

## Artist's statement: *Étoile*

As a composer, I have always felt most comfortable when I start by knowing what I want to say. But coming into the comps process, I had no idea what that was.

It was terrifying, beginning arguably the biggest project of my Carleton career, without knowing where it was going. I knew how I felt about *The Little Prince* and Spivak's *Calculus*. I knew I wanted to write for the voice as an incredibly human entity, but also as an instrument, capable of more than words and lyrics. Aside from that, I didn't know much about what I wanted to accomplish with my comps project.

*Étoile* came about almost by accident. That isn't to say that I wasn't trying to write music (I was) or that I didn't care how the piece deals with loneliness (I did). But as I started exploring the relationship between standard musical syntax - formal meter and musical time, counterpoint, and harmonies that move from left to right - and everything outside of it - speech, music outside of time, music without pitches - the concept of loneliness just unfolded in the piece. It felt surreal, as if, instead of me writing the piece, it was writing me - pushing me in directions I couldn't think of on my own, telling me what it wanted to become.

The process was far from easy. Too often I found myself awake too late or too early (occasionally at an hour that could be either), standing at a white board with a pen in one hand and an eraser in the other, not sure which I would need next. Near the end of the term (impeccable timing, I know), my desire for perfection grew into a healthy bout of writer's block. Eventually, I got through this with colored pencils and many, many pieces of paper, scribbling furiously at abstract representations of the sounds in my head. When I ran out of sounds to represent, I asked myself, what color comes next? What shape? Music became color, color became music, and *Étoile* finally, FINALLY came to completion.

I didn't know what would happen this term, but I could never have dreamt it would be *Étoile*. Writing it pushed me past my limits, forced me to write with my whole being, and made me fall in love with music all over again. I've wrestled with it, argued with it, and come to know it as its own living, breathing entity. It is utterly different from anything I've written before, and I am humbled that I was allowed to discover it.

-- Skyelar Ginsberg, composer