

Étoile

By Skyelar Ginsberg

Les gens ont des étoiles qui ne sont pas les mêmes – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

For Mom and Dad
You taught me to marvel at the stars

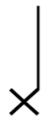
- I. Prelude
- II. Traveler
- III. Hundreds

duration 12-13 minutes

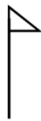
Étoile is about gazing at the stars and wondering what they mean. It's about reaching out in the dark to search for one another, about kindred spirits, about orbits that draw us together and apart. It exists in a place of both profound loneliness and incredible togetherness, and it pushes the boundaries between strict form and absolute chaos, between melody and speech. It is sung by an ensemble of six, constantly searching for one another, sometimes aligning, sometimes falling out of orbit.

The text in this piece is taken from an unlikely pair of sources: *The Little Prince*, written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and translated by Katherine Woods, and *Calculus*, a textbook by Michael Spivak. While the two books concern wildly different subjects and are intended for vastly different audiences, both are written with whimsy, poeticism, and a genuine love of the subjects they concern.

Concerning notation



Speech. Typically, a single cross note head will indicate where to start speaking a line of text in a natural, freeform way. Occasionally, speech rhythms are written out syllable by syllable.



A voiced sigh on an ah vowel, from mid-high in the singer's range to mid-low in the singer's range.



Notes without stems signify flexible rhythm, up to singer interpretation and improvisation. They are sometimes accompanied by text and are sometimes sung on a vowel.

A ♩ = 105
playful

I // Prelude

Soprano

Mezzo-soprano

Alto

Tenor

Baritone

Bass

oh oh oh oh-ah

oh oh oh oh-ah

oh oh oh oh-ah sim.

oh oh oh oh-ah

oh oh oh oh-ah

oh oh oh oh-ah

B

9

S.

Mzs.

A.

T.

Bar.

B.

oh oh oh

oh oh oh

oh oh oh oh-ah sim.

oh oh oh oh-ah oh-ah oh-ah-oh-ah sim.

oh-ah oh-ah-oh-ah

17

S. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

Mzs. 3 3 mat-ters of cons-e-quence oh oh oh oh-ah sim. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

A. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

T. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

Bar. 3 3 mat-ters of con - se quence oh-ah oh-ah-oh-ah sim. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

B. *f* 3 3 mat-ters of con-se quence

The slides in the mezzo, bari, and bass don't need to start on a specific pitch, but should arrive at the correct pitch at the correct time.

25 **C**

S. ooh

Mzs. oh

A. oh oh oh oh-ah sim.

T. oh-ah oh-ah-oh-ah sim.

Bar. oh

B. oh

31

D

mp

S. ah ooh

Mzs. oh - ah Three and two make five. oh oh oh oh - ah

A. ah oh oh oh oh - ah sim. Twelve and three make fifteen.

T. ah oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah sim.

Bar. oh - ah oh Five and seven make twelve.

B. oh - ah oh

37

S. ah ooh

Mzs. Good morning. oh - ah oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah

A. ah oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah sim.

T. ah oh oh oh oh - ah sim.

Bar. ah oh - ah oh oh oh oh - ah

B. ah ooh

After measure 44, speak the line of text repeatedly, but break it up with staccato articulations of the note in measure 45. The rules of this game are:
 - begin your articulations on an ee vowel, then add ah vowels as time goes on, until you are singing mostly ah vowels
 - increase the singing to speaking ratio until you are mostly singing, with occasional words
 - gentle crescendo
 - this should take about 45 seconds, and measure 46 should be cued

42

S. *f* ah

Mzs. *f* ah

A. *f* ah
 oh oh oh oh - ah sim. //: Then that makes five hundred and one million, six hundred twenty-two thousand, seven hundred-thirty-one. ://

T. *f* ah
 oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah sim. //: Then that makes five hundred and one million, six hundred twenty-two thousand, seven hundred-thirty-one. ://

Bar. *f* ah
 Fifteen and seven make twenty-two. //: Then that makes five hundred and one million, six hundred twenty-two thousand, seven hundred-thirty-one. ://

B. *f* ah
 Twenty-six and five make thirty-one. //: Then that makes five hundred and one million, six hundred twenty-two thousand, seven hundred-thirty-one. ://

47

S. *mp* *mf* Slide on beat 2
 oh - - - ah

Mzs. *mp* *mf*
 Only purveyors of mathematical austerity would insist too strongly on such precision. oh - - - ah

