

Of All the Stars

for Choir (SATB), ~5'

Spencer Klaw Kennedy, 2025

PROGRAM NOTES

“There is always more surface to a shattered object than a whole object.”

–Djuna Barnes

The poetry of Sappho now exists primarily in fragments—snippets of text, either quoted by others or scrawled on disintegrating slivers of parchment. As such, we have mostly little scraps of sentences: “rose-fingered dawn,” “broken with longing,” “dawn’s golden sandals.” I feel sad when I think about how much of her work was lost, and then feel privileged about feeling sad. I can read texts written two and a half millennia before my birth. How is the fact that anything at all survives not enough for me?

There is never enough in the world. I may be happy with what I have, but I will never be satisfied with it. However, I cannot change the limits of what exists. Lyric poetry (such as Sappho’s) is meant to be sung, so I will sing the fragments, sing around the tritone and the Lydian. That is all I can think to do with what is left.

I will walk into desire

[96]

TEXT, from the LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY, translated by myself:

[Fragment 38]

Ὅπταις ἄμμε
/hoptais hā me/
you burn me

[Fragment 104B]

ἀστέρων πάντων ὁ κάλλιστος
/ˈaːsteːrɔːn pāntɔːn ho kaːˈlistos/
of all the stars most beautiful

Of All the Stars

Text by Sappho
Music by Spencer Klaw Kennedy

$\text{♩} = 48$, rubato, adoringly

Soprano
solo *p*
hop - ta - ees — ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

Alto
solo *p*
a - ster - awn pan - tawn

Tenor
8

Bass
8

Piano (for rehearsal only)

6

S.
mf ho kal - lis - tos *mp* ham - meh *tutti p* hop - ta - ees — ham - meh —

A.
mf ho kal - lis - tos *mp* ham - meh *tutti p* hop - ta - ees — ham - meh —

T.
8
p hop - ta - ees — ham - meh —

B.
p hop - ta - ees — ham - meh

Pno.

11

S. *mp* *mf*
ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

A. *mp* *mf*
ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

T. *mp*
8 ham - meh a - ster - awn pan

B. *mp*
ham - meh a - ster - awn pan

Pno.

14

S. *mp* *mf* *p*
ho kal - list - os hop - ta - ees ham - meh

A. *mp* *mf* *p*
ho kal - list - os hop - ta - ees ham - meh

T. *mf* *p*
8 ho kal - list - os hop - ta - ees ham - meh

B. *mf* *p*
ho kal - list - os hop - ta - ees ham - meh

Pno.

18

S. *pp* *p* *mf* *f*
 you burn me you burn me of all the stars most beau - ti - ful

A. *pp* *mf*
 hop - ta - ees ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

T. *pp* *mf*
 hop - ta - ees ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

B. *pp* *mf*
 hop - ta - ees ham - meh a - ster - awn pan - tawn

Pno.

24

S. *p* *mf*
 ham - meh ham - meh you burn me

A. *p* *mf*
 ham - meh ham - meh burn me

T. *p* *mf*
 ham - meh ham - meh burn me of

B. *p* *mf*
 ham - meh ham - meh you burn me of

Pno.

a few sopranos on the G,
sopranos stagger breathe

30

S. *f* all the stars most beau - ti - ful burn *p*

A. *f* all the stars most beau - ti - ful *mp* you are beau - ti - ful the

T. *f* all the stars most beau - ti - ful *mp* of all the stars most beau - ti - ful *mf*

B. *f* all the stars most beau - ti - ful *p* of all the stars most beau - ti -

Pno.

35 *tutti*

S. *f* you burn me you burn *ff*

A. *mf* stars you burn me you burn *ff*

T. *f* stars you burn me you burn *ff*

B. *f* - ful of all the stars you burn *ff*

Pno.

38

S. *mp* *pp*
me you burn burn burn burn

A. *fff* *mp* *pp*
me you burn burn burn burn

T. *fff* *mp* *pp*
me you burn burn burn burn

B. *fff* *mp* *pp*
you burn burn burn burn

Pno.

43

S. *p*
ham - meh

A. *tutti p* *p*
ham - meh ham - meh kal - list - os ham - meh

T. *p*
ham - meh

B. *p* *p*
ham - meh ham - meh kal - list - os ham - meh

Pno.

50

S.  ham - meh beau - ti - ful

A.  ham - meh beau - ti - ful

T.  ham - meh beau - ti - ful

B.  ham - meh beau - ti - ful

Pno. 

Detailed description: This page contains a musical score for a four-part vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. The lyrics are 'ham - meh beau - ti - ful'. The Soprano part starts on a half note 'ham' (G4), followed by a half rest, then a half note 'beau' (B4), a half note 'ti' (A4), and a half note 'ful' (G4). The Alto part starts on a half note 'ham' (F#4), followed by a half rest, then a half note 'beau' (E4), a half note 'ti' (D#4), and a half note 'ful' (C#4). The Tenor part starts on a half note 'ham' (E3), followed by a half rest, then a half note 'beau' (D3), a half note 'ti' (C3), and a half note 'ful' (B2). The Bass part starts on a half note 'ham' (C2), followed by a half rest, then a half note 'beau' (B1), a half note 'ti' (A1), and a half note 'ful' (G1). The piano accompaniment consists of chords: a D4-F#4 chord in the first measure, a half rest in the second measure, and a D4-F#4 chord in the third measure, followed by a half rest in the fourth measure.