

# BELL TOWER

MUSIC BY

GEORGIA STITT







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## POETRY IN MOTION



### *I am talking to you about poetry.*

I read these words from my seat on the New York City subway where the MTA has for decades now broken up the monotony of advertising signage by displaying poems. Right in front of me, this short verse made me laugh out loud. In the middle of a busy city, on a crowded train, a poet reached out across time and distance to tell a joke, and I laughed. Is there any better example of what art is meant to do?

The poem, aptly named “Communication,” stayed with me. I researched the author, Alicia Partnoy, found out she was living in LA, and wrote to ask if I could set her poem to music. Delighted, she noted that it would likely be a very short song. Indeed, the finished piece turned out to be only 53 seconds long, and even that’s because I repeated her lines when I turned them into lyrics. But, important to me, the joke still lands.

The challenge and the joy of setting poetry to music is in trying to figure out what a composer can offer to the poet’s work without getting in the way. I’m often thinking about how music can add pacing and allow breadth, how musical comedy requires specific timing, how rhyme can set very exacting expectations, how choices about musical density can either amplify or impede a poem’s meaning, how we hear musical text differently when we’re not also reading it. My training is as a classical musician, but I’ve worked in the theater for decades. I write music that is mostly in the service of words, aiming to enhance their meaning and provide an emotional invitation to signal something about my understanding to the listener.

After I wrote “Communication” I began looking for more very short poems that I could set to music. Not all poems have room for music, though, and part of a composer’s job is to figure out whether or not she’s welcome. I spent a lot of time browsing books of poetry (where I found gems by Cristin O’Keefe Aptowicz, Dorothy Parker, Connie Bensley, and Wendy Cope), digging deep into archives (unearthing work by Sara Teasdale, Margaret Funkhouser, Lorine Niedecker, and Georgia Douglas Johnson) and asking my friends (Faye Greenberg, Angelica Chéri, Mindi Dickstein, Anika Chapin, and Ta’Rea Campbell) to create something just for me. At first it was a coincidence that all the poets were women, and then I decided to make that an intentional choice. During the pandemic, 2020 – 2022, the writing of these pieces became a bit of a lifeline for me. In a moment when everything I knew about productivity was turned upside down, finishing one of these little songs felt like I was accomplishing something.

That pandemic took its toll on this project, though. For about a year, singing was thought to be the most egregious virus transmitter, and recording studios were closed. What that meant for me, mid-project, was that everything stopped but the writing. It has been ten years, almost exactly, since I went into the studio with Rebecca Luker to record three art songs I had written for her. Even though I wasn’t yet dreaming of this album, I knew I wanted to capture the moment and her glorious performance from the premiere. She died four years later. These files have been sitting on my computer, awaiting further instruction, for a very long time.

The “Two London Songs” were written in the 1990s when I was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University’s Blair School of Music, and “The Trumpet” was written only about six months ago because I saw an opportunity to merge the trumpeting voice of my friend Tituss Burgess with the actual trumpeting of Liesl Whitaker, a Broadway musician who spent two decades playing lead trumpet for the US Army Band. (She was the first woman to win this position in any premier military jazz ensemble.) The Sarah Ruhl poem showed up in my email inbox in response to a tragedy in our community, and the Jacqueline Suskin and Louise Driscoll poems were both commissions. I had begun exploring this idea of creating an album of theatrical art songs, and it turned out that I already had a complete body of work.

I want to close by thanking Krista Tippet for *On Being*, a podcast that explores the intersection of art and faith. Her conversations are endlessly inspiring, and if you haven’t heard the episode “A Wild Love for the World” that features a conversation with Joanna Macy about poet Rainer Maria Rilke, I hope you’ll go listen to it... just as soon as you finish listening to these songs.

