

Experiments in the Key of Prayer

Volumes I - III

New Music by Bandelion



Bandelions collaborating on this project:

Corissa “Reese” Johnson, Eric Kupers, and Keith Penney

All songs written by Eric Ray Kupers*

with collaboration by Corissa “Reese” Johnson, Keith Penney, GT, and GK.

**Except I Ain’t Got No Home, adapted by Eric from a Woody Guthrie song;*

Forgiveness Practice, adapted by Eric from a practice taught by Jonathan Foust;

Healing Balm 2 co-created by Eric and Reese;

and Five Recollections Practice; adapted by Eric from a practice taught by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Eric: Vocals, Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, Bass, Ukulele, Percussion, Flutes, and sonic bits & bobs.

Reese: Vocals

Keith: Keyboards and Musical Guidance

Kristoph Klover at Flowinglass Studio: Recording, Mixing, & Mastering

GT and GK: Creative and Spiritual Guidance

COMPOSER NOTES ABOUT THIS ALBUM:

This music project emerges out of my lifelong quest to integrate the spiritual practices and art-making processes that have been the core through-lines for my journey. As I turn 50 this year, I'm finally learning to make prayer and meditation my own, primarily through singing. With the help of deepening connections with my ancestors, I'm realizing that the wisdom I sought so fervently from others, has been with me all along. And even though I'd been told that very thing more times than I can count, I had to live my questions over many decades, in order to find my way to embodied answers. These songs are intended as both music to listen to, and guided practices to experiment with. I'm grateful to all the beings who have guided me along the way. May this work be of benefit to all who encounter it.

--Eric Ray Kupers, February 2022

ABOUT ERIC KUPERS:

I am an interdisciplinary teaching artist, focusing primarily on the intersections of inclusive dance, music, storytelling, community ritual, and spiritual practice. I am a grateful visitor on the territories of the Yrgin/Chochenyo/Ohlone & Southern Pomo peoples in Northern California. My people are Ashkenazi Jews that came to Turtle Island from Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe in the early 1900's. And in the words of my teacher Ram Dass, "I'm only Jewish on my parents' side." I am also of the Walks-Between people, including Queer folks, Artists, Activists, Outsiders, Rebels, Mystics, Wizards, Witches, Healers, Visionaries, Weirdos, Queerdoes, and Divergent people from throughout human history. I am a professor and department chair for Theatre and Dance at CSU East Bay, a co-founder and co-director of Dandelion Dancetheater, and create art with Dandelion, Bandelion, Mandolion, the CSUEB Inclusive Interdisciplinary Ensemble, Ultrasonic Current, the Wandering Ensemble, and a diverse, intersecting web of artists.

ABOUT BANDELION/DANDELION:

Founded in 1996 by Eric Kupers and Kimiko Guthrie, Dandelion Dancetheater is situated at the crossroads of dance, theater, music, community activism, healing, and new performance. Bandelion (founded in 2006) is one of Eric's core ensembles within Dandelion. We are inspired by Inclusive Performance, in which people with and without disabilities figure out how to create together and set up accessible structures for performance. Our work includes diverse creative approaches due to abilities/disabilities and devotion to different artistic disciplines. Bandelion is continually experimenting with intersections of artistic forms, ritual, and intimacy.

More Music and Info: www.dandeliondancetheater.org/music/

Painting of Bandelion by Adam Caldwell.

Photos on this document by Eric, Hans Holtan, James Wagner, Adam Caldwell, Bonnie Baskin, Max Sovine, Pete Agraan, Casey Barnett, Faye Chao, UC Davis Department of Theatre and Dance, Cristina Carrasquillo and anonymous.

Graphic Design on CD and USB Drives by Eric, with help from Bill Smith.

NOTE: This album notes document will likely be updated from time to time, so if you want to make sure you have the most recent version, go to www.dandeliondancetheater.org/music/

Volume One: Ancestral Healing Prayers

1. Call to Prayer (*instrumental by Eric*)
2. Ancestor Kin Land
3. Grandfathers Prayer
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5. River of Light
6. Rooted Free
7. This One Here (Elale)
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9. In Search of our Desert Home (*instrumental by Eric*)
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Volume Two: Prayers of Loss and Longing

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2. Learning Being
3. His Own Dance
4. To Do To Die
5. I Ain't Got No Home
6. Love Song to Myself (via my First Love)
7. Happy Song
8. Asking the Stream for Help
9. Healing Balm (*instrumental by Eric*)

Volume Three: Buddh-ish Practices & Beyond

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3. Five Recollections Practice
4. Just This Much
5. Midday Practice
6. Healing Balm 2 (*instrumental-ish by Reese and Eric*)
7. Forgiveness Practice
8. Song for Frank
9. Only Love
10. Lovingkindness Practice
- II. Parting Practice
12. I Open at the Close (*instrumental by Eric*)

Bonus Experiments from Stories of Our People

(Only included on USB Music Card version of album)

1. Rosh Hashanah 5775 (Walk Between With Me)
2. Stories of Our People – There are Many
3. Song for Della (Dance Club Version)
4. The Wind
5. To Be Complete
6. The Seam
7. The Seam – Response
8. What Soft Hand

Volume One: Ancestral Healing Prayers



Ancestor Kin Land

Written by Eric in response to teachings by Corrina Gould of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Ohlone Territory (2021)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Waterphone, & Vocals

Reese: Vocals

I.

