

SONG NOTES, MY OWN PARTICULAR LIFE

I began writing the lyrics for this album in the fall of 2019, just after my move to Rochester, NY. I was thinking about the trajectory of my life and my friends' lives, and about those who had passed on. I was also pondering the alarming state of the world in general. What I noticed was that it is sometimes possible to find great joy on the other side of calamitous experiences, even in the midst of them. That's the general theme of *My Own Particular Life*. As before, the stories within are sometimes autobiographical, sometimes borrowed from friends, books I've read, or films I've seen; sometimes pure invention, or some combination of any of these.

1) MY OWN PARTICULAR LIFE

This is the first tune that Eddie Arkin and I wrote for the album. The time signature is 6/4. To me, the drumline groove captures the adrenaline rush of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and marching ahead full-throttle into your life after a dark spell. I quote Yoda a couple of times; the second time is a mashup of him and Eleanor Roosevelt. The band is made up of Eddie's and my treasured musician colleagues, with whom we've been working for over a decade. We wanted the first solo on the album to be by the great Russell Ferrante. Michael Shapiro, who now lives in Manila, played drums and "a mountain of percussion," as he described it, from 8000 miles away.

I love flower bulbs; the talking part of MOPL is what I call the "John Scheepers *Beauty from Bulbs* catalog" section.

Eddie: The layered vocal harmonies in this album occur in three forms, all performed by Lorraine. First, we would harmonize the lead vocal in certain phrases with two, three, or even four parts. Second, background vocals were used as pads or as rhythmic punctuations doubling or accentuating some instrument in the rhythm section. And third, the voice was used in a linear fashion in two, three, or four parts to create mostly non-verbal lead counter-melodies in different ranges that are featured as solo passages

2) MUSIC FROM THE CEILING

This song was written for my dear ex-husband Tony Morales, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's a few years after we divorced. I had made a trip to Los Angeles and met Tony, his brother Joey, and Joey's girlfriend Emily at a restaurant near my hotel. Tony was mostly uncommunicative, but at one point during the meal, he looked up at the overhead speaker and asked why music was coming from the ceiling.

Eddie played me the music for this song when we were working on something else during that trip. Usually, we write a song lyrics-first, but I was moved by what he'd composed and came up with the lyrics a couple of days later. The accompaniment is just Eddie on guitar, using a Big Sky reverb pedal, and Michael Valerio on bass.

3) EVERYTHING ELSE IS WAITING

I wrote the lyrics for this in November of 2019. The title is taken from a quote, "Life is on the wire, and everything else is waiting," something wire-walker Nicholas Wallenda's grandfather told him when he

was a boy. It is meant to describe the way in which someone who adores and admires you can help you live this perilous life with courage and joy.

Eddie: Violinist Charlie Bisharat is the featured soloist on “Everything Else Is Waiting.” Charlie’s beautiful melodic lines and passionate playing are the perfect complement to Lorraine’s story-telling on this song.

4) ARE YOU UP?

I had written a humorous lyric about being in lockdown, a couple of months into the pandemic; when I looked at it a year later, the tone of it didn’t appeal to me. What I wrote and gave to Eddie in its place, was about a long-distance love affair in the time of COVID. Two people share dreams of flying, communicate awkwardly through texting, and finally meet in person—then have to walk six feet apart. “Alphabet bar” means computer keyboard, and is a term coined (as far as I know) by Internet sensation Pluto, the “talking” Canadian Schnauzer.

Eddie: Structurally, “Are You Up?” goes through several mood changes harmonically and melodically, but what remains a constant throughout is the undulating Baion rhythm so wonderfully played by Mike Shapiro. He and Mike Valerio create a foundation that locks in the groove and drives this song from beginning to end.

5) A HOPEFUL NOTE

Dave Grusin and his wife Nan Newton invited me to visit them in Santa Fe at the beginning of 2020. Dave and I worked on this song together, and when we took breaks, Nan showed me around the beautiful town. Christmas lights and farolitos were everywhere, and snow was on the ground. It had been some time since Dave and I had worked together, and I flew home feeling refreshed and happy. We made plans to record the song in spring, but then the pandemic hit, and a year went by. It was so good to work with him again, and finally hear his exquisite playing on “A Hopeful Note” in the spring of 2021.

6) GRAND INVENTION

This was one of the last lyrics I wrote for *MOPL*. I had just visited the nearby Eastman Museum, with its artifacts from the early days of photography and cinematography. I spoke the lyrics in rhythm into my phone and sent them to Russell Ferrante, and he sent me back the completed song. What Russ did was fashion a musical jigsaw puzzle like an invention or fugue with sections of jazz tango, and what Mike Valerio called a kind of *Phantom of the Opera* vibe at the end, the lovers in an ecstatic swoon. Jacob Braun played cello on this track—a first for my albums.

