The Watermelon Cargo

a chamber opera for four singers, small SATB chorus, flute, oboe/English horn, vibraphone, marimba, drum set, string quartet (or strings), and electric bass

Libretto by Jeffrey Sichel

by Kyle Gann
2003/2018
The Watermelon Cargo (2003/2018)

The Watermelon Cargo began as a chamber opera in just intonation, and as such, was never performed. In 2018 I rewrote it for conventional instruments, without the extended tuning. It is intended as a companion piece for a similar opera, Cinderella's Bad Magic, also rewritten in conventional tuning. The libretto by my colleague Jeffrey Sichel listed four characters, but did not assign lines of text to specific characters, which left me free to decide who sings what, and to add a small chorus (twelve singers). The main characters are:

- Rip Van Winkle – soprano
- The Photographer – tenor
- Woman – alto
- Man – bass

There are four acts:

I. The Awakening of Rip Van Winkle
II. Dreaming of the Iroquois Nation
III. The Guy with the Camera
IV. In the Watermelon Cargo

There are some quarter-tones (on F, A, and C) notated in the flute’s upper register. If preferred, the quarter-tone sharps can be played as regular sharps.

The observant may notice some redundancy in the notation of drums and cymbals at the stage of the score. This was because I needed the score to both generate parts and to play the MIDI, and Sibelius 8 will no longer play the drums and cymbals on the same staff. In the event of an imminent performance, this will be quickly remedied.

Duration: 45 minutes
The Watermelon Cargo - ranges of the four soloists:

Rip Van Winkle  Photographer  Woman  Man

(Octave lower)
The Watermelon Cargo

Prelude

Jeffrey Sichel

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Act I: The Awakening of Rip Van Winkle

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
watermelon suspended in a river of flowing gauze-like fabric.

The sound of water lap-ping

gently on a shore, amplified and hypnotic, like a whisper.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
Light rises softly inside the

watermelon__huge and womb-like._

The lovers...
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

na-ked sus-pen-ded in the flesh of the fruit, making
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

love.  
They fall asleep in each other's arms.
They fall asleep in each other's arms.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
cream-colored sail emerges from the center as the couple disappear from our
A light wind captures the sail and it bilows\'romanti-cal-ly\n
view.

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*The Watermelon Cargo, Act I*
as i-ma-ges of A-me-ri-can In-di-an his-to-ry e-merge a-
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

round the inner perimeter of the boat with giant carved oars and be-
Fl. 98
gin to row rhythmically

Eng. Hn.

Mar.

Vib.

Cym.

Dr.

RVW

Vln. I

Vln. II

Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The wind becomes more intense as the sail is captured...
and rises to the sky. Lights fade as it falls back to the ground.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

and the rest of the scene dissolves away.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

Rip Van Winkle is asleep
under a gauzy white canopy

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

Fl.

Eng. Hn.

Mar.

Dr.

SA

like a weeping willow tree.

TB

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The sound of a single breath

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

The sound of water lapsing repeatedly.
on a riverside.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

weeping willow canopy. They are wearing yellow rain-coats
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
Do you re-mem-ber the ri-

pictures a-gain.

Do you re-mem-ber the ri-ver?
Do you re-mem-ber it be-fore?
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
dreams as a vital link to our biological and spiritual
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
air line we will die. The way to kill a
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
dreams, the way the whites are taking care of the
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The couple in their raincoats drop their umbrellas and re-
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

main frozen. The sound of a city street corner... downtown.
In-dian stand fac-ing each o-ther

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
Won't you sing me a song?

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
moves from there.

I am hiding in shame.

In the story of

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
Fl.

Cym.

Dr.

Woman

SA

TB

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The one story is The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

everything changes around him.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
What we're carrying is love.

In the closing river... myth, love, and truth.
Inside the watermelon they journey... together up the moments.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

We paint the watermelon still life.

In progress.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

There are no magic slippers.