***Let this darkness be a bell tower and  
you the bell.***

***As you ring, what batters you becomes  
your strength.***

— GEORGIA STITT

New York City, November 2025



## 1. WHAT LIPS MY LIPS HAVE KISSED (3:10)

Rebecca Luker, vocals

Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Steve Williamson, clarinet

What lips my lips have kissed, and where,  
and why,  
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain  
Under my head till morning; but the rain  
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh  
Upon the glass and listen for reply,  
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain  
For unremembered lads that not again  
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.  
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,  
Nor knows what birds have vanished one  
by one,  
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:  
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,  
I only know that summer sang in me  
A little while, that in me sings no more.

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The original poem, "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed (Sonnet 43)", was published first in 1920 in *Vanity Fair* and was then included in the 1923 volume *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems*, for which Millay became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize.



## 2. HUTCHINSON SONNET (2:58)

Rebecca Luker, vocals

Poem by Henry William Hutchinson (1897-1918)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Mairi Dorman-Phaneuf, cello;  
Jamie Eblen, cymbals

The falling rain is music overhead,  
The dark night, lit by no intruding star,  
Fit covering yields to thoughts that roam afar  
And turn again familiar paths to tread  
Where many a laden hour too quickly sped  
In happier times, before the dawn of war,  
Before the spoiler had whet his sword to mar  
The faithful living and the mighty dead.  
It is not that my soul is weigh'd with woe,  
But rather wonder, seeing they do but sleep,  
As birds that in the sinking summer sweep  
Across the heaven to happier climes to go,  
So they are gone; and sometimes we must weep,  
And sometimes, smiling, murmur, "Be it so!"

©2004 Geocate Music (ASCAP)

The original poem, "Sonnet VIII", was published posthumously in 1918 as part of *Sonnets and Translations*. Hutchinson was shot and killed in a communication trench in 1917 while fighting for the British Army during World War I. He was only 19 years old.



## 3. WHEN I AM DEAD (2:30)

Rebecca Luker, vocals

Poem by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Shelagh Abate, French horn;  
Alexandra Eckhardt, upright bass

When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree:  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain;  
I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on, as if in pain:  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth not rise nor set,  
Haply I may remember,  
And haply may forget.

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The original poem, "Song [When I am dead, my dearest]", was written in 1848 when the poet was 18 years old, but it was not published until fourteen years later as part of her 1862 collection *Goblin Market and Other Poems*. Born in London to an Italian father and a half-English, half-Italian mother, Rossetti wrote often about Victorian-era repressed passion, the tension between worldly desires and spiritual devotion, and the quest for salvation.

*Georgia! Thank you for these gorgeous songs and poems. You're a genius. I DO feel like they were written for me. :) Can't wait to do them with you. Xoxo, Becca*



## 4. THE TRUMPET (2:42)

*Tituss Burgess, vocals*

Poem by Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)

Georgia Stitt, piano

Liesl Whitaker, trumpet

Lisa Stokes, upright bass

Jamie Eblen, percussion

Rise up, rise up,  
And, as the trumpet blowing  
Chases the dreams of men,  
As the dawn glowing  
The stars that left unlit  
The land and water,  
Rise up and scatter  
The dew that covers  
The print of last night's lovers—  
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening  
To the clear horn,  
Forget, men, everything  
On this earth newborn,  
Except that it is lovelier  
Than any mysteries.  
Open your eyes to the air  
That has washed the eyes of the stars  
Through all the dewy night:  
Up with the light,  
To the old wars;  
Arise, arise!

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This poem was written in 1916 after the poet enlisted in the British army in 1915 at the age of 37 to fight in World War I. He was killed in 1917 during action in France, and this poem was published posthumously in *Collected Poems* in 1922.



*It's such a moving song. I heard the first phrase and said I'm recording this before having finished. U wizard. – T.*





## 5. COMMUNICATION (:53)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Alicia Partnoy (b.1955)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Translated by Richard Schaaf  
Georgia Stitt, piano

I am talking to you about poetry  
And you say  
When do we eat?  
The worst of it is  
I'm hungry too.

©2008 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Alicia Partnoy. Original poem is from the book *Revenge of the Apple*, Cleis Press, S. Fco. 1992. Used with permission.

