

# Kelly Moran Shares New Video for WATER MUSIC from ULTRAVIOLET

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Kelly Moran releases the official music video for "Water Music," one of the standout pieces from her acclaimed LP *Ultraviolet*. The video, directed by her close collaborator Katharine Antoun, pays homage to Moran's transcendent experience in the woods of Long Island, one which inspired the making of *Ultraviolet*.

"On the day I made the music that eventually became this record, I went swimming in the ocean and for the first time went far past my comfort zone in the water," says Moran. "I'm usually too skittish to go deeper than my ankles, but I felt completely uninhibited that day and actually let myself swim and feel the weight of my body disappear in the water. With this newly achieved sense of freedom and looseness, I attempted to bring that feeling back to my studio when I played piano later that day."

"Water Music" features vivid, textural explosions made from Turkish marbling techniques as well as epi-fluorescent footage of plant cells and various chemical reactions, all to a refined psychedelic effect. Intercut with intimate shots of Moran and culminating in the emergence of a supreme being, designed by visual artist Cassie McQuater, the video combines a few interdisciplinary techniques, merging the natural world with the digital.

It also speaks to the collaborative nature of the original song, which features additional production and synth by Oneohtrix Point Never, with whom Moran also toured as a member of his MYRIAD ensemble. Antoun and Moran are longtime friends who've connected visually throughout much of the *Ultraviolet* experience, and McQuater commissioned Moran to score her recent video installation *Love Birds, Night Birds, Devil-Birds*, which premiered at Frieze in Los Angeles last month.

McQuater also designed some of the live visuals that Moran has been touring extensively with as of late. She's currently wrapping up a string of European dates, including sold out debuts in Berlin, London and Manchester, with state-side performances at Moogfest, Mutek SF, and *Roulette* (NYC) to follow. Full tour routing below.

*Ultraviolet*, Moran's debut for Warp Records, received nearly universal praise upon its release in November 2018, including *Pitchfork* noting of its best electronic albums of 2018 "the liquidity of her playing finally overwhelms the containers she's created for it, spilling over and splashing out. The excess is thrilling." and *Exclaim* saying the album "is indebted to the charm of the natural world, but with it, Moran unlocks dazzling new ones in the process."



The prepared piano - where a pianist places screws, forks and other foreign objects on the piano strings to create strange, eerie timbres - has long had a place in the world of contemporary classical music, notably in the avant-garde music of [John Cage](#) and [George Crumb](#). Pianist and composer [Kelly Moran](#) was pursuing that same path, collaborating with prepared piano veterans like [Margaret Leng Tan](#) and releasing several albums of increasing complexity and rigor, culminating in 2017's *Bloodroot*, named by the *NY Times* as one of the year's [best classical recordings](#).

But, before long, Moran found herself at an impasse which left her "banging her head against the wall." Not long after, she had what she describes as "her [Eureka moment](#)":

"I was squatted down in the forest, listening to the sounds of the wind and the wildlife, and all the echoes surrounding me. I asked myself: How can I make music that feels like this: natural, connected, and effortless? So I went back to my piano, hit record, and went into this trance-like state where I improvised for several hours nonstop...When I listened back to the recordings, I felt like the music that I had produced that day felt really unbridled and joyous."

Since then, Moran has reimagined the prepared piano as an instrument of ecstatic possibilities, enhanced by electronics and a less rigid, more improvised approach to performance. Specifically, Moran feeds her piano into [MIDI](#) software and a sampling keyboard, allowing her to electronically manipulate the recordings and play them back as complex, new sounds.

Along the way, Moran was enlisted by [Oneohtrix Point Never](#) (a.k.a. Daniel Lopatin) to play keyboards in his touring band. That ultimately led to her signing by Lopatin's label [Warp Records](#) (also home to [Aphex Twin](#), [Brian Eno](#) and [Squarepusher](#), among others) which has resulted in two releases so far: November's *Ultraviolet* and the more recent EP *Origin*.

On Monday 5/20, Moran performed at [Roulette](#), completing her [Van Lier artist-in-residence fellowship](#) that began in March 2018 (prior to her joining Warp). The first half of the program consisted of music from *Bloodroot* and *Origin*, which was gentle and slowly evolving, like Erik Satie crossed with Terry Riley's ecstatic improvisations, with elements of wind chimes and Balinese gamelan. The electronic elements were subtle, subjugated to the prepared piano; Moran, in a flowing white dress complementing her long blond tresses, was the clear focus, lit by a simple spotlight.



After intermission, Moran returned - now wearing a black top and denim - to perform all of *Ultraviolet*. According to an [interview she did with Pitchfork](#) last year, Moran, who is [synesthetic](#), sees a different color on each track of the album: "Autowave," in E major, is pink; "Water Music," in E flat major, is yellow with blue undercurrents. In developing her live performance, Moran commissioned a set of mind-bending visuals by video artists [Cassie McQuater](#), [Gabe Liberti](#), [Juli Odomo](#) and [Ren Pan](#) (along with Moran herself) to accompany each track, in order to let the audience experience the album as she does.

The result was an overwhelming audiovisual spectacle, with projections taking over the entire proscenium of the stage and a massive screen hung behind Moran and the piano. On *Ultraviolet*, the electronics are positioned more forward, enhancing and often subsuming the brightness of the prepared piano, as with "Water Music's" melisma-like patterns and "Nereid's" circular spectral magic.

For me, *Ultraviolet's* clear highlight was "Helix", which starts out slowly and simply, almost childlike on what sounds like a toy piano. Soon, the music becomes faster and more intricate, building to a crescendo girded by heavy dark synth that reflects Moran's love of black metal. The effect was simultaneously scary and rapturous, not unlike the sound of [a great organist](#) playing an extended voluntary. Or, perhaps more aptly, a killer guitarist launching into an extended solo. Walking out onto Atlantic Avenue on a cloud, I was fairly certain that my first experience with this thoughtful and boundary-breaking artist won't be my last.

Moran is taking her act on the festival circuit this summer, including Paris' [Villette Sonique](#) and [Sónar Barcelona](#), where I hope to return next month for the first time [since 2011](#). More pics on the [photo page](#).



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## Marathon Microtonal Magic with Kelly Moran at Roulette

*by delarue*

During the momentary pause midway through [Kelly Moran's](#) riveting, marathon performance at Roulette Monday night, a handful of audience members went up on the balcony to peer into the concert grand piano she'd been playing. What had she done to get such magically eerie, bell-like, otherworldly pointillistic sounds out of that thing?

Moran never addressed the issue, emerging from the wings for the second half in a new outfit – switching out an airy linen dress for a slightly more festive black top and jeans. Had she detuned some of the strings? There were some suspicious coppery objects inside the piano, and people in the crowd were speculating whether she'd put tacks, or similar metal objects, on some of the hammers. And there were a couple of laptops involved. Whatever the case, Moran worked the keyboard hard as she swayed from side to side on the bench, a rugged individualist reveling in her own inimitable sound.

It was a torrentially gorgeous tour through Moran's two latest albums, plus a lengthy suite of new material. Moran combines the uneasy belltones of Mompou with the Asian inflections and rhythmic complexity of Debussy while adding her own layers of microtonal mystery. She tackled six relatively short pieces from her botanically-themed [Bloodroot](#) album with an unexpected vigor. The album is on the delicate side; here, she raised the voltage, anchoring her meticulous, rhythmically perfect righthand articulation with graceful, sparse lefthand accents, a trope that would recur with even more intensity later on. While both the subtle circular shifts of Philip Glass and the plaintiveness of Chopin seemed to be touchstones, the music was unmistakably Moran's.

The two new, considerably longer pieces before the intermission were even more dynamic. There was a Glass-in-a-matter-of-factness in the methodical, outwardly rippling variations of the first two movements of [Helix II](#), while the aptly titled [Night Music](#) brought to mind late Ravel.

The second half of the program was more electroacoustic, Moran playing along to videos of underwater imagery in tandem with prerecorded, synthesized orchestration that ranged from low drones to what seemed to be live sampling. Often that increased the psychedelic factor, spinning her celestial curlicues and spirals back kaleidoscopically, although as the thicket of sound grew more dense, it sometimes subsumed what Moran was actually playing. After the better part of two hours onstage, she finally closed with a stately, spacious, echoingly minimalist theme to send the crowd home on a rapt note.

[Roulette](#) continues to program the most exciting avant garde and 21st century music of any Brooklyn venue, while staying in touch with their roots in the loft jazz scene. Fans of largescale improvisational music and the AACM canon might want to swing by the [memorial concert](#) for the great saxophonist Joseph Jarman this Saturday, May 25 at 2 PM; admission is free with a [rsvp](#).

## The New York Times

On Monday, the composer and pianist Kelly Moran completed a residency at Roulette in Brooklyn with a selection of prepared-piano works that have occupied three of her recent releases — “Bloodroot” (one of our [“best classical recordings”](#) picks, in 2017), as well as the subsequent full-length “Ultraviolet” and the EP “Origin,” both of which use electronics in a more prominent way.

I was, once again, delighted by the pieces from “Bloodroot.” But I also found myself enjoying later ones just as much. In works like “Helix,” the electronic, granular low end of Ms. Moran’s setup suggests the gravitas of a pipe organ — and also works as a foil for her graceful and percussive live pianism. *SETH COLTER WALLS*