Coming back to it...
Slicing a watermelon with a knife.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I

Water lap-ping on the shore of a ri-ver.

Image two:
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
The Watermelon Cargo, Act I
Act II: Dreaming of the Iroquois Nation

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
A large rectangular box floating on a stage, painted floor to ceiling in...

\textit{The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II}
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
There are latitude and longitude lines as well as feeduracy to the present.

*The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II*
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
would-be lovers cutting a watermelon together.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
end with eyes looking toward the future.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
Rip Van Winkle will always wander off into the

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
mout-tains. He will al-ways drink the ma-gic wine. He will al-ways dis-ap-pear in-to a mout-tains. He will al-ways drink the ma-gic wine. He will al-ways dis-ap-pear in-to a
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
And they are in love.

dream.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
A dream in very pure love in a particular storyline.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
In a particularly limited

vol-ving pain- ters and wa-ter-me-lons.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
An inability to motion and a left-hand distance.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
Rip Van Winkle will always wander off into the mountains. He will always drink the

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

Story of the would-be love and the pure love.

Story of the would-be love and the pure love.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
And they are back together in a dream.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
And a machine named Spuyt and Dyu-vil.

"Spit of the Devil."

The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

The first thing I hear is the

The lights go dark.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

sound of water flowing.
A moment of would-be lovers married in the...
end with eyes looking past the future.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

Rip Van Winkle will always wander off into the
mounds. He will always drink the magic wine. He will always disappear into a mountain.
dream. A moment again in the story of the would-be love and the
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
And they are in love, and they are married.

dream.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
paralysis and a movie dealing with similar issues.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Rip Van Winkle bowling match.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The sailboat train is like a time machine.

nine-pin thunder
Not at all like a fixed object.

chine that moves.

*The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II*
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

for a song and a marriage ceremony with
watermelons and it is all a dream, and it is all a
dream in a thunderous bowling game with Rip Van Winkle
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

Fil-mi-cal-ly fad-ing in and out on a ca-noe... Hudson
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
Rip Van Winkle once again fading and blending in a soft lens.

A canoe and the discovery of the new world and the
selling of the city for a song.

Spuyt and Dyu-vil.

Spit of the Devil.
RedHook rituals.

An Indian

A marriage ceremony.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
dance into a wedding into a birthday.

Rip Van Winkle

The Watermelon Cargo, Act II
is the entrance into the dream and the exit from it.

The lost time
_ in the hidden amphitheater with the elves or Hendrik Hudson or who
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

Text:
ever it is and the thundercrashes and the game of nine pin con-

Musical notation:

Fl.

Cym.

Dr.

SA

TB

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
That is the lovers and their story in an
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II

The first thing I hear is the empty theater.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act. II
Act III: The Guy with the Camera

\[ \text{with a gently romantic swing} \]

\[ \text{\( \dot{f} = 136 \)} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{Violin I} & & & & \\
\text{Violin II} & & & & \\
\text{Viola} & & & & \\
\text{Violoncello} & & & & \\
\text{Electric Bass} & & & & \\
\end{align*}

\[ p \]

\[ p \]

\[ \text{\( \dot{f} = 136 \)} \]
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III

An art school in a box in the late afternoon.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III

Lazy sunshine pouring through an old style

The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
un-til the two of them are a lone.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The camera is an artificial presence.
We see details through the eye of the camera and then we disintegrate.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
Why is the guy with the cam’ra here?

Recording.

*The Watermelon Cargo, Act III*
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
In the studio, the sound of footsteps.
See-ing your-self so many years later.
Krapp... a last tape.

Hear-ing your - self

The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III

.wav...was yes-ter-day.

What,
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
\begin{quote}
171

\textit{The Watermelon Cargo, Act III}
\end{quote}
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III

Fl.

Woman

movie snapshot.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

E. Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
The Watermelon Cargo, Act III
Act IV: In the Watermelon Cargo

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
In the gauzy white canopy.
In a bed reading the newspaper. Studio night.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

- Wak-ing with-out a des-ti-na-tion.
I'm waking up. I'm waking up.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

Rip Van Winkle under the white weeping willow canopy sail.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Slow and melancholy

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
I want to go back to the watermelon cargo.
where at least I love.

We start again like be-

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
I choose life.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
de-co-ra-ting the sky above us.

An i-ma-gi-na-ry sum-mer scene.

de-co-ra-ting the sky above us.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

We slept warm in each
It's impossible not to talk about it.

other's arms.

other's arms.

It's im-

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
On a hillside, possible not to talk about it.
a photograph of a prince painting an idyllic landscape.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
free in the world.  Breath-ing in na-ture.

A fai-ry tale.
Faster, more comfortable

\[ J = 72 \]

I try to draw a picture of the love I want in my

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
In a corner I watch the sun set through an

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

open-window. I fill in a section of the city paper cross word with all the
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

I speak the words to myself in silence.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
trying to focus on a more refined image of

love A blob of paint on the floor.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
spread it with my fingers... with my hands.

I roll a

round in it. I want to paint a watermelon for you.

Like

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Kahlo and Rivera, I want to share something so primal and basic about love.
Slightly slower, military

Fl.

Mar.

Dr.

M.

Don Qui-xo-te's voice propels me on explaining that after

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

E. Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
all was said and done and he was proved wrong
he just re-created his world
and the monster he was battling were just pre-
The giants had tending to be windmills.
(spoken) We have this unerring ability to not see things for what they are.

(spoken) We build up imaginary worlds to avoid sight and expectations.

(spoken) Whole structures with ends that want nothing.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Brooding, moderate tempo

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

carved into the shape of a windmill.

The life contained inside
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Duet: "and this is the end..."

\[ \text{Significantly faster} \]

A man and a woman beginning their

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Fl.

Eng. Hn.

Cym.

Dr.

RVW

Ph.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

E. Bass

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

know that this is the end...

and they know that this is the
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

couple— who have been together forever... and they're a
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
and they know that this is the end...

and they know... and they know...
their paintings happen simultaneously...

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
and their paintings happen simultaneously.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
know... like matching monologues...

and they know... like matching monologues...
They know that this is the end.

They know that this is the end.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
They know that this is the end.

They know that this is the end.

*The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV*
They know that this is the end.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

The watermelon like a brain
or a heart or a head or a body.

A magic fish beached

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The night and set free. We are blessed now.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
be - fore the wed-ding all spread out at the great ban-quet

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

The to last the rest of their lives together.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

Watermelon Cargo is something home...

something about a
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

truthful thing moving in and out with documents of filmed
In the watermelon

We lie under weeping willows and search for poetry.
Car-go we car-ry or are car-ried to a des-ti-na-tion

The

We grasp at po-e-try and truth.
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
We lie underweeping with documents of filmic truth.

fall asleep againstourselves...
wil-lows and search for po-e-try. We

We lapse in and out of con-scious life

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
grasp at poetry and truth.

We are drug-induced and naturally a
we car-ry or are car-ried to a des-ti-na-tion by the wind

We lie un-derweep-ing willows and search for po-e-try.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV

Car-go we wake up and fall as-leep a-gainst our-
In the watermelon

We grasp at poetry

is something home...

some-thing-a-bout a truth-ful thing

moving

selves...

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
Car-go we car-ry or are car-ried to a des-ti-na-tion
We grasp at po-e-try and truth.
We lapse in and
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
In the Watermelon Cargo we wake up and fall asleep against ourselves...

No one is pure.

No one is pure.

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
No one is pure.

one is pure.
To wander off into the mountain...
To drink the magic wine...

to the mountains...

To drink the magic wine...

The Watermelon Cargo, Act IV
To disappear into a dream.
in to a dream.

in to a dream.

in to a dream.

in to a dream.

in to a dream.