

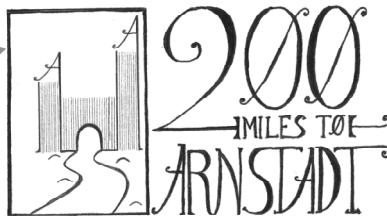
# **the Idea of a Whale**

**for Soprano and Piano**

PREVIEW

**Douglas Buchanan**

PREVIEW



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**the Idea of a Whale**  
for Soprano and Piano , c. 7'40" (2008)  
Text and Music by Douglas Buchanan

Blue,  
it sails through the universe,  
Blue  
it sails through the darkneses driven by starlight  
alone and adrift in the afterglow's twilight  
Blue

It sleeps,  
flowerlets of stars  
trail and dance in its wake,  
wisps of old sky  
now adrift from their worlds  
curl smokily  
about its flank;  
colors bursting all around the closed eye  
running, blurring sea and sky –

Blue.  
It slips through the universe, blue,  
floating down paths that have long gone untrodden,  
so ancient that even the stars have forgotten  
wandering, ceaseless, unknowing what way are chosen  
never halting its journey through the frozen  
air,  
Blue.

It dreams,  
deep and untouchable visions,  
dreams of the gently lulling waves  
rolling over dark figures  
gliding through the deep;  
the little clicks and calls of mother and child,  
their whistles cry out over winds rough and wild,  
and  
they  
Dive

freely, wanton,  
playing at shadows, and sunlight and beaches  
and all the creatures  
of the sea

---

Slowly  
shadows slip under  
the water, burrowing deeper,  
and leaving wakes hotter; creeping  
through sea-bed and crag-topped  
mountains, strange other shadows  
which wretch acid fountains; cruelly betraying the  
safe homeward bowers: acid-etched echoes where once were sea-towers;  
wave-choking forms shrouding over the light, cloudily birthing a  
bleak starless night, swathing a pall cast  
across darkened waters: mothers,  
fathers, brothers, daughters,  
caught in sickness and  
in ruin; trapped  
in a home  
no longer  
their own,  
while  
ending  
tendrils  
grasp, wrench,  
undo all  
breath and beauty,  
it stirs in its sleep:

and Weeps:

it weeps for its brother and sisters now under the waves  
where iron-wrought hands tore and sundered their graves  
and that eternal clank and grind  
silencing songs, and tearing its mind,  
it weeps its dreams,  
in sleep it screams:

Blue,

its tears wash the universe,

Blue,

washing all worlds free of song-ending sadness

(though deep in its heart it may never feel gladness,

lost songs sifting slowly through its ears)

stars awash in tears

shimmer and dance

waves rush away, wind down forgotten roads,

cleansing the mind of the heavens –

---

Blue,  
it  
drifts  
through  
the  
un  
i  
verse,  
B  
l  
u  
e:

sleeping and dreaming of ages ago,  
while it dreams softly its tears gently flow,  
remembering family too soon laid low

Blue

floats through the universe

e

u

l

b

Douglas Buchanan  
January 30, 2008  
Dallas, Baltimore

PREVIEW

# the Idea of a Whale

Commissioned by the University of Baltimore

Douglas Buchanan

**Adrift** (♩ = c. 60) **Slowly, floating** (♩ = c. 72)

Soprano

Piano

Blue, it

*mp* *8va loco* *p*

7

S

sails through the u-ni-verse, Blue, it sails through the darknesses driven by star-light, a -

Pno.

*mp* *p* *pp* *mp*

(*Rec.*)

11

S

lone and a - drift in the aft - er - glow's twi - light, Blue. It sleeps,

Pno.

*mp* *mp < mf* *p* *mp*

(*Rec.*)

6  
14 *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mp*

S  
flow'r-lets of stars trail and dance in its wake, wisps of old sky, now a-drift from their

Pno.

(Ped.)

17 *mf* *mp*

S  
world curl smok-i - ly a bout its flank; \_\_\_ co lors burst - ing all a round the clo-sed eye, \_\_\_

Pno.

(Ped.)

8:6 5

19 *f* *mf*

S  
run-ning blur - ring sea and sky, Blue, it slips through the u - ni-verse, blue,

Pno.

(Ped.)

5 11:12

A little faster than tempo I (♩ = c. 44)

22 *mp*

S  
floa - ting down paths that have long been un - tod - den, so

Pno.



(very quiet indeed)

accel.

*mp*

*f* rall.

S 23

ancient that e-ven the stars have forgotten, wandering, ceaseless, unknow-ing what ways are cho - sen, —

Pno. 23

(Leo.)

rall.

25 *a tempo* *mf*

*mp*

S 25

ne - ver hal - ting its jour - ney through the fro - zen air, blue. —

Pno. 25

(Leo.)