A. *mp* *mf*
 oh oh oh oh - ah oh - - - ah

T. *mp* *mf*
 oh - ah - oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah oh - - - ah

Bar. *mp* *mf*
 Moreover, one is not equal to zero. oh - - - ah

B. *mp* *mf*
 oh - - - ah

52 **F** *freely, pulsing*

S. _____

Mzs. _____

A. _____

T. *p* _____ *mp* *Not merely as a prelude but as the first real encounter* _____ *mf* _____
 ee ah ee ah

Bar. _____

B. *p* _____ *mp* _____ *mf* _____
 ee ah ee ah The evolution of one idea

58 *mf* *rit.* *a tempo*

S. *mf* *rit.* _____ *a tempo* _____
 ooh

Mzs. _____ *mf* _____ *a tempo* _____
 ooh

A. _____ *mf* _____ *mp* _____
 ooh oh oh oh - ah

T. _____ *mf* _____ *mp* _____
 ooh oh - ah oh - ah - oh - ah

Bar. _____ *mf* _____ *a tempo* _____
 ooh

B. _____ *mf* _____ *a tempo* _____
 ooh

This movement should begin with the ensemble inhaling together. Then measure 1 should begin as all at once, in a jumble.

II // Traveler

After about twenty seconds of speech, begin peppering in voiced sighs on an ah vowel (represented as triangle half notes), from your mid-high range to your mid-low range. These sighs should last one and a half to two beats. Over the course of about 30 seconds, the ensemble should fully transition from speech to sighs.

♩ = 55

Once the entire ensemble is sighing randomly, have an ensemble member or conductor cue measure 3 (metric sighs).

G

f harsh, grating

Soprano //: It is a little lonely in the desert ://

Mezzo-soprano //: Now to the left, now to the right ://

Alto //: I sort out travelers in bundles of a thousand ://

Tenor //: They are pursuing nothing at all ://

Baritone //: It is a little lonely among men ://

Bass //: The method by which the formula was discovered remains a mystery ://

mf vast

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

In this movement, this falling motive currently in the top three voices is repeated over and over. Each time, it should have a small crescendo and decrescendo at its beginning and end. This is notated only for its first iteration in each voice, but continue to sing it with inflection.

H

slightly slower, ♩ = 52

mp

mf

S. ah all ah

Mzs. ah all ah

A. ah noth - ing at all ah

T. all noth - ing at

Bar. all noth - ing at

B. all noth - ing at

16

I
a tempo, ♩ = 60

S. all it is such a se - cret place, the land of tears ooh

Mzs. all ooh the land of tears ooh

A. all ooh the land of tears ooh

T. all ooh the land of tears ooh

Bar. all ooh the land of tears ooh

B. all ooh the land of tears ooh

This section does not need to be performed exactly as written; as soon as you reach measure 28, the ensemble can speed up at separate paces, breaking apart as it does so.

23

slightly slower, ♩ = 52

accel.

S. noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all

Mzs. noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all

A. noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth -

T. noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all

Bar. noth - ing at all ooh noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at

B. noth - ing at all noth - ing at all noth - ing at all

Measure 34 should be cued, around 10-15 seconds after measure 28.

At some point during this section, each voice is given a string of notes and corresponding text. You should come in when your line appears, then repeat until the end of measure 45. The lines should be sung out of time, and can vary rhythmically with each occurrence.

J

$\text{♩} = 52$

$\text{♩} = 60$ thoughtful, wandering

S. *f* noth - ing at all *mf* you are of no use to the stars

Mzs. *f* noth - ing at all *mf* a sub - tle point, ne - glect - ed *mf*

A. *f* noth - ing at all a sec - ret place

T. *f* noth - ing at all *mp* ah

Bar. *f* noth - ing at all *mp* ah

B. *f* noth - ing at all *mp* ah

Beat four of measure 45 should be cued, and should come about 15 seconds after all voices are singing their individual lines.

K

42

S.

Mzs.

A.

T. *mf* you are of no use to the stars *p* ooh

Bar. *mf* the land of tears *p* ooh

B. *mf* tell an - y se - crets *p* ooh

49

S. *mf* *mf* *f* *mp*

Mzs. *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

A. *mf* *mf* *f* *mp*

T. *mf* *f* *mp*

Bar. *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

B. *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

In measure 63, you should slide from the end of your sigh to your note. Slide on beat 3

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

no - thing at all ah ah - ee

68 **L**

Before measure 69, the entire ensemble should inhale together. Each line should come in just before the end of the previous line.

