GEORGIA STITT

My Lifelong Love

with

Michael Arden • Kate Baldwin
Shoshana Bean • Heidi Bickenstaff
Susan Egan • Jesse Tyler Ferguson
Christopher Jackson • Brian d'Arcy James
Michael McElroy • Jessica Molaskey
Laura Osnes • John Pizzarelli
and Anika Noni Rose
1. Not Yet

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY GEORGIA STITT

(from the Musical Mosaic)

Cheri Steinkeller and I wrote a one-woman, one act musical called Mosaic, and we were lucky enough to have Heidi Blickenstaff perform it. Heidi’s character was Ruth, and in the earliest draft of the script, Cheri wrote, “Ruth is a writer—a cabaret-singer-songwriter who back in the late 90s penned a hit song the kids still sing in auditions today.” No pressure. This is Ruth’s song.

You wanna know my middle name? Not yet.
You wanna set my heart aflame? Not yet.
I’ll surrender everything in time.
You’ll be my reason and my rhyme.
You’ll know my pride; You’ll know my shame.
Some girls reveal what’s down below.
You wanna know my middle name? Not yet.
You wanna set my heart aflame? Not yet.
I’ll surrender everything in time.
You’ll be my reason and my rhyme.
You’ll know my pride; You’ll know my shame.
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Some girls reveal what’s down below.

2. My Lifelong Love

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY GEORGIA STITT

My friend Joel Fram was putting together a Valentine’s Day concert for his New Voices Collective, and the assignment was to write about your first love. I knew everyone else was going to write a ballad, so I wrote this instead, about Adam, my junior high crush. Here’s a photo of him, circa 1983. My LIFELONG LOVE was first recorded by Lauren Kennedy on the album “Here and Now,” (PS Classics), but Jesse Tyler Ferguson sang it in a concert of mine and I loved his version, too.

My lifelong love was first recorded by Lauren Kennedy on the album “Here and Now,” (PS Classics), but Jesse Tyler Ferguson sang it in a concert of mine and I loved his version, too.

He was the smartest boy in the whole sixth grade.
He was twelve years old, and I was just eleven.
But my innocence was won
By the boy who introduced my heart to heaven.

Though his teeth were in braces and his Dockers were frayed,
I just wanted to be around him.

There are men who make you lose yourself
Or fill you with regret,
But Adam won my lifelong love
Because he played the clarinet.

I wanted nothing more than to share a stand
With this prodigy of perfection.
I dreamt of after-school practice with the junior high band
Where we’d sit in the woodwind section.
So I marched into the band room and became a devoted,
For Adam was my lifelong love, and this would make him notice me.

He wasn’t much to look at.
I wouldn’t call him “fun.”
He was twelve years old, and I was just eleven.
My friends thought I was crazy,
But my innocence was won
By the boy who introduced my heart to heaven.

I wanted more than to share a stand
With this prodigy of perfection.
I dreamt of after-school practice with the junior high band
Where we’d sit in the woodwind section.
So I marched into the band room and became a devoted,
For Adam was my lifelong love, and this would make him notice me.

Some girls tell everything they know.
Not yet.
Some girls reveal what’s down below.
Not yet.

If you stick around, you’re guaranteed.
Your plans to win me will succeed.
My heart will open up and bleed.
But not yet.

You wanna know my middle name? Not yet.
You wanna set my heart aflame? Not yet.
I’ll surrender everything in time.
You’ll be my reason and my rhyme.
You’ll know my pride; You’ll know my shame.
Some girls reveal what’s down below.
Not yet.

Oh, how I practiced. God, did I suck.
Adam gave lessons; I was in luck!
All the scales he made me learn by heart.
I had never seen him look so cute!
I told him that his music was an art.
He told me that his girlfriend played the flute.
I was the dumbest boy in the whole fifth grade,
And now everyone else had seen it.
I announced, “I quit the band! My decision has been made.”
But I wished that I didn’t mean it—
For the music had a hold on me,
Much more than any fling.
I knew I’d found my lifelong love,
And Adam didn’t mean a thing.
The marching band was not for me,
But in the choir, I could sing.

The marching band was not for me,
But in the choir, I could sing.
He was the smartest boy in the whole sixth grade.
3. Sing Me a Happy Song

**Music and Lyrics by Georgia Stitt**

I wrote this song for my now-husband, Jason Robert Brown, back in the early days. *Sing Me a Happy Song* was first recorded by Susan Egan on the album “Coffee House.” (ML Records) Jason wrote this new orchestration and Shoshana turned it into something even more than I knew it was. The best part about writing is when performers reveal your songs to you.

