

# Betelgeuse

*for SATB, piano, violin, cello*

Autumn Stephens

## **Text by Autumn Stephens:**

Betelgeuse rise!  
Orion, bear witness for a night.  
Orion, lend your mercy for a fading light.

Orionis, Orionis,  
Witness it for all its holy light!  
Breathe and sleep tonight.

Gaze upon her final light.  
See the glorious dimming sight.  
Witness! Bear witness tonight!

Orion, ever careless.  
Could you hear how she cried?  
Let it ring in your mind!  
Please, see how she tried.

Orion, do you grieve?  
Please, Orion, grieve her last light.

## **Inspiration for "Betelgeuse":**

This piece is about a real star and its inescapable death. A member of the Orion (or Orionis) constellation, Betelgeuse will likely be the next star in our night sky to go supernova. This explosion will produce a light nearly as bright as the Moon, and will remain that way for several weeks. Its death will be sudden, brilliant, and unexpected. Despite how horrifying this sight may be, the constellation of Orion will rise and set just the same.

## **Mental Imagery for Performance:**

Although I encourage performers to adopt their own interpretation of the piece, I will outline the imagery/tone envisioned for each section.

Up until mm. 13, the Orion constellation is rising over the eastern horizon. Without modern technology, an observer would have no idea whether the star had died since the previous night. So the first four measures represent the anxious anticipation of its arrival. From mm. 13-20, the observer is relieved to see that another day has passed without the star's death. However, going into the next section, Betelgeuse finally explodes. From mm. 23-39, the observer feels hatred directed toward Orion for being otherwise unaffected by Betelgeuse's death. The penultimate section is the observer's final, desperate attempt to get a reaction out of the constellation. We end on a somber note, finally recognizing that Orion cannot grieve.

# Betelgeuse

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$\text{♩} = 55$  **A**  $\text{♩} = 70$

*pp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

S Be - tel - geuse rise! O - ri - on Bear wit-ness for a night.

A Be - tel - geuse rise! Oh

T Be - tel - geuse rise! O - ri - on Bear wit-ness for a night.

B Be - tel - geuse rise! Oh

Piano *pp* *mp*

Reduction *pp* *mf*

9 **B**  $\text{♩} = 80$

*p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Oh O-ri-o-nis O-ri-o-nis Wit-ness it for all its ho-ly light!

*mp* *p* *mp*

O-ri-on lend your mer-cy for a fad-ing light. Oh O-ri-o-nis O-ri-o-nis all light!

*p* *mp*

Oh O-ri-o-nis O-ri-o-nis Wit-ness it for all its ho-ly light!

*mp* *p* *mp*

O-ri-on lend your mer-cy for a fad-ing light. Oh O-ri-o-nis O-ri-o-nis all light!

*mp*

17 *mf* *rit.* *p*  $\text{♩} = 70$

Breathe and sleep to - night. To - night.

Breathe and sleep to - night. To - night.

Breathe and sleep to - night. To - night.

Breathe and sleep to - night. To - night.

*mf* *p*

*mf* *p*

23 **C**  $\text{♩} = 80$  *mf* *mp* *mf*

Gazeu-pon her fi - nal light! See the glo - rious dim - ming sight. Wit-ness! Bear wit-ness to -

*mf* *mf* *mp*

Gazeu-pon her fi - nal light! See the glo - rious glo - rious sight.

*mf* *mp* *mf*

Gazeu-pon her fi - nal light! See the glo - rious dim - ming sight. Wit-ness! Bear wit-ness to -

*mf* *mf* *mp*

Gazeu-pon her fi - nal light! See the glo - rious glo - rious sight.

*mp*

28 *mp* *mf* *f* **D**

-night! Wit-ness! Bear wit-ness to - night! Oh, could you hear how she

Wit - ness! Bear wit - ness to - night! Wit - ness! Bear wit - ness to - Could you hear how she

*mp* *mf* *mf* *f*

-night! Wit-ness! Bear wit-ness to - night! O-ri-on O-ri-on O-ri-on e-ver care-less

Wit - ness! Bear wit - ness to - night! Wit - ness! Bear wit - ness to - O-ri-on O-ri-on O-ri-on e-ver care-less

33 *f* *mp* *mp* *mp*

cried? Let it ring in your mind! Please see how she tried. O - ri -

cried? Let it ring! O - ri - on! Bear wit - ness! O - ri - on!

O - ri - on O - ri - on O - ri - on e - ver care - less O - ri - on O - ri - on O - ri - on e - ver care - less O - ri - on O - ri - on

O - ri - on O - ri - on O - ri - on e - ver care - less O - ri - on O - ri - on O - ri - on e - ver care - less O - ri - on O - ri - on

38 **rit.** **mf** **f** **mp** **p** **E** ♩ = 65

-on, do you grieve? Grieve! Grieve Please, O - ri - on,

Oh do you grieve? Grieve! Grieve Please, O - ri - on,

O - ri - on do you e-ver grieve? Grieve! Grieve Please, O - ri - on,

O - ri - on do you e-ver grieve? Grieve! Grieve Please, O - ri - on,

46 **mf** **f** **rall.** **mf** **pp** **F**

grieve her last light. Bear wit-ness Bear wit-ness, hmm

grieve her last light. Ah hmmm

grieve her last light. Bear wit-ness Bear wit-ness, hmm

grieve her last light. Ah hmmm