Wind, kindles Fire, calls forth Water, creates Earth, creates

II.

Fish, into Legged, and the Winged, to our birth,

III.

Thank You Elder Powers, all around us, please guide us now,

IV.

Thank you, all our Grandmothers, all our Grandfathers, thank you,

V.

Thank you Ohlone, Pomo, and all peoples who are of these lands,

VI.

Thank you artists. Thank you teachers. thanks to all, who are tuning in, to the

VII.

Trees, and other peoples, to the Heart, to constant change, like the

VIII.

Wind, kindles Fire, calls forth Water, creates Earth.



Grandfathers Prayer

Written by Eric in close collaboration with GK and GT, during participation in Ancestral Medicine's courses (2020)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, Flute, Vocals

Keith: Harmony Vocal Guidance

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, please share this space. Wrap me in your wide embrace.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, open the gates. Be with me now in this place.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, I've felt alone, thinking that I had no roots.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, lead me back home. Please help me live in the Truth.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, please share your love, with all those between us not well.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, help us be free, of history's lingering spells.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, I feel such joy. When I can sense you so close.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, please carry on, healing our family's ghosts.

Chorus

**Oh Wayfinders, thank you for all of your gifts
Oh Grandfathers, please help me let go and live**

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, vast open skies, more beauty than I had allowed.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, help me be wise, touching the desert's wise ground.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, fish crocodile, laughing and diving within.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, your bodies smile. I feel like I belong again.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, I see you there - just watching the water flow by.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, I feel your prayer, healing us through from inside.

Chorus

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, dance as our prayer, with mountains, and soil, and trees.
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, these legs we share, in my hips pourin' down through my feet.

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, tuned to the Earth, the dark, fertile power of Love
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, Teach me life's worth, as Deer reminds being's enough

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, circling the fire, a gentle, warm council of men

Grandfathers, elder guides when my soul's tired, please hold and stay close to me then

Chorus

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, I want to learn to let you guide how this unfolds
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, I'm gonna turn towards you and trust the don't know

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, it's like waking up to this unbroken river of light.
Grandfathers, with you now, I can relax in between and throughout day and night

Grandfathers, Healed and Whole, the whole world's new, as I see you've always been here
Grandfathers, Elder Guides, happiness blooms
in kinship with all far and near (3x)



Prayer for Pausing

*Written by Eric during Ancestral Medicine's Voice and Song Ancestral Circle (2021)
Eric: Percussion, Jaw Harp, and Vocals*

Lean back, pause
Lean back, pause
Lean back, pause
We're with you

Drop down, pause
Drop down, pause
Drop down, pause
We're with you

_____, pause
_____, pause
_____, pause
We're with you



River of Light

Written by Eric in close collaboration with GK (2021)

Eric: Ukulele and Vocals

There is a River of Light
Moving in the Tree of Life
There is a River of Light
Grey, Blue, Green, Crystal Wise
I'm part of this River of Light

There is a River of Light
an ancient unbroken line
There is a river of light
An uncontainable sky
I'm part of this River of Light

Grandfathers mine
A River of Light
Grandfathers mine
inside the tree of life
Grandfathers, Ancestors of mine

We are a River of Light
and there's no need to strive
We are a River of Light
beyond all how and why
A River, a River of Light



Rooted Free

*Written by Eric in close collaboration with GT (2021)
Eric: Ukulele, Moyo Drum, Flute, and Vocals*

You showed me your forest face
You brought me back to our home place
You led me deep within
I am blessed we are kin

Our Forest self is underground
and above, inside around
I feel you throughout me
Across time, rooted free

Sharing time, seeds drop down
Root anywhere, we are found
There's no work that must be done
Just pleasuring Earth, Moon, and Sun



This One Here (Elale)

Written by Eric as part of the Wandering in the Wilderness project (2021)

Eric: Mandocello, Flute, and Vocals

Keith: Keyboards

The first day I read the book that unlocked what I'd sought
I lay beside my friend on hallowed hills
We got high and then I died and firmly found my foot
taking the first step toward that which fills

That which fills my gaping holes, & soothes my poisoned wounds
that which always seemed too far away
I left home that night for good, following faint tunes
And I'm still walking this deer path today

The only word that I could find, to help me understand
was double-U Oh double-U, just Wow
That led me to my real name, that gives life to my hands
and I'm still growing into that name now
-into that name now

I am of the Desert.....I am of the water dancing through 'neath the cliffs...
A River of Light, flowing from my ancient fathers, I exist.