7) SWEET LITTLE CREATURE

In early 2019, I went through a traumatic event that prompted my abrupt departure from the house where I’d been living in Massachusetts. I didn’t know where I was going to go but impulsively decided to move to Rochester, NY. I was in tears all the time, it was the dead of winter, and a blizzard was on the way. It helped me to focus on my beloved Siamese rescue cat, Albert (Einstein). A friend recommended a nice boarding facility called Holliston Meadows Pet Resort for Albert to stay in while I got set up. Another friend offered to drive him to me when I had secured a place. Holliston Meadows is in a remote wooded location, and the woman there always told people it was across from the Fatima Shrine, as a landmark. When I hugged Albert and handed him over, I whispered to him, “We’ll land on our feet.” The next time I

saw him was two weeks later, when my belongings had been moved into my new apartment, and I fetched him from Cats and Critters in Rochester.

Russell's music begins like an old ragtime piece but goes elsewhere.

8) ARBITRARY DRAWERS

This lyric is a revenge fantasy. A woman is leaving her controlling husband. The guy in question is very anal and owns a lot of kitchen equipment. Her act of vengeance consists of emptying all the kitchen drawers and cabinets and putting things back in a random fashion so that he won't be able to find anything. The wife's anguish morphs into excitement as she flees, and then into a sense of delicious calm, as she contemplates her new life and freedom.

Shelly Berg has been my collaborator on quite a few oddball creations over the past 20 years, and I tucked this lyric aside for our writing get-together in New York in mid-2020. But like so many people, I was at home for over a year, and Shelly and I wrote our two songs long-distance. My co-writers and I know each other so well by now, it's not hard to work this way.

9) LIFE STORY

My other Shelly collaboration is a conversation between two people who are no longer young; they are drawn to each other, but balk at having to go through all the steps of courtship again, tell the countless details of their respective lives. They slowly realize that the best part of life can come at any time, often when one least expects it. The first part of the section that starts "You tell me there are times when you're quite taken with yourself," could be an internal monologue within either of their heads, rather than the woman talking to the man.

10) JACKET WEATHER

"Jacket Weather" is a swing shuffle that was basically conceived as a written-out guitar duet with rhythm section. The soloist here, and playing guitar throughout this album, is Grant Geissman. He always has an innate sense of what to play where, and his blues-tinged solo is very soulful. Mike Shapiro's cool touch of adding bongos to this track reminded me of classic swing jazz albums from the '50s and '60s.

The couple in this lyric might be the "Life Story" pair, now building a life together—experiencing the thrill and trepidation of starting over, sharing the rapturous beauty of autumn and the coziness waiting at home. I put this tune last because it is something of a bookend with the first, "My Own Particular Life." Everything is changing, but in the moment, there is exhilaration, and hope for the future.

FROM LORRAINE

I missed seeing and singing with the musicians in person, to put it mildly, during the process of making this album. I was astonished, though, by how easily everyone connected from their different locations. I think this has a lot to do with the fact that we have been working together so long, some of us for 30+ years!

In the midst of the social and emotional privation of a difficult time, thank God we have all stayed safe—and have been able to complete *My Own Particular Life* together. I'm grateful that we've gotten to the finish line, and for the virtuosity, imagination and emotion that the guys put into every track.

Thanks to Maggie Rodford, Pat Arkin, Ronald Gisjel, Kerry Gogan, and Joe Soldo.

Thanks also to Mark and Vanessa Watters, Nan Schwartz, Conrad Pope, Lydia Geissman, Bill Elliott, Wendy Rickles, Megan DaSilva and Daniel Slavin for their special friendship and support during the period of time that preceded the start of this project.

Thanks to my co-writers Russell, Shelly, Dave, and my longest-time best friend and co-producer Eddie Arkin for the ongoing adventure of creating original music to record.

FROM EDDIE

I am amazed by, and grateful for, the creativity and interpretive skills of each and every musician on this album. Because of the events and challenges of this last year, we recorded much of this record remotely, requiring careful planning and “musical logistics.” Special thanks to Matt Ramerman for recording all the vocals and to engineer Eric Astor for being the creative gatekeeper organizing, editing, and rough-mixing all these tracks as they were sent in literally from all corners of the globe.

Don Murray, thank you for these beautiful mixes; you are a true master of your craft.

Thanks to my wife Patricia, for your “ears,” suggestions and loving support.

And lastly, thank you to Lorraine. The original concept and inspiration for these albums are always born from her imagination. Then myself, my colleagues here and Lorraine together bring our songs into the light. These moments of collaboration, which for me have now spanned over three decades, are pure joy.