With a little more movement (♩ = c. 50)

*mp* < *mf* > *mp*

*mp* < *mf* > *mp*

*mp*

S 27

It dreams, — deep and un-to-ugh-ta-ble vi - sions, — deams of gen-tly lul - ling waves,

Pno. 27

(Leo.)

30

*mf*

*mp*

S 30

— rol - ling o - ver dark — fi - gures, gli-ding through the deep; the lit-tle

Pno. 30

(Leo.)

8  
32

S  
clicks and calls of mo-ther and child, their whist-les cry out o-ver winds rough and

Pno.

(Leo.)

rall. **Faster, flowing** (♩ = c. 72)

34 *mf* ***f*** *rall.*

S  
wild, and they dive!

Pno.

(Leo.)

**Playful, con moto** (♩ = c. 46)

37 *mp* *mp*

S  
Free-ly, w-ton, play-ing at sha-dows and sun-light and beach-es,

Pno.

(Leo.)

*rall. mf* *mf* *mp* **With growing dread** (♩ = c. 52)

39 *rall.*

S  
and all the cre-tures of the sea.

Pno.

*poco a poco accel. e cresc.*

S 41 *3 3 3 3 3*  
Slow - ly sha-dows slip un - der the wa-ter, bur - row - ing deep - er and leav - ing wakes hot - ter,  
*poco a poco accel. e cresc.*

Pno. 41 *3 5 3*  
(*Rec.*)

S 43 *3 3 3 3 3*  
creep ing through sea - bed and crag top - pled moun - tain, strange o - ther sha dows which wretch ac - rid foun tains;

Pno. 43 *5 7 3*  
(*Rec.*)

S 45 *3 3 3 3 3* *f*  
cruel - ly be - tray - ing the safe home - ward tow - ers, a - cid etched ech - oes where once were sea tow - ers, *f*

Pno. 45 *5 7 5 7*  
(*Rec.*)

**Tense, agitated** (*♩* = c. 64)

S 47 *p mf 3 3 3*  
wave cho king forms shrou ding o - ver the light, clou - di - ly bir - thing a bleak star - less night, *3*

Pno. 47 *f 5 5 5 5 6*  
(*Rec.*) *mf < f f*

10  
49 *mp* *mf* *f marcato*

S  
swa - thing a pall cast a - cross dark-ened waters: mothers, fa thers, bro thers, daugh ters,

Pno.  
*f* *ff*

(Leo.)

51 *legato* *mf* *molto rall.*

S  
caught in sick - ness and in ru - in, trapp-ed in a home no long - er their own, while

Pno.  
*f* *molto rall.*

(Leo.)

53 *marcato* *legato* *ff*

S  
ending ten - drilsgrasp, wren - do allbreath and beau-ty, it stirs in its sleep, and

Pno.  
*ff*

(Leo.)

Mourning (♩ = c. 46) *f* *mp* *mf*

S  
Weeps, it Weeps, It weeps for its brothers and sisters now under the waves,

Pno.  
*ff* *mp*

(Leo.)

S *mf*  
 where i - ron wrought hands tore and sundered their graves, and that e - ter-nal clank and grind,

Pno. *f* *mf*

S (Ped.) *f*  
 si-len-cing songs, and tea-ring its mind, it weeps it dreams, —

Pno. (Ped.)

S *f* *poco rall.* *ff* *Cleanly* (♩ = c. 42) *f*  
 in sleep it dreams, — Blue, its tears wash the u - ni-verse, Blue, —

Pno. *f*

S *p*  
 was hing all worlds free of song end-ing sad-ness, (while deep in its heart it may ne-ver feel glad ness,

Pno. (Ped.) *p*

12 *poco rall.* **Shimmering** (♩ = c. 60)

S  
lost songs — sift - ing slow - ly through its ears) stars a wash in tears

Pno.  
*mp* *mp*  
(*X* *sempre a fine*)

S  
shim - mer and dance, waves wash a - way, wind down for - got - ten roads,

Pno.  
*f* *rall.* *mf* *mp*  
*p* *f* *mp*

S  
cleaning the mind of the a - vens, Blue, it drifts through the u - ni verse, Blue:

Pno.  
*mp* *p* *mp*  
*p*

**Slowly, floating** (♩ = c. 72)

S  
slee - ping and drea - ming of a - ges a - go, while it dreams soft - ly its tears gent - ly

Pno.

76 *rall.* *p > pp* *a tempo*

S  
flow, re - mem - be - ring fa - mi - ly too soon laid low, Blue,

Pno.  
*rall.* *a tempo*  
*loco*

79 *p > pp*

S  
it floats through the u - ni - verse, blue. \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.  
*ppp*

81 *Adrift* (♩ = 1.00)

S

Pno.  
*ppp*