*The cave calls...The cave it holds my oldest, deepest sounds
The cave breathes...the power in my bones and in the ground
the power in my bones and in the ground...in the ground*

Lie down beside me.... Lie down and feel this warm earth hold your back
Watch the chatter float by...observe the doubting and the fear and the lack

*The clouds teach...the clouds they sing their secrets in (the) plain sight
The clouds know...they show us how to be more like the sky
they show us how to be more like the sky...like the sky*

E – L – A – L – E: Like “Wow” it holds the Truth in what we find.
Elale guide me...Guide me in and out and up and down my Mind.

*I'm not sure...I'm not sure, but I've learned to improvise.
We came before...We lived & dreamed before it all categorized
lived & dreamed before it all categorized...categorized*

I don't fear trouble...live in-between identities, unknown, and change.
I find great) courage...I go deep and expand out when I'm afraid.

**When we were much too young, we opened ancient doors
and danced within the flowers and the roots
Ever since I've circled back, on rocky, spiral shores,
tryin' to live those visions from my youth**

**For 50 years this body, has waited patiently
And now I'm finally learning to be here
I'm taking birth now as this man, emerging from the wings
I now make love with this one, near and dear
This one here**

I am of the mountains...I am of the dark, moist, fertile, living, breathing soil.
Grandfathers) know me...They walk with me through all my births and deaths and births

*Spiraling...in circles, orbiting, Embracing space
Sharing...Sharing weight & breath & original face
weight & breath & original face...my true face*

Galaxy touching...galaxy touch, galaxy touch more galaxies.
I lead and follow...like the seed that sprouts and returns endlessly

*Locking in... embedded in the pulse of everything
figure 8's... Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. In...
Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. In... Exhale In*

I am of the desert





Thank-Full

Written by Eric as part of a ritual for Rosh Hashanah 5781 (2020)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

**When I feel that nothing is going right.
When I complain of all the things I might.... have done
When it seems that everything just sucks
Then I remember that I am a part of all life.**

I am thankful...for this body
I am thankful...for all the things it does.
I am thankful...for its limitations
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for my ancestors.
I am thankful...for how they're guiding me.
I am thankful...to feel them always with me
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for this planet.
I am thankful...for this land.
I am thankful...for this land's ancient people.
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for my breathing.
I am thankful...for the plants and the trees.
I am thankful...for our collaboration.
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for my mother.
I am thankful...for my dad.

I am thankful...for all who came before them.
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for my sense of wholeness.
I am thankful...that we can feel each other's pain.
I am thankful...that we can work towards our healing
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for my love of movement.
I am thankful...for those who have taught me
I am thankful...for the chance pass it on.
And I am thankful...to be part of all life

I am thankful...for the gift of music.
I am thankful...for the chance to sing and play
I am thankful...for the chance to sing and play with you right here
And I am thankful...to be part of all life



Prayer for Pausing Again

Written by Eric during Ancestral Medicine's Voice and Song Ancestral Circle (2021)

Eric: Frame Drum and Vocals

Lean back, pause
Lean back, pause
Lean back, pause
We're with you

Volume Two – Prayers of Loss and Longing



Initiation

*Written by Eric in response to a particularly fertile therapy session (2021)
Eric: Ukulele, Mandocello, and Vocals*

My initiation has taken 35 years
And I am guessing that the end is still nowhere near
I stepped through the inner gates when I was just 16
I found much more than I could hold, it launched my wandering
And now I see the gates again, and know what I must do
I'll shed my skin like snake my friend and say Goodbye with you
Goodbye to my teenage dreams, my visions of success
Goodbye to things being clean, let's rejoice in the mess

Chorus

Goodbye, Goodbye, Goodbye
Everything that's born has to die
Goodbye, Goodbye, Goodbye
It's a new world. I'm a new girl. Goodbye.

Goodbye to... all illusions of...security
Goodbye to all the folks, who can't really see me
Goodbye to my younger self, who tried so hard to fix,
my family, and unmet needs, that got lost in the mix
Goodbye to the carnival. Goodbye to the stage.
Goodbye to all the plans, and projects still half-made
Goodbye to enlightenment. Goodbye to "someday".
Goodbye to what isn't true, and what gets in the way.

Chorus

Goodbye to shoulds and have-to's, goodbye to fitting in
I offer it all to the fire, let it dissolve in the wind.....*goodbye*



Learning Being

*Written by Eric on/with the Big Island of Hawai'i (2021)
Eric: Ukulele, Moyo Drum, and Vocals*

I'm learning...to learn how to
learn...and I'm trying, to try not to
try...I'm trusting...that I'll trust `at each
turn. And I'm dying...to die before I die

I'm being...this being that is seeing...and I'm
seeing...what it's time for me to hear...I'm
listening...so I can hear how to listen...and I'm
being...so sacredly Queer

I'm waiting...for this fear to keep fading...and I'm making...
what I know will disappear...I'm shaking...as I try to be
patient...and I shiver, when I can't shed my tears