Partnoy, an Argentina-born poet and activist, was abducted by the Argentinian army in 1977 following the death of Juan Perón and the ensuing military coup. A member of the Peronist Youth Movement, she became a political prisoner who lived for three years in a concentration camp and then a prison. Upon her release, she came to the United States as a refugee, earned a PhD, and taught Spanish language and literature for many years at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

## 6. ALAN'S DEAD (1:27)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Faye Greenberg (b. 1957)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Alan's dead  
Well, he's dead to me  
Which is not the same  
But it ought to be  
I was betrayed  
And the break was rough  
Alan's dead, dead, dead, dead, dead  
Just not dead enough.

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## 7. THAT LOOK (:52)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Faye Greenberg (b.1957)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

That look says I'm about the dumbest white woman  
Ever to walk the Earth  
I thought I was helping  
You made it clear, I was not  
Dear God, why did I ever give birth?

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Greenberg is a theatrical lyricist and music producer, who, in partnership with her husband David Lawrence, wrote songs for the quadruple-platinum score to Disney's *High School Musical*, among many other TV, film, and theatre projects. She wrote these two short poems because Georgia begged her to. The daughter of a percussionist, Greenberg grew up attending a lot of NYC theatre, befriended Carol Burnett, and now lives in Los Angeles and sometimes New York. She and David have raised a wonderful daughter named Mabel.

## 8. WHY I AVOID EYE-CONTACT (1:20)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz (b. 1978)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

You make me happy  
but you are not  
a responsible enough person  
to hold that kind of position  
in my life.

©2017 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz

Georgia picked up a book of Aptowicz's poems at a bookstore while she was hunting for material to include in this collection. Fandom and correspondence followed, and in 2015 Georgia received an email offering this poem, which can also be found published in *Dear Future Boyfriend*. Aptowicz co-founded the NYC Urbana Poetry Slam, a weekly reading series dedicated to showcasing the most innovative voices in poetry, which began in 1998 and is still held at NYC's Bowery Poetry Club. She is one of the only "slam poets" to have won a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Poetry.



## 9. EXTERMINATOR (1:09)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Mindi Dickstein (b. 1968)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

I am a murderer of mice,  
A killer of bees.  
I hate myself for it,  
But I do it with ease.  
Someday I will pay the price,  
Pursued by an angry swarm  
Plagued by wild rodent lice...!  
Not today.

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Dickstein is an American lyricist and librettist, perhaps best known for having written the lyrics for the 2005 Broadway musical production *Little Women*, though she has also written musical theatre adaptations of the films *Benny & Joon* and *Toy Story*, among others. She teaches Musical Theatre Writing to graduate students at NYU and has received many accolades including the 2001 Jonathan Larson Award.

## 10. PERMISSIVE SOCIETY (:46)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Connie Bensley (b. 1929)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Wake, for the dawn has put the stars to flight,  
And in my bed a stranger: so once more,  
What seemed to be a good idea last night  
Appears, this morning, sober, rather poor.

©2003 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Connie Bensley

This poem was originally published in *Central Reservations: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 1990) and then republished in *Finding a Leg to Stand On* (2012). Used with permission. Bensley, born in London, worked most of her life as a medical secretary. Her poems revel in poking gentle fun at the self-deceptions and delusions of middle-class suburban life. Notably, she “thinks the suburbs have got a bad press” and she likes “the idea of stability and order that they represent.”



## 11. CENTRAL PARK AT DUSK (1:45)

Kate Baldwin, vocals

Poem by Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Buildings above the leafless trees  
Loom high as castles in a dream,  
While one by one the lamps come out  
To thread the twilight with a gleam.  
There is no sign of leaf or bud,  
A hush is over everything –  
Silent as women wait for love,  
The world is waiting for the spring.

