

# Magic Light

All Lyrics and Music Composed and Arranged by Chuck Owen (ASCAP) except Spinning Wheel (comp. by David Clayton-Thomas):

1) Spinning Wheel	5:41
2) Can't Remember Why	8:41
3) . . . And Your Point Is??	9:37
4) Omaha	6:52
5) Apalachicola	10:52
6) We Rise	6:34
7) What Once Was Lost	10:01
8) Magic Light	5:30

## Personnel

Kate McGarry – Vocals (Tracks 1, 2, 4, 6, & 8)  
Sara Caswell – Violin  
Jack Wilkins – Saxophones  
Corey Christiansen – Guitars  
Chuck Owen – Piano, Keyboard, Accordion, & Hammered Dulcimer  
Mark Neuenschwander – Bass  
Danny Gottlieb – Drums (Tracks 1,2,4,6, & 8)  
Matt Wilson – Drums (Tracks, 3, 5, & 7)

## Credits

Produced by: Chuck Owen  
Recorded at: Morrisound Studios. Aug. 28 & 29, 2019, Jan. 9 & 10, 2023  
Mixed & Mastered at Morrisound Studios  
Recording & Mixing Engineers: Jim Morris, Tom Morris  
Mastering Engineer: Jim Morris  
Additional Recording Assistance: Keith Ganz  
Cover Art:  
Photography:

## Acknowledgements

All composers are utterly dependent upon the talented musicians who interpret and perform their works. In jazz, however, the composer (at least the smart jazz composer!) seeks to

surround him or herself with artists that go beyond simply realizing the notes on the page; imbuing the music with their own sensibilities . . . often taking it in directions that the composer only wishes he/she had conjured up! With each passing year, I recognize more and more how thrilling it is . . . and how lucky I am . . . to work with such wonderful musicians and friends. Jack and Mark have been with me from the very first Jazz Surge album while Corey, Danny and Sara have all collaborated on multiple recording projects and performances. They are like a second family.

It was, however, my first time to get to work with both Matt and Kate. An ardent fan of each for years, I relished the opportunity for Matt to put his playful spin on these tunes while the sound of Kate's mellifluous voice was never far from my ear while writing these tunes – even before I approached her about doing the recording! They immediately fit right into the family, and I can't thank them enough for their trust, energy, and creative contributions.

I started working with Tom Morris 40 years ago. He has engineered all 7 Jazz Surge recordings (co-producing some as well) in addition to letting me occasionally beat him in racquetball. I've known Jim, Tom's brother, and co-owner of Morrisound Studios, for just as long. Although Jim was typically busy engineering other projects during Surge sessions, we would frequently consult with him whenever another perspective was needed. He was always willing to jump in when Tom was unavailable, or the size and timeline of the project required a second engineer. While Tom recorded the first instrumental session, in the 3 and a half years between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> recording sessions for this album, his Meniere's Disease worsened to the point that he could no longer trust his hearing would be reliable. Jim jumped in seamlessly – embracing this project in a way that goes far, far beyond just the professionalism one would expect. I am so lucky to get to work with these two and thank them profusely for their dedication, enthusiasm, and patience in helping to realize my musical vision while making work in the studio so much fun!

While always evolving (just since the last Surge recording, I believe we've added a son and daughter in-law, a serious girlfriend, 2 more grandchildren, and close to a dozen dogs, cats, rabbits, & rats), I can't thank my family enough for their unconditional support and love. It means absolutely everything to me!! I think they are all a bit mystified at what my version of "retirement" looks like; but it will all be worth it if I've finally written something my children or grandkids might sing!

### **Composers' Notes**

Magic Light is a phrase I first heard in reference to the "Golden Hour" – that early morning or evening hour just after sunrise or before sunset when the sun's indirect and "soft" rays create the perfect ambiance for serious photographers. I'm not the latter (although that's another bucket list goal); but I've always admired the dedication and amazing lengths to which they often go to make sure they capture that elusive light.

As some may recall, I'm a fan of the stunning photos of Clyde Butcher, whose "Shell Island" adorned the cover of my 3<sup>rd</sup> album with the Jazz Surge, "Here We Are". Clyde is known to trudge miles through the swamps of the Everglades braving gators and snakes while lugging his unwieldy large-format camera (he still uses film!), tripod, and other equipment – only to wait patiently for just the right light before "snapping" the one or two shots he has envisioned.

It was this image of Clyde – conflated somewhat with a trip to Arches National Park where my son similarly climbed over rocks onto narrow ledges to get his perfect shot – that formed the crux of the lyrics for the song "Magic Light".

As a composer, I consider myself a storyteller. At least that's what I've always aspired to. . . . taking the devoted listener on a journey . . . one in which I hope they might share my vision; but, having authored mostly instrumental works to date, accepting that the listener's imagination may lead them to an entirely different world. As long as they take the ride, I'm more than OK with that.

With this project, my first authoring lyrics, I've enjoyed getting the opportunity to be a bit more direct with my intentions and concepts. In a couple of cases, I eagerly revisited previously recorded tunes that had always wanted lyrics . . . I just needed the time and opportunity to write them! "Magic Light" was one such piece - appearing in instrumental form almost 25 years ago on "Madcap" (the Surge's 2nd album). "Can't Remember Why" is a bit more recent – debuting in 2017 on "Whisper's on the Wind".

The other 2 original vocal tunes (Spinning Wheel clearly excepted) are new; both continuing my fascination with Americana - its icons, traditions, values, & heroes – as contrasted against what our present actions, words, and policies appear to value. That theme runs through the instrumental works as well.

The cynic might note that "Magic Light" is much like Americana – a soft filter on a stark reality. In my more optimistic worldview, however, the Golden Hour lens offers a glimpse of what's possible – a window to a better vision, a better future.

In 2021, I "retired" from my position as Professor at the University of South Florida after 40 years. I loved academia. I loved teaching. But, as I look through the viewfinder at the landscape in front of me – now cast in the magic light of sunset, I'm seeing this familiar territory anew. The people . . (so many!) . . I've been fortunate enough to love, laugh with, work with, play with. . . . stand out against what's left of the muted, angled light. And though the past is cast in a benevolent shadow; small vignettes, intimate crannies, and a lone spire are momentarily framed by the angled sun's rays. Areas, in some cases, I've failed to notice before . . much less explore. I intend to do so.

So, the magic in Magic Light? Here's my take:

- It's seeking to capture the perfect moment while knowing there is no such thing.

- It's cherishing and welcoming the unexpected after exhaustive planning and preparation to ensure its absence.
- It's continuing to be astonished, with almost child-like naivete, at the beauty of one's surroundings - even as they change with every tic of the clock.
- Ultimately, for me, it's in seeking (and maybe finding) meaning through creativity.

Magic Light is all around us. I hope you find a little right here.