I'm learning...to spend time with beings...who see me,
but who my mind can only feel...I'm?
loving...all this new love I'm discovering...and I'm
following...my best sense of what is real



His Own Dance

Written by Eric as part of Bandelion's Room to Fall Apart project, with arrangement guidance by Keith (2019)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Bass, Percussion, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

He steps on the floor and he scans the whole room
He's wondering if he'll abandon it soon
He's tried for so long to recapture the feel
Through echoes and tunnels and memories he steals

He's shifting and swaying and looking for paths
That unleash the sorrow and harness the wrath
Back and forth, up and down, inside and out
He slips in between all the rain--drops of doubt

Is it safe now to trust that the rest are okay?
Each on their own time and each on their way.
Closing his eyes and adjusting to dark
The landscape both crowded and some-how so stark

Just like a new geyser, the rumbling low
Signals his lack of control of the flow
Mind racing faster and body awake
He's riding the trembles, and shivers, and shakes

Oh – He's seeking his own dance.
Oh, Oh, Oh – He wants to be free
He's all alone (all alone, all alone)
And that's all he needs.
Because he's thinking & checking & worrying if,
he'll do something wrong make some terrible slip
Uh-Oh He's seeking his own dance.

No planning, no knowing, no trying, no time,
He's guided by something He cannot define
He calls on his practice, He calls on techniques

to lift him beyond all the static mind speaks.
He drops even further inside of himself
A current is flowing in rushes and swells
He was thinking and checking and worrying then
But now He's got traction-no if now, just when

The dance found him early, then left him at times,
Uprooted and bleeding He struggled to find
The spark from the ember that started the song
That always returns even after so long

'cause Oh – He's seeking He own dance.
Oh, Oh, Oh – He wants to be free
He's all alone (all alone, all alone)
And that's all He needs.
Because He's sinking & surfing & falling down in,
the patterns and layers--that spiral and spin

Oh He's seeking his own dance.
Oh, Oh, Oh – He wants to be free
Oh He's seeking his own dance.

He's all alone, all alone, all alone...

Truth now seems so long ago
And He can't find his way back home...

Trusting anyway he turns him-
self around now to see

Where is this me, I am seeing from,
now what, or who leads the dance?

Oh, he's dancing...





To Do To Die

Written by Eric for Bandelion's Room to Fall Apart project (2019)

Eric: Mandocello, Bass, Ukulele, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

I want to be complete.
I want to be whole.
I want to feel alive.
I want a satisfied soul

But before I can have any of this
I got some things to do.
So many tasks, I can barely count
And each day there's something new.

To ease my troubled mind,
And sharpen my focus
I write each item down
On my to-do list

I'll never get it all done
But I'll continue to try
I'll keep chipping away, line by line
But some day I will die

It's my to-do list
It's my to-do list
It's all the things I have to do
Before I can find my bliss

How much more time will I have?
Could I have 50 more years?

Or 30, 20, 10 or 1
Or could death already be near?

Nobody knows when their life will end
And so it's hard to prioritize
All the things that are still undone
I need a list called To-Do-To-Die

**It's my To-Do-To-Die list
How do I organize it?
Which are the things I have to do?
To have a great finish**

*Professor Dumbledore said that to the well-organized mind
Death is just the next great adventure
But my mind ain't so organized
I'm afraid I'll just die unsure*

*Others say don't die with regrets
Tell each person "I love you"
I already have and we're still unresolved
So what's a scared guy to do?*

Even if, I work out all the hurt
with all the folks that I know,
Then if we live just one more day
We'll have to start again with more,

So what now should I do?
How do I prepare?
Guided by the to do to die list?
How do I get from here to there?

Maybe there's no way
to finish everything.
Maybe there's no answers.
And that's why we dance and sing.

It seems undone ain't so bad.
A testament to change.
Undone, unwound, and unbound,
my spirit now can range.

**My incomplete life list
will dissolve into mist.
I'll let go of everything,
and rest with how it is.**

I want to be complete.
I want to be whole.
I want to feel alive.
I want a satisfied soul.



I Ain't Got No Home

Original version by Woody Guthrie--adapted here by Eric for Dandelion Dancetheater's MUTT project (2009)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

I ain't got no home, I just a ramble round.
Rest when I can get it, I roam from town to town.
People Make it hard Lord, wherever I may go...
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

I was born a hungry ghost, with a hunger I can't fill.
Followed by a darkness, that's following me still.
I've been fighting so long, can't remember what it's for...
And I ain't got no home, in this world anymore.

I never found my one true love, but I did find a friend.
We walked together for a while, until it had to end.
I wish I hadn't said those things, or stomped right out the door...
Now I ain't got no home, in this world anymore.

I can't find a place, to lay my weary head.
In and out of lovers' arms, in and out of beds.
Nothing lasts, No one stays, and nothing seems for sure...
I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

I wonder who you're with tonight, and if you think of me.
You're the only one I let inside, you somehow found the key.
I didn't think it would feel so bad, to be so all alone...
And I ain't got no home, in this world anymore.