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Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Teasdale first began seriously writing poems in her late teens and joined a group of young women writers who called themselves “The Potters.” They printed their original art, poetry, and prose in *The Potter’s Wheel*, a monthly artistic and literary magazine produced from 1904 to 1907. They also referred to themselves as the “Self and Mutual Admiration Society.” This poem was originally published in the poet’s 1911 collection *Helen of Troy and Other Poems* when she was 27 years old.

*It is the privilege of my life to get to  
make music alongside you. XO, Kate*



## 12. LET THIS DARKNESS BE A BELL TOWER (4:05)

Hila Plitmann, vocals

Poem by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Translation by Joanna Macy (1929-2025)  
and Anita Barrows (b. 1947)  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Todd Reynolds, violin;  
Chihiro Shibayama, vibraphone

Quiet friend who has come so far,

feel how your breathing makes more space  
around you.

Let this darkness be a bell tower  
and you the bell. As you ring,

what batters you becomes your strength.  
Move back and forth into the change.  
What is it like, such intensity of pain?  
If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine.

In this uncontainable night,  
Be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses,  
The meaning discovered there.

And if the world has ceased to hear you,  
Say to the silent earth: I flow.

To the rushing waters, speak: I am.

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The original poem, *Sonnets to Orpheus II*, was published in German in 1923. This translation by Joanna Macy was published in 2016, featured on Krista Tippett's podcast *On Being*, and used here with permission.

*Oh, sweetheart what glorious music, my whole body is in chills!!! Gorgeous. You are flipping amazing. — Hila*



## 13. LONDON (3:12)

Marc Kudisch, vocals

Poem by William Blake (1757-1827)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every black'ning Church appalls;  
And the hapless Soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born Infants' tear  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

©1992 Geocate Music (ASCAP)

The original poem was published in the UK in 1794 during the French Revolution as part of the collection *Songs of Experience*. Known for his social critique and criticism of urban life during the Industrial Revolution, the poet combined two volumes of poetry to publish *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and for these volumes he also personally engraved, hand-printed, and colored unique illustrations to accompany each poem.



*I LOVE your music,  
the challenge of it. It  
is really beautiful. And  
deceptively provoking —  
which is really cool.  
— MK*

## 14. COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE (4:11)

Marc Kudisch, vocals

Poem by William Wordsworth (1770-1850)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty;  
This city now doth like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare  
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky.

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

©1992 Geocate Music (ASCAP)

The original poem, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" was written in the wake of the French Revolution and published in the UK in 1807 as part of *Poems, in Two Volumes*. The poet, known for his deep connection to nature, wrote this sonnet when he was passing through London on a journey to Calais with his sister, Dorothy. Her journal entry around the same time confirms the message of the poem; both were awed that a city could be as beautiful as anything in nature.



## 15. BLOODY MEN (1:31)

Ruthie Ann Miles, vocals

Poem by Wendy Cope (b. 1945); Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Bloody men are like bloody buses —  
You wait for about a year  
And as soon as one approaches your stop  
Two or three others appear.

You look at them flashing their indicators,  
Offering you a ride.  
You're trying to read the destinations,  
You haven't much time to decide.

If you make a mistake, there is no turning back.  
Jump off, and you'll stand there and gaze  
While the cars and the taxis and lorries go by  
And the minutes, the hours, the days.

©2022 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Wendy Cope

Cope is a popular contemporary British poet known for comic observations on the mundane aspects of British life. An Oxford-educated former elementary school teacher, her early poems gained notoriety because she entered them into, and won, competitions in magazines like *The Spectator*. Publication and literary accolades followed. This poem was originally published in 1992 in *Serious Concerns*, Faber & Faber Ltd., and is used with permission.

## 16. THE TRUE NATURE OF EVIL (54)

Ruthie Ann Miles, vocals

Poem by Anika Chapin (b. 1983); Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

I think I am a good person  
I don't like to cause pain  
And yet I bought a tuna sub  
To eat while on the train.

©2019 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Anika Chapin

Anika currently works as the Director of Artistic Development at Signature Theatre in Arlington, VA and has an MFA in Dramaturgy from Columbia University. This poem was originally a Facebook post.

## 17. FROM HALCYON HAIL (1:15)

Ruthie Ann Miles, vocals

Poem by Margaret Funkhouser (b. 1972)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

Let my hymnal dry in heat. I'm a congregant,  
waiting to float in the night. Not to worry,  
I'm keeping my good breeding and adage;  
the one that speaks of belief without sight.

©2020 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Margaret Funkhouser

Margaret is the Director of Writing, Film, and Media Arts at Walnut Hill School for the Performing Arts in Massachusetts. She and Georgia spent many summers sharing music and poetry together at the College Light Opera Company on Cape Cod, but this is their first collaboration. Margaret has been the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize and her poems have been published in *Boston Review*, *The Paris Review*, *Pleiades*, and elsewhere.

## 18. A VERY SHORT SONG (1:03)

Ruthie Ann Miles, vocals

Poem by Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

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.

©2006 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Dorothy Parker

Poem was originally published in *Enough Rope* in 1926. Parker, known for her sharp wit and caustic wisecracks, was an American writer and literary critic as well as being a founding member of New York's Algonquin Round Table. Despite success, her left-wing politics resulted in her being placed on the Hollywood Blacklist in 1950. Thanks to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for authorizing this use of Dorothy Parker's work, which has since come into the public domain.

## 19. THE HEART OF A WOMAN (2:13)

Ruthie Ann Miles, vocals

Poem by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880-1966)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,  
As a lone bird, soft winging, so restlessly on,  
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales does it roam  
In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,  
And enters some alien cage in its plight,  
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars  
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

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Original poem published in 1918 in *The Heart of a Woman and Other Poems*. Douglas Johnson was one of the most well-known Black female writers and playwrights of her time. Born in Georgia and educated at Oberlin College and Cleveland College of Music, she gained professional prominence as a writer in Washington, DC during the Harlem Renaissance. Douglas Johnson hosted weekly salons, known as "S Street Salons," to gather artists and connect them to a larger national movement. Her community-building efforts linked the Great Depression to the Civil Rights Movement.



*On the subway & a tuna fish sandwich  
crossed my nostrils. Thinking of you.*  
— Ruthie



## 20. BRIEF PASSAGE (2:57)

*Kelli O'Hara, vocals*

Poem by Sarah Ruhl (b. 1974)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Sarah Hewitt-Roth, cello;  
Randy Landau, upright bass

What mother does not walk?  
Does not hold her child's hand:  
feeling how cold  
how dry  
how warm.

What mother does not  
give her child her own large mitten if  
the smaller hand  
seems colder than her own?

What mother does not expect to  
cross the street with her child,  
a small step up on the curb,  
walking with a friend,  
talking of the day  
or not talking,  
only walking,  
a stroller between them,  
a brief passage  
from one side to the other.

Bathed in what tears?  
The tears  
of mothers  
who walk.

©2018 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Sarah Ruhl

Poem was used with permission from author and  
subsequently published in 2020 in *44 Poems for  
You* (Copper Canyon Press).

Composed with love for Ruthie.



*How hauntingly beautiful. And  
heartbreaking. I want to thank both you  
and Sarah for putting your heart into this.  
So sweet and melancholy. — Kelli*

## 21. RE-CREATION (3:01)

*Andrea Jones-Sojola, vocals*

Poem by Jacqueline Suskin (b. 1984)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
commissioned by Carla Dirlikov Canales  
Georgia Stitt, piano; Judy Yin-Chi Lee, French horn;  
Lisa Stokes, upright bass; Jamie Eblen, cymbals

Pull the past into focus  
and rewrite repetitions  
that spin from the tests of trauma.  
Now standing in this power, we present  
ourselves with newness, bold belief  
in the betterment of the whole  
by way of this recreation.  
How we lead with our own  
lessons, stand firm when enough  
is enough, and with our gratitude  
held above all memory of pain  
we see the structure of our life  
illuminate each choice  
beyond the wall of circumstance.

