing I’ve previously seen. Watching water can be like witnessing magic.

When I first decided to put some of my water photos into a book, I knew that I wanted to create a book that could give back to water for all the years of pleasure and fascination it had provided me, both professionally and personally. I wanted to create a book that could assist in the protection and restoration of water in many different parts of the world. Now, through a partnership with the United Nations Foundation, the book’s charitable recipient, *Water Music* will be able to do just that.

For this book, I wanted an exceptional text. Who could better speak for and about the most essential and lyrical of elements, I thought, than musicians, who themselves so lyrically and essentially enrich all of our lives? So I set out to invite some of the greatest musicians of our time, asking each of them for their intimate impressions of and responses to water.

The many musicians on these pages have made space in the midst of their demanding lives to contribute to the

book, generously donating thoughts, poems, essays and music about water for the book's text.

It is my hope that the collaborative joy behind the making of this book will be communicated on its pages, and that the respect for water inherent in this project will ripple outward into the world.

*Marjorie Ryerson*