Now I just ramble round and see what I can see.
It's a wide wicked world... sort of funny place to be.
Everyone is smiling, yet deep inside it's cold...
I ain't got no home, in this world anymore.

Sometimes when I'm all alone, and at the edge of sleep.
This whole mess makes sense to me, and I can finally see.
That I ain't meant to understand, I ain't meant to know...
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.



Love Song to Myself (via my First Love)

Written by Eric as part of Bandelion's Arthur in Underland project (2012)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

Keith: Piano

The first time I saw you, and your shy blue eyes,
It seems I remembered the feel.
You stood there, not talking, you shattered the rules
Our quiet hearts filled the air.

Days into lifetimes. You lead us ahead.
Your music seeps into my veins.
Drawn to you like a moth's drawn to the light.
Your body as soft as the rain.

Rumors of male love. My blood starts to rise
I ask you if this could be true.
You hesitate, turn away, then slowly say yes.
I inhale as the room spins.

I pause for a moment. It's been many years,
I think it might finally be here.
I ask, "Can I kiss you?" And as our lips meet,
everything else disappears

Chorus:

No turning back. No anyone else.
Nothing exists but you.
I pour into your eyes. You pour over me.
Nothing exists but you.

We wander the dark streets. We dangle off the edge.
We embrace with a hunger so bold.
I fall and you catch me. I'm covered in bliss.
My ache for you goes on and on.

I finally understand every love song.
I know what the mystics speak of.
I've left home for good now. And you are the one.
Brother and Lover and more.

Chorus

*Your love could take me home.
Let me in -- no longer shall I roam.*

Your eyes are my guide now, my compass, my friend
We stare at each other straight through.
You dive deep inside me, you show me my own.
I long to live in here with you.

Still feel where you touched me. Still taste your soft lips.
When I think of you something unfurls.
30 years later, the longing still lives
But it's now between me and the world.

Chorus

The first time I saw you, and your shy blue eyes,
It seems I remembered the feel.





Happy Song

*Written by Eric out of discussions in Bandelion rehearsals (2015)
Eric: Octave Mandolin, Bass, Ukulele, and Vocals*

Chorus

Most of my songs are sad. But this one's happy.
Even though it's a happy song, it's still a little sad.
Life is for the living and livin' ain't easy.
Singing makes me happy, so this is a happy song.

Most of the things that make me happy, are on the following list.
Even though it's not comprehensive, I think you'll get the gist.
My home, my dogs, dance, and art, taking time to play.
Sitting with my honeypie, each and every day.

Chorus

Sometimes when you're feeling bad, it helps to go outside.
Sometimes you need a friend, sometimes it's best to hide.
Sometimes it goes away on its own like every thing.
When I start to feeling bad, I know it's time to sing.

*I was born a Jew. And we like the sad songs.
For us the sad songs confirm that we all belong.
Once a friend asked me, "Do Jews think sad is happy?"
(I said) Kind of no, and kind of yes. We're complicated folks.*

Sad and Happy, no and yes, chocolate and vanilla.
Good guys, bad guys—Give it a rest, will ya?
Most of the things in real life, are too hard to pin down.
Soon as I think I know for sure, it all turns round and round.

Chorus



Asking the Stream for Help

Written by Eric on the banks of a stream while on retreat at Spirit Rock Meditation Center (2014)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Branches and Reeds, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

On and on
Only knows
Disappear
On and on.

I.
never
heading for the
On and
on.

stopping.
sea.

ahhhh.
into

II.
Please won't you tell me your secrets and teach me to roll on.
I've been alone now for too long; there must be something wrong.
Please won't you tell me your secrets and guide me towards the dawn.
I'm at the end of my answers and need another song.

III.
On and on and on and on and on and on into yourself.
I must find a way back into myself as well.

Into, into, into, into yourself.
I must find a way back into myself as well.

IV.
Just like this (*inhale*) and just like this (*exhale*); roll on.

V.
Just a drop, heading home.

VI.
May this longing... carry us home.
To the ocean... all waters flow.

Volume Three: Buddh-ish Practices & Beyond



IT IS TIME

Written by Eric as part of a ritual for Rosh Hashanah 5776 (2015)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

It is time and all is here
and every moment a new year
every breath and every thought
is born and dies—again we start and

isn't death another moment
just like this one, never knowing
what will happen, moment's new now,
at the same time, growing somehow,

into something beyond naming
always new and always fading,
there's no way to get a hold on,
what we are, but still I sing songs

about searching and the heart-pain
about love and loss and deep shame
about longing just to be with
everything just as it is and...

It is time.



Invocation

*Written as part of Eric's first Ancestral Lineage Healing course with Ancestral Medicine (2020)
Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, Flute, Percussion, and Vocals*

**May all beings be free
May we melt into peace
May I savor our kinship with care.
with thanks for the earth,
trusting death and rebirth
May I remember the beauty we share.**

May my lineages heal.
May I now clearly feel
My wise ancestors strong at my back.
May I learn the true songs
of these lands that I'm on
honor those who first wandered
these paths

**May I trust a bit more
from deep down in my core
May my roots be nourished and smile
May I now listen
Fall in love with this place
May I soften & with all things dance.**

May my mind pour down
fill my torso and hips
As the space inside has no end
we all share this trip
And under it all
Flowing through every wall
May I soften & with all things dance.

**May my allies much older
and wiser than I**

**Protect me and show me the way
May I learn to be humble
and hold the big view
May I soften and with all things dance**

May I cherish this body
as part of the earth
Love this vessel at last, as is
Breath moving free
back and forth with the trees
May I soften and with all things dance.

**May I slow myself down
May I taste all around
May I honor the Water and Space
And the Fire and the Wind
May I return again
To the deeper truths here in this place**

May anything that isn't
mine in my space
let go and return to its source
May we each do the work
we have taken birth for
Let each find their own way in due course

May all beings be free
May we melt into peace
May I savor our kinship with care.
with thanks for the earth,
trusting death and rebirth
May I remember the beauty we share.

**And under it all
Flowing through every wall
May I soften & with all things dance.
May I soften & with all things dance.
May I soften & with all things dance.**





Five Recollections Song

adapted by Eric from Thich Nhat Hanh's rendering of traditional Buddhist reflections (2020)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Bass, and Vocals

I am of the nature to die.
There is no way to escape my own death.
I am of the nature to die.
I will die. I will die.

I am of the nature to grow old.
There is no way to escape growing old.
I am of the nature to grow old.
I will grow old. I will grow old.

I am of the nature to be ill.
There is no way to escape bein' ill.
I am of the nature to be ill.
I will be ill. I will be ill.

All that is dear to me & everyone I love are of the nature to change.

*There is no way to hold on to anything
No way to hold...I will let go*

My actions have consequences.
I cannot escape the consequences of my acts.
I can practice acting more skillfully.
Right here now. Here right now.

I am of the nature to die.
There is no way to escape my own death.
I am of the nature to die.
I will die. I will die.
I will die. I will die.



Just This Much

Written by Eric as part of a ritual for Yom Kippur 5776 (2015)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

This is just
Just this breath.
Just this much, can't
help the rest

this poor mind
just wants to rest
no more "more, "
drop the tests

only this
now just this
nothing more, and
nothing less

now I see
we won't reach next
only this
just this step

only here
is all we get
nothing more, and
nothing less

And it's
an ancient gift
reminding me to live
in just this



Midday Practice

Written by Eric (2021)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Bass, Percussion, and Vocals

This is the song that I sing in the middle of the day to remember to come back to my body and to

feel all the feelings that I feel and to trust my inner guidance and not be so concerned with what other people

think about me and the choices I make and it's so hard to do so I sing this song to re-

turn to myself and my spirit and my ancestors and my intuition...

my intuition...

my intuition...

(It is a)

short song...a to the point song...a practical song...a song to sing any time and any-

where song...and so I'm singing, this midday song to remember my spirit and my breath...

my spirit and my breath...

my spirit and my breath...



Forgiveness Practice Song

Written by Eric, adapted from a forgiveness practice taught by Jonathan Foust

Eric: Mandocello, Ukulele, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

May I allow myself to be imperfect.
May I allow myself to make mistakes.
May I allow myself to be a learner.
Still learning...still learning life's lessons.

May I forgive myself for my actions
If I can't forgive me now, may I someday
May I hold myself in the heart of kindness
Even as I'm imperfectly...still learning life's lessons.

May I allow you to be imperfect.
May I allow you to make mistakes.
May I allow you to be a learner.
Still learning...still learning life's lessons.

May I forgive you for your actions
If I can't forgive you now, may I someday
May I hold us both in the heart of kindness
Even as we're imperfectly...still learning life's lessons.

Please allow me to be imperfect.
Please allow me to make mistakes.
Please allow me to be a learner.
Still learning...still learning life's lessons.

Please forgive me for my actions
If you can't forgive me now, may you someday
Please hold us both in the heart of kindness
Even as we're imperfectly...still learning life's lessons.

*It seems that forgiveness is never finished.
It seems we return again and again and again
It seems we lay our burdens down in stages
As we're Imperfectly...still learning life's lessons*

May we all allow us all to be imperfect.
May we all allow us all to make mistakes.
May we all hold us all in the heart of kindness
Even as we're imperfectly...still learning life's lessons.



Song for Frank

Written by Eric in honor of Frank Shawl's passing (2019)

Eric: Ukulele, Bass, and Vocals

Keith: Keyboards

Reese: Vocals

How ya doin'? I'm doin'
How ya doin'? I'm doin'
How ya doin'? I'm doin' great.

Isn't it a joy? Aren't we lucky?
Isn't it a joy? Aren't we lucky?



Only Love

Written by Eric (2013)

Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

Only love when I see your face. Only Love. Only Love.
Only love when you call out my name. Only Love. Only Love.