©2018 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Jacqueline Suskin

This song was commissioned by The Canales  
Project and created in honor of Celeste Mergens,  
Founder of Days for Girls, as part of *Hear  
Her Song*, an initiative bringing together an  
extraordinary array of female musical artists to  
offer powerful insights into women's leadership  
worldwide. In addition to her nine published  
books of poetry, Suskin has composed over forty  
thousand improvisational poems for patrons who  
chose a topic in exchange for a unique verse.



*Ah, thank you for inviting me into  
your world. I'm just so happy to be  
given opportunity to work with you.  
It's actually a gift to me. Not  
a job. — AJ*



## 22. WHAT HORROR TO AWAKE AT NIGHT (1:50)

Sierra Boggess, vocals

Poem by Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

What horror to awake at night  
and in the dimness see the light.

Time is white  
mosquitoes bite

I've spent my life on nothing.

The thought that stings. How are you, Nothing,  
sitting around with Something's wife.

Buzz and burn  
is all I learn

I've spent my life on nothing.

I'm pillowed and padded, pale and puffing  
lifting household stuffing—  
carpets, dishes  
benches, fishes

I've spent my life in nothing.

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A product of the Great Depression, Niedecker led a difficult, mostly rural life in Wisconsin. There were long stretches of time when publication eluded her, and she lived in near-poverty. Upon her death, Niedecker's husband burned many of her unpublished manuscripts, but a comprehensive volume called *Collected Works*, including papers preserved and donated by her neighbor and close friend, was published at last in 2022. Used with permission.



## 23. TECTONIC PLATES (2:01)

Sierra Boggess, vocals

Poem by Angelica Chéri (b.1987)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

What have you done?  
I was in my head.  
Then in my heart.  
Now I'm in my body.  
And you're under my skin.  
Surfing waves of thighs and sighs,  
and temperatures rise  
over and over again.  
Nobody loses.  
Nobody wins.  
Tectonic plates.  
Nines turn to eights.  
I'm going backwards.  
Earth shatters.  
Everything trembles when you say my name.  
Time's running thin.  
Say it again.

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Chéri is a playwright, musical theatre bookwriter/lyricist, screenwriter, and poet. She and her collaborator Ross Baum received the prestigious Richard Rodgers Award for their musical *Wanted*, formerly called *Gun & Powder*, which was inspired by the true story of Mary and Martha Clarke, African American twin sisters (and Chéri's real-life ancestors) who became outlaws. She was named by *Variety* as one of Broadway's Top Ten Stars to Watch.

*Omg Georgia!!!!!! I LOVE LOVE LOVE!!!!!!  
The brilliant musicality, the unexpected  
turns of humor, the unique beauty...  
I'm so grateful to be on this album.  
Congratulations. — Sierra*

## 24. MASKED BEHAVIOR (1:30)

Sierra Boggess, vocals

Poem by Ta'Rea Campbell (b. 1979)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

I miss you.  
I really miss you.  
The heat you bring to my lips.  
The way you brighten the smile on my face.  
The color you add to my soul.  
I miss you,  
Lipstick.

©2020 Geocate Music (ASCAP) and Ta'Rea Campbell

Ta'Rea Campbell is a Broadway actress and singer, with notable credits in shows such as *The Lion King*, *Hamilton*, and *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*. She and Georgia have been good friends since they worked together on the Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors* in 2003. This is her first published song, and of course, it was written in 2020 during the pandemic.

## 25. SMALL TALK (1:30)

Sierra Boggess, vocals

Poem by Mindi Dickstein (b. 1968)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
Georgia Stitt, piano

In the space between "Hello" and  
"How are you?"  
My thoughts surge, my words tumble.  
My heart leaps, my lips mumble.  
In this moment there is ardor,  
Longing like a stone.  
More than can be said with words alone.  
Small talk is small.  
Large is so much harder.