Sing me a happy song.
Just start it, and it won’t be wrong.
Something with light,
Something that’s new.
Sing me a happy song
‘Cause you’ve been blue for far too long.
Oh sing me a simple happy song.
Sing me a lullaby.
Lay with me and don’t ask why.
Rock me to sleep,
Trust that I’m right.
Sing me a lullaby.
Tonight the words won’t make you cry.
Oh sing me a happy lullaby.

There’s nobody else.
They’ve all gone away.
You’re safe in this room,
So let your music play–
And sing me that song at last
‘Cause all our pains are in the past.
Believe me,
We need the music–
So sing me the perfect happy song.

4. Sonnet 29

**Music by Georgia Stitt, Lyrics by William Shakespeare**

I have set a lot of poetry to music, and though I knew this piece was epic, I didn’t realize just how big it was until I asked Don Sebesky if he would orchestrate it for me. (Notice his handwritten chart on the background of this page.) Many of LTM’s very best musicians are playing on this track, and conducting them was an enormous thrill. Once Brian d’Arcy James agreed to sing it, I knew I had a reason to release this album. **Sonnet 29** was originally recorded by Stuart Matthew Price on the album “All Things in Time.” (SimG Records)

When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur’d like him, like him with friends possess’d,
Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven’s gate;
For thy sweet love remember’d such wealth
Brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

5. The Wanting Of You

**Music by Georgia Stitt, Lyrics by Marcy Heisler**

This song is the first of five in a song cycle I wrote with Marcy Heisler about women alone in New York City. Originally it was scored for piano, violin and voice, but Susan and I wanted to re-conceive it for this album. To make it edgier, I changed the concert violin to an electric violin and added bass and drums. Susan recorded it in just one take. Serenely THE WANTING OF YOU was originally recorded by Kate Baldwin on the album “Alphabet City Cycle.” (PS Classics)

I’m walking in my head down Avenue B
As the echo of a guitar strums
Tightening my overcoat
And waiting for contentment
Like a bus that never comes
Crushing my hat over angry hair
I beg my pocket for a cigarette
And instead I find a nickel
And a crumpled little napkin
With a poem for a lover I need to forget…
The wanting of you
It colors everything I do
It’s in my house and in my bed
It’s there in every tear I shed
When I don’t think I’ll make it through
The wanting of you
It is my unsurrendered prayer
I trace your hands upon my skin
How did I dare to let you in
It’s almost more than I can bear
The wanting of you

I patronize myself as I take my chair
In the couldn’t care less café
Accept the silent greeting of the mother with
the baby
And the model with the black shar pei
There’s a NYU kid who raises one lid
Then goes back to his thousand page book…
And I spend another morning tracing stories in
the oatmeal
That some Spanish guy did not remember to
cook…

The wanting of you
I step into the bath round a quarter past three
Let the water ease my wounded pride
I wash away my sorrow with a promise of tomorrow
But the water doesn’t let me hide…
The clock on the wall says go ahead stall
You’re entitled to a way to cope…
And I wonder if it isn’t really loneliness that kills you
I think people really die of hope of hope

I wanted you to be the light in the window–
The cup of water for a man who’d run dry.
Oh, but you were a reflection of who you are,
Not who you’ll be.
Well, maybe in time, if I should ever find that I’m

At this turn in the road again.
I thought that we could be better than just lucky.
You’re a survivor, and I’m learning how.
Oh, I may not be the perfect man, but as I am,

The wanting of you
It wakes me up at half past two
With long gone shadows I converse
I think it can’t get any worse
But how I know that isn’t true

The wanting of you
It is a never ending storm
I wear it everywhere I go
Just like a coat that doesn’t know
That it’s supposed to keep me warm.

You…

Knocking on my door, stumbling over words
Laughing at my jokes, losing wallets
You,
Never getting mad, sort of getting mad, never
understanding
Understanding everything
You
Absolutely right
Absolutely wrong
Everything that matters…

Nothing but a song
Nothing but a song

I am talking to you about poetry
and you say
when do we eat.
The worst of it is
I’m hungry too.

This much was yours.
Well, maybe in time, if I should ever find that I’m
At this turn in the road again.
Ask me how the breath comes to keep going
As I’m leaving now without the warmth of
knowing
That I can come back to you.
Did you ever think, ever once consider
How good I could be?
And love would make me better!

I wanted us to be a prayer and its answer.
The truth between us, in a world filled with lies.
No, I may not be the perfect man, but as I am,
This much was yours.
Well, maybe in time, if I should ever find that I’m
At this turn in the road again.
8. A Very Short Song
MUSIC BY GEORGIA STITT, LYRICS BY DOROTHY PARKER

Here’s another one-minute song. This time the words are by the formidable Dorothy Parker. I asked Laura Osnes to record both of these short songs for me, and I still don’t think there’s enough of her glorious voice on this record.

Once, when I was young and true
Someone left me sad–
Broke my brittle heart in two;
And that is very bad.

Love is for unlucky folk,
Love is but a curse.
Once there was a heart I broke;
And that, I think, is worse.

9. If I Could
MUSIC BY SAM DAVIS, LYRICS BY GEORGIA STITT

Sam and I have a unique collaboration. He writes music first and emails it to me, and I fill in the lyrics. I think Sam and I wrote this entire song without ever being in the same room. This one came to life when Michael Arden recorded it.

If I could,
I would freeze the clocks.
You’d never leave my bed;
I wouldn’t have to go to work.
Morning sun would linger on your sleeping face.

If I could,
I would keep it warm.
We’d never need our coats;
The summer wouldn’t fade to fall.
Everything as perfect as it is today, tomorrow.
Nothing ugly to remember.

If I could,
We’d never age a day.
Time wouldn’t be a burden.
This happiness we know
Would have space to grow
If I could make it so.

Tell me then,
Would you stay with me
If I could promise you
That life would always be this sweet?
How long would it take you to get bored
Of all the passion and the burning?

And would I recognize your yearning?
And if you asked me to start the clocks turning again,
Would I, if I could?

10. Invested In You
MUSIC BY SAM DAVIS, LYRICS BY GEORGIA STITT

John and Jessica make me feel starstruck. I’m so much in awe of what they can do that I get flustered when I’m around them. It was fantastic to watch them build this track — John as a one-man band playing all the instruments himself, Jessica standing over his shoulder making suggestions and correcting harmonies. So much fun.

Man:
Times are tight,
And we don’t have much money,

Woman:
But honey, it’s all right.
I believe the heart is where the wealth resides.
Besides…
If we never have the fountains
Or the mansion in the mountains,
I suppose you fear
I might disappear from view.
Not true.

Man:
Others dream of racing sailboats,
Dressing up in gowns and tailcoats.

Both:
But I’m full enough
Without all that stuff to do.
Because I’m invested in you.

Man:
If times should stay depressing,

Woman:
There’s no point in second-guessing
That I’m full enough
Without all that stuff to do.

Both:
Because I’m invested in you.
I wonder,
Was I always destined for this role?
A baby cries and I come running.
Try to stay calm, but scared to the core.
This is my life.
Once just a wife,
Becoming a mother more and more.
Finally.
Becoming my mother, more and more.

11. More of my Mother
MUSIC BY DAVID KIRSHENBAUM, LYRICS BY GEORGINA STITT
I wrote this entire lyric without ever hearing any music in my head, and that’s highly unusual for me. David Kirshenbaum and I were working on a project together at the time, and I showed him the lyric, saying, “I don’t know, maybe it’s just a poem. Can you do anything with this?” His music said what I couldn’t say, and to top it off, he wrote it overnight.

Reflection in a storefront window. Scanning her hair as I reach the door. Thick upper lip.
I’m more of my mother every day.

Discovering a vein protruding. Seeing her hands as I reach the door. Knuckles that crack. No turning back.
Becoming my mother more and more.

I carry her hips behind my pockets. I carry her values in my heart. I wonder, when did all this copying start?
I never wanted to become her. I longed for my life to sweep me away. Logic and sense. Smart and intense.
I’m more of my mother every day.

But oh, she’s a woman filled with regret. And oh, there are things she’ll never see. She has a hunger lost inside. And sometimes I’m terrified.

That’s exactly who I’m growing up to be. And oh, there’s her voice that’s still in my ears. Saying, “No, darling, this is just a phase. These are times you will outgrow. There are things you can’t yet know.” When will I stop looking for her praise?

I notice with a shock she’s aging. Her edges look soft and colored with grey. No slowing down. Never a frown. She’s more like her mother every day.

She carries those hips behind her pockets. She carries those values in her soul.

I wonder,
Was I always destined for this role?
A baby cries and I come running.
Try to stay calm, but scared to the core.
This is my life.
Once just a wife,
Becoming a mother more and more.
Finally.
Becoming my mother, more and more.

12. Kites and Children
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY GEORGINA STITT
FOR SWB ON HER 2ND BIRTHDAY
My friend and fellow songwriter John Bucchino introduced me to the Australian singer Tyran Parke, whose brother Trent is a well-known photographer. Tyran asked several writers to look at his brother’s photos to see if one might inspire an original song. I looked at the website of Trent’s photos and was struck by a moody black and white image of kids flying kites on a stormy day. Tyran’s own CD is due for release soon, and it will include this song, along with many others and all of their original photos. In the meantime, here’s my version, sung by the extraordinary Anika Noni Rose.

I stand behind you, not too close, not too far away.
I feel the wind. It whispers things I dare not say.
We know the truth about how hard it is to make things fly:
The kite and I.

You’re carried forward, first a step, then a gentle run.
You don’t look back; at once the distance has begun.

I turn my head, and just like that you’re nearly out of view: The kite and you.
They tell me there’s a storm a-comin’. They tell me that I’m holding on tight to these strings. But I know about kites and children, And all that they need is air and wings.

There is a secret that one day everybody learns. Each path you choose will shock you with its twists and turns. You may forget just how it felt to be so young and free With kites and me.

I won’t pretend that I don’t see the darkened skies, But when it rains, I figure we just improvise. You shine like sunlight. There’s nothing in this world you cannot do. You’ve got air; You’ve got wings; I’ve got you.
They tell me there’s a storm a-comin’. They tell me that I’m holding on tight to these strings. But I know about kites and children, And all that they need is air and wings.
13. Love After Love
Music by Georgia Stitt, Lyrics by Derek Walcott

This poem leapt off the page when I first read it in a collection of Derek Walcott’s work, and I set it to music without having any idea where I might ever perform it. When I went to Michael McElroy’s home to teach him the music, I found that Michael already knew it perfectly, and he mocked up a MIDI track of sampled strings so he could really understand what he was going to hear in the recording studio. We listened to the fake string sounds and spent at least two hours talking about this poem, about life, about forgiveness, about love. It was a fantastic afternoon.

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other’s welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your
self
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.
Experts say we encounter an astronomical number of people in our daily lives – that because we now move so fast, the sheer numbers are astounding. I’m not impressed. Who cares how many jump in and out of our worlds? I am amazed by who stays – and moreover, who becomes a treasured traveling companion.

Georgia and I met in 2000, when I was still working on Broadway. I was researching material to record for my album, “Coffee House,” and hers was one of many demo CDs I had been given by Michael Kerker of ASCAP. I listened to hours and hours of new music that never seemed new, and then I popped in Georgia’s CD. Her song, “This Ordinary Thursday,” struck me on so many levels: the melody caught me right off, the structure was great, and the unfolding of the story captivated me – it still does. In the song, the singer has been viewing other people’s lives through the fishbowl-like windows of NYC, and now, because she is loved, her life is finally worth displaying, too.

I loved it. Georgia’s experiences as a single girl living in NY mirrored mine, so immediately I could relate, but Georgia’s point of view was distinctive. How, with the millions of love songs in existence, did she write one so completely unique? Michael set up a meeting, and Georgia spent an afternoon playing me her music. I ended up recording “Sing Me A Happy Song” on that album. [Shoshana’s version on this CD is spectacular!] Once I understood who the “Jason” was in “This Ordinary Thursday” (no, I didn’t know), I thought she should keep that one for her album. Lucky me that I got to sing it on that debut CD! About a year later, fate somehow brought us both to Los Angeles then played her part again when Georgia (really, a professional acquaintance at the time) called me up one August, during her eighth month of pregnancy, to see if she might float in my swimming pool for an hour or two. She did. And that was that.

I am not really certain how or when we became such dear friends. I can look back at the incremental steps, but the whole of our friendship is so much greater than the professional meetings, the moves out West, the friendly coffees, the synchronistic pregnancies (2nd time around), the mommy world, the concerts, the travel, the glamour and the goop. Georgia and I have not just shared a road on our individual journeys these last few years, we have literally at times linked arms, leapt over potholes, penned the traveling music, and more than once, gotten behind the other and pushed. Somewhere along the way, I actually think we influenced each other’s paths…..

From my vantage point, I have seen Georgia in her many roles: mom, wife, blogger, business woman, producer, chef, and of course, composer. I am proud to know her – fortunate to have borne witness to the creation of so much of the music you hear on this collection and even to recognize where some kernels of those song ideas sprouted from in her mind. I have heard first drafts through final mixes. I know her well, and still, the music surprises me, lifts me and takes me on unexpected journeys. Her singular and inspired point of view, I now know, is simply how Georgia sees the world. How lucky for us that she has the ability to articulate it so eloquently in music and lyrics. It’s everywhere here; enjoy it. Her Lifelong Love is now yours.

— Susan Egan
Los Angeles, October 25, 2011
Thank you...

to the many people who made this album possible: Mom and Dad, always; my extremely gifted singers and musicians; Andy Waterman, Lauren Price, Ashburn, Ethan, and Luke at Umbrella Media Studio; Tyran and Trent Parke for the photo that inspired “Kites And Children;” Cheri Steinkellner, my Mosaic partner; Lauren Kennedy, Kate Baldwin, Stuart Matthew Price and Keith Byron Kirk, who recorded earlier versions of these songs; Bruce Miller for his guidance; Madeline Myers for her assistance; Derek Bishop for his eyes; Susan Egan for her inspiration and partnership; and Jason Robert Brown, my husband and best friend, for everything else.

For M & S, my lifelong loves.