Only Love Love Love (2x)

Only love when I hold your hand. Only Love. Only Love.
Only love when we don't understand. Only Love. Only Love.

Only Love Love Love (2x)

Only love when we start to fight.
Only love when you're frightened at night.
Only love when it turns upside down.
Only love when we can't find the ground.
Only love while we're building our home.
Only love when the heart turns to stone.

Only Love Love Love (2x)

You are a part of me.
You are my family.

Only love when things aren't going well. Only Love. Only Love.
Only love are the stories we'll tell. Only Love. Only Love.

Only love in my dream long ago. Only Love. Only Love.
Only love will guide us I know. Only Love. Only Love.

Only Love Love Love (2x)



Lovingkindness Practice

Written by Eric during a flare-up of OCD anxiety (2020)

Eric: Octave Mandolin, Flute, and Vocals

Reese: Vocals

Hold...your heart, your frightened heart
in the arms of loving-kindness
Like a baby,
Like your precious only child

Hold...your mind, your striving (*confused*) mind
in the cave of the Great Bear
Protected and warm,
safe to just let it be

Hold....your self, your whole self
In the softness of the vastness
trust, from deep inside
that all will be alright

Hold...your heart, your hurting (*tender*) heart
in the arms of loving-kindness
Like a baby,
Like your precious only child



Parting Song

*Written by Eric on/with the island of Maui, after being gifted my first Ukulele from the Bandelions.
Eric: Mandocello, Octave Mandolin, and Vocals
Reese: Vocals*

The main event is over.
We're not going to do a bow.
We warm up to get ready.
And now we will cool down.

This song will mark the ending,
Of what we came to do.
You can listen, or sing, or dance, or sit,
It's totally up to you.

It's also fine to leave now.
And it's fine to stay.
This time is meant for integrating
Each in our own way.

Now I'll sing the chorus,
And then some verses too.
Thank you all for being here.
And for being you.

Chorus

**Goodbye dear friends. May we meet soon again.
May your paths be filled with delight.
May we honor the pain and the beauty we shared.
May we journey on safe through the night. (3x)**

Every beginning must end with an end.
Every snail must leave its shell.
So let us come close now, and after three breaths.
We'll bid our beginnings farewell. (3x)

Sometimes after parting, I can't find my way.
I feel like I'm lost out at sea.
This too is part of our learning, our love.
It's part of the truth that we seek. (3x)

Chorus

Please forgive me any hurts that I caused,
for times that I did things unkind.
I'll do the same for your fears and faux pas'.
This long road gets rocky sometimes. (3x)

We never know what the next moment will bring.
Don't know if we'll meet up again.
But in this strange world as we wander along
I'm so glad to know you, my friends. (3x)

Chorus



Bonus Tracks: Experiments from Bandelion's *Stories of Our People*



These musical experiments from Bandelion's first album, *Stories of Our People* feel like the “prequels” to *Experiments in the Key of Prayer*, and so are included in the USB Music Card version of this album. The full *Stories of Our People* album is available on all the usual music platforms and through www.dandeliondancetheater.org/music/

On these recordings:

Chris: *Cello, Looper, Spoken Text*

Christof: *Clarinet, Backing Vocals*

Corissa: *Lead and Backing Vocals, Cajon*

Eric: *Lead and Backing Vocals, Ukulele, Looper, Bass and Tenor Banjos, Djembe, Cajón, Percussion, Moyo Drum, Spoken Text*

Keith: *Keyboards, Accordion, Djembe, Lead Vocals on The Wind, Spoken Text*

Anne-Lise: *Backing Vocals, Spoken Text, Lead Vocals on The Wind*

Frances: *Spoken Text*

Music and Lyrics by Eric Kupers in collaboration with Bandelion except where noted*

*Note: All of these songs were created as Bandelion worked on the performance piece, Stories of Our People (2015.)
Some ended up in the shows, some stayed behind the scenes and fueled us in other ways.*

1. Rosh Hashanah 5775 (Walk Between With Me)
2. Stories of Our People – There are Many *Words by Andrew Ramer, adapted by Eric
3. Song for Della (Dance Club Version)
4. The Wind
5. To Be Complete
6. The Seam *Lyrics by Dawn Holtan
7. What Soft Hand
8. The Seam – Response



Rosh Hashanah 5775 (Walk Between With Me)

Note: I've always felt disconnected from traditional Jewish religious services, especially around the High Holy Days. In year 5775 (2014-15) I began celebrating the Jewish New Year with a ceremony that is spiritually customized for my particular collection of habits, inclinations, and yearnings—writing a new song on both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I might use the songs in performance, or they might remain private. This feels like a form of prayer I can do wholeheartedly. this song was written on Rosh Hashanah 5775 and became an important part of my practice this year. --Eric

Walk between with me.
There are no guarantees; and nothing is easy...
but life is queer everywhere; and here we are;
I can only be me...

Home is a story I dreamed of so long ago.
When I was young, and I didn't know.

Dodi li va-ani lo
Haro eh basho shanim...