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## 26. HOLD FAST YOUR DREAMS (4:33)

Nikki Renée Daniels, vocals

Poem by Louise Driscoll (1875-1957)  
Music by Georgia Stitt (b. 1972)  
commissioned by Zoe Allen and premiered on her 2021  
recording *Beneath the Sky*  
Georgia Stitt, piano  
Janet Axelrod, flute  
Lisa Stokes, upright bass

Hold fast your dreams!  
Within your heart  
Keep one still, secret spot  
Where dreams may go,  
And, sheltered so,  
May thrive and grow  
Where doubt and fear are not.  
O keep a place apart,  
Within your heart,  
For little dreams to go!

Think still of lovely things that are not true.  
Let wish and magic work at will in you.  
Be sometimes blind to sorrow. Make believe!  
Forget the calm that lies  
In disillusioned eyes.  
Though we all know that we must die,  
Yet you and I  
May walk like gods and be  
Even now at home in immortality.

We see so many ugly things—  
Deceits and wrongs and quarrelings;  
We know, at last we know  
How quickly fade  
The color in the west,  
The bloom upon the flower,  
The bloom upon the breast  
And youth's blind hour.  
Yet keep within your heart  
A place apart  
Where little dreams may go,  
May thrive and grow.  
Hold fast—hold fast your dreams!

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*I absolutely LOVE it! Such a beautiful piece, what a treat, thank you so much for having me be a part of this. — Nikki*

Born in Poughkeepsie, NY, Louise Driscoll worked as a librarian in her town of Catskill, NY. This poem was written in 1916 during World War I and was published in *The New York Times* that same year. Of interest: Driscoll first attracted attention with a poem called "Metal Checks," which received a prize of \$100 offered by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* for the best poem on the European war.



## PRODUCTION CREDITS

**ALBUM PRODUCED BY** Jeffrey Lesser and Georgia Stitt

**RECORDED BY**

Tracks 1-3 recorded by Jack Mason at MSR, Studio B, NYC,  
March 9, 2016

Track 4 recorded by Angie Teo on July 31, 2025 and by Isaiah Abolin  
on August 16, 2025 at Renaissance Recording, NYC. Kat Lopez  
and Ryder Lippman, interns.

Tracks 5-11 recorded by John Kilgore at John Kilgore Sound and  
Recording, NYC, April 7, 2022

Track 12 recorded by Alex Conroy at John Kilgore Sound and  
Recording, NYC, June 16, 2022

Tracks 13-14 recorded by John Kilgore at Pulse Music, NYC,  
January 17, 2024, and by Angie Teo at Reservoir Recording, NYC,  
August 1, 2025

Tracks 15-19 recorded by John Kilgore at Pulse Music, NYC,  
January 8, 2024

Track 20 recorded by John Kilgore at John Kilgore Sound and  
Recording, November 5 & 22, 2019

Track 21 recorded by John Kilgore at John Kilgore Sound and  
Recording, NYC, October 10, 2019 and by Angie Teo at  
Renaissance Recording, July 29, 2025

Tracks 22-25 recorded by Derik Lee at Renaissance Recording,  
NYC, January 13, 2024

Track 26 recorded by John Kilgore at Pulse Music, NYC, January 8,  
2024 and Angie Teo at Renaissance Recording, July 29, 2025

**MIXED AND EDITED BY** Jeffrey Lesser at Jet Laser Productions NYC

**MASTERED BY** Oscar Zambrano at Zampol Productions,  
New York, NY

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**PHOTOS BY** Matthew Murphy, Georgia Stitt

**PUBLIC RELATIONS BY** Rebecca Davis

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Imogen Lloyd Webber – **EVP, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

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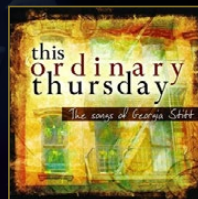
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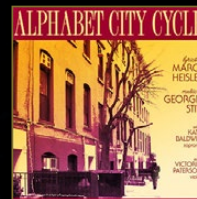
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