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**Israeli Multi-Instrumentalist Rafi Malkiel Releases 2nd Album,
Water on Tzadik June 29, 2010
Featuring Creative Uses of Water in the Recording Process**

**Album Features An All-Star Cast
Including Clarinetist Anat Cohen, Trumpeter Avishai Cohen, Flautist Itai Kriss
And Many More Israeli and Latin Musicians in New York**

Tzadik is very proud to announce the release of *Water*, the second album under the leadership of composer and multi-instrumentalist **Rafi Malkiel**. On this ambitious and expansive suite of twelve compositions, Malkiel leads a uniquely constructed ensemble, exploring his multicultural roots while expanding the diverse sound world from his award-winning debut, *My Island*. Weaving intricately orchestrated tapestries of multiregstral brass and reeds, he creates a lush landscape from a musical language as malleable as the water that gives the collection its title.

Malkiel's fascination with water is longstanding. "I've always loved water," he explains. "It is at the center of many of my favorite activities, and I've felt that it has healing properties. I wanted to represent its many states and characteristics in my music." To achieve this, Malkiel felt that water should be an integral part of the listener's experience. "I decided to include as many different water sounds as I could throughout the disc, so that it actually becomes part of the ensemble." To this end, he invented the **Aguaphonium**, a hose with a trumpet or trombone mouthpiece that is played submerged in water; it can best be heard on "Meet My Sweet Little Sea Monsters." Two of the percussionists also play what might be called water drums, adding a layer of rhythmic and timbral intrigue to Malkiel's tasteful arrangements.

The Jerusalem-born trombonist and euphonium player's exposure to all manner of music began early. "My father is a musician, and so are my two sisters," he explains. "Both of my parents are from Morocco. Their musical heritage combines Spanish and Jewish elements in a way that has had a deep influence on my compositions." Jazz, European and American classical music also contributed greatly to Malkiel's emerging musicality, so that when he was invited to go on tour with veteran trombonist Ray Anderson's big band in 1996, he knew it was an extraordinary opportunity. "His playing was a huge influence on me; I had heard him in Israel, and I couldn't believe that I was being invited to tour with him." The invitation also signaled the beginning of the next phase of his education. "Instead of flying back to Tel-Aviv after the tour, they flew me to New York. I thought I'd just take a year or two and study, but it's been fourteen years, and I've never really left."

Malkiel earned a B.A. in Fine Arts from the New School, where he studied with Anderson and Slide Hampton, to name only two of his eminent teachers. In 2003, he formed the Rafi Malkiel Ensemble, soon after receiving a Masters degree from the Manhattan School of Music. His diverse activity increased, and he became known as a versatile improviser at ease with Salsa, Jazz and Colombian music. He is especially grateful for the recent experience of performing with Salsa legend and fellow trombonist Willie Colon. He also singles out his work with bass master Reggie Workman and Colombian singer Toto La Momposina as formative experiences.

Nothing, though, could have prepared Malkiel for the convergence of events in 2008 that led to *Water*'s composition and production. He received a New Works grant from Chamber Music America that enabled him to devote more time to composition. "I had composed a few pieces, but I really wanted to dig in and see what I could do." Around the same time, he received additional support for the venture from an altogether unexpected source. "I got a phone call from John Zorn—it was on my birthday—and he mentioned that he really enjoyed my debut album and wanted me to make a disc for Tzadik," says Malkiel. It was to be part of the label's Radical Jewish Culture series, which inspired Malkiel to undertake a deep study of his heritage. "Of course Jewish culture was a part of it," he explains, "But I worked hard to incorporate many of my influences."

Malkiel's vast musical experience is evident in each track, from the richly impressionist chromaticism of "Waves," to the driving reggae and cumbia rhythms of "Eden Rain." Often, stylistic allusion is not so overt, as many of the vignettes engage several cultures at once. Fortunately, Malkiel's ensemble contains musicians of the highest order to help him fulfill his multifarious vision, including long-time collaborator **Avishai Cohen** on trumpet, flutist **Itai Kriss**, bassoonist **Gili Sharett** and clarinetist **Anat Cohen**, along with a powerhouse rhythm section and a host of first-rate percussionists. "They're great soloists and excellent ensemble players," says Malkiel. "Many are band leaders themselves, and they play my scores with ease and precision."

Beyond summing up Malkiel's musical past, *Water* reflects the present. His infant daughter provides vocals on "Mai Eden," which is named for her. The album also incorporates complex production techniques entirely without pretense. "Pablo Mayor, my co-producer, was extraordinary in helping me get exactly the sound I wanted. The mixing engineer, Brian Montgomery, was also amazing; he helped me blend water with the ensemble at just the right volume and in the right part of the sound stage." All of these musical and timbral components coalesce to form a unified collection of pieces that confirms Rafi Malkiel as a naturally gifted composer.

RELEASE DATE: June 29, 2010

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