Hebrew Lyrics: Traditional;
Translation: *My beloved is mine, I am his, The shepherd among the lilies...*



Stories of Our People – There are Many

**Words by Andrew Ramer, adapted by Eric*

There are many stories of our people.

Sometimes we are called the *Man-Woman People*,
and sometimes we are called the *Not Man-Not Woman People*.

Because of our connection to the air, we are sometimes called the *People with Wings*, or the *Fairy People*.
And because of our connection to the Earth, we are called the *Fruit People*, and the *Faggot People*,
which means the *Bundle of Sticks Tied Together People*.

We have been called the *Fixes the Hair People* and the *Makes Beautiful Lodges People*.
Sometimes we are called the *Like-That People*, the *Happy People*, or the *Strange People*.

Some have called us the *Creative People*, the *Misfit People*. or the *Wild People*.

Because we travel on our own, beyond the known lands, without maps,
we are sometimes called the *Alone People*, or the *Outsider People*,

But of all the names we have called ourselves and been called, my favorite is the *Walks Between People*.

After Father Earth had made all the different people, he saw that every people was staying in its own place, keeping its own kind of beauty. So he asked Grandmother Sun. She thought about it, and she thought about it, and she thought. She got so tired thinking that she fell asleep. And while she was sleeping, she dreamed. And in her dream, a new kind of people appeared, the *Walks Between People*—the People who walk between women and men, who walk between night and day, who walk between the sky and the earth, who walk between the living and the dead, connecting them, carrying their beauty back and forth and forth and back. And she was happy. And Father Earth was happy.

As we have grown, we have planted *Walks Between* seeds. And now in this time, those seeds have begun to sprout in all places, so that there are those who are part of other peoples, but they are growing eyes that see as *Walks Between* eyes see, and ears that hear as *Walks Between* ears hear, and hearts that feel as *Walks Between* Hearts feel. They are growing *Walks Between* songs inside of them, so that even when we are walking between,
they can remember all kinds of beauty.



Song for Della – Dance Club Version

Note: Della Davidson remains my primary artistic mentor. I studied with her, danced in her companies, and went to her over and over to understand my work from deeper perspectives. Her death in 2012 affected me profoundly. I didn't feel done with our mentor/mentee relationship. So I'm doing my best to continue seeking her guidance with the intuitive form our relationship now takes. I wrote this song just after her death. This Dance Club Version arose out of a desire to continue to actively remember Della in my work, while honoring the side of her that loved ecstatic dance ritual onstage. It is my hope that many people will dance to this song, in many different ways, touching into the wild mystery that Della led so many of us into. --Eric

Ahava / v'Rachamim / Chesed / v'Shalom

Chorus:

The breath inside the breath; The fire that fuels the fire;
A light shining, no one will ever see.
The wind under the ground; The un-hearable sound;
The tiny bridge you pause upon, crossing into sleep.

Do you ever get lost without a name in the fog?
Do you ever seek something obscene?
Will you pay the cost for the beauty beyond,
all reason and all that you think?

Chorus

There's a treasure below, it's all covered in stone.
There's a truth that you cannot be told.
Try watching and waiting. Try slipping through shadows.
Try drinking the unending sky.

Chorus

This breath, no longer yours.
This body, just a passing song.

Ahava / v'Rachamim / Chesed / v'Shalom

Hebrew lyrics and melody adapted from Kehilla Community Synagogue
Translation: Love; Mercy, Compassion; Charity, Good Deeds; Peace

The Wind

Written by Eric on/with the island of Maui, after being gifted my first Ukulele from the Bandelions. (2014)

Shimmering, kissing trees. Older, than all beliefs.
Empty...yet bursting seams. Moving, only moving.

No birth, and no demise. Sees all, ground-body-sky.
Carries, my longing home. Maybe, I'm not alone.

Wondering, how you began. Savoring, your tender hands.
Waiting for your embrace. Knowing you'll leave no trace.

Hear me, Hear me now. Take my, pain somehow.



To Be Complete

Written by Eric (2014)

Grass grows green, then brown,
Sun and sky, turn round,
Clouds come up, then down,
Grass grows green, then brown.

I don't want to get to the end of my time,
never knowing what it is to be complete.

I forgot our stories.
I don't know our land.

Growing up, growing up, growing up, and down.



The Seam

Music created by Eric and Bandelion, Lyrics by Dawn Holtan (2014)

I want to touch the seam where sky meets sea.
At dusk, the clouds will sing to me,
And cresting ocean heave a shadowed sigh,
I know I'll hear you speak if I just try.

Your voice will come to me, this place is ours.
I train myself to trace you in the stars,
Me an anchor plunged deep into the sand.
I taste the salt as if it were a man.

I came to touch the seam where sky meets sea.
At dusk, the clouds were thick--I could not breathe.
And cresting ocean heaved a shadowed sigh.
I want to hear your voice, to taste your cry.

Speak to me. Please speak to me.

Bright moon sunken deep beneath the black,
I cannot stop the tide. I want