S. *desolate*

Mzs. It is a little lonely in the desert

A. Now to the left, now to the right

T. I sort out travelers in bundles of a thousand

Bar. It is a little lonely among men

B. They are pursuing nothing at all

The method by which the formula was discovered remains a mystery

III // Hundreds

M ♩ = 60 *grand, expansive*
mf

Soprano
 oh we write of e - ter - nal things we write of e - ter - nal things

Mezzo-soprano
mf
 oh we write of e - ter - nal things

Alto
mf
 oh we write of e - ter - nal things

Tenor
mf
 oh

Baritone
mf
 oh

Bass
mf
 oh

8

S.
 we write of e - ter - nal things ah ah

Mzs.
 oh we write of e - ter - nal we write of e - ter - nal ah

A.
 oh we write of e - ter - nal we write of e - ter - nal we write of e - ter - nal ah

T.
 oh oh write of write of write of write of write of write of write of write of ah

Bar.
 e - ter - nal e - ter - nal ah

B.
 we write of we write of we write of ah

N

15 $\text{♩} = 80$

S. *mp* Mars wak - en *f* wak-en pour out fresh wa-ter

Mzs. In addition to the great planets Venus *mp* wak-en *f* pour out fresh wa-ter

A. *mp* wak - en *f* So small that one has a hard time seeing them pour out fresh wa-ter

T. *mp* wak - en Earth *f* There are also hundreds of others wak-en pour out fresh wa-ter

Bar. *mp* wak - en wak - en wak-en *f* pour out fresh wa-ter

B. *mp* wak - en Jupiter *f* wak-en pour out fresh wa-ter

O

During this section, breathe when needed. The lines should be all legato.

26

S. *p* hushed ooh

Mzs. *p* ooh

A. *p* ooh

T. *p* ooh

Bar. *p* ooh

B. *p* ooh

In this speaking section, be careful to stay in time with your singing. When you have a line, stop singing to speak your line naturally; then jump back into the repeating four-measure loop.

34

S. To travelers

Mzs. No more than lights in the sky

A. To travelers

T. To some

B. For others

The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen

The stars are guides

For my businessman, they were wealth

they are problems (should fine up with alto)

There are also hundreds of others

P

44 ♩ = 60

growing stronger

S. we do not yet un-der-stand mat-ters of con-se-quence

Mzs. we do not yet un-der-stand mat-ters of con-se-quence

A. we do not yet un-der-stand mat-ters of con-se-quence

T. *mp* we do not yet un-der-stand mat-ters of con-se-quence

Bar. mat-ters of con-se-quence

B. mat-ters of con-se-quence

Enter as written, then repeat your mini-melody outside of time, improvising rhythm. Once all voices are singing (i.e. measure 60), continue in this manner for about 20 seconds, gently quieting to *mp*.

The soprano line in measure 61 should interrupt the musical chatter in the other five voices, and should be cued. All voices but the soprano, cut out at the beginning of measure 62.

54 **Q** *regal*

S. ah wak - en!

Mzs. ah wak - en

A. ah wak - en

T. ah wak - en

Bar. ah wak - en

B. ah wak - en

64 **R** *poco rit.* *mf* *a tempo* *mp* *hopeful*

S. wak - en! wak - en! oh we write of, we write of

Mzs. wak - en wak - en! oh we write of, we write of

A. wak - en wak - en! oh

T. wak - en wak - en! oh

Bar. wak - en wak - en! we write of e - ter - nal things oh

B. wak - en wak - en! oh

73

S. oh we write of, we write of we write of e - ter - nal things

Mzs. oh we write of, we write

A. we write of e - ter - nal

T. we write of e - ter - nal things oh oh write of

Bar. we write of e - ter - nal things oh oh

B. we write of e - ter - nal things oh we write of

78

S. *mf* ah *mp* Mezzo sings outside of time un - til now *molto rit.*

Mzs. *mf* ah *mp* a sub - tle point, neg - lec - ted un - til now

A. *mf* ah *mp* un - til now

T. *mf* ah *mp* un - til now

Bar. *mf* ah *mp* un - til now

B. *mf* ah *mp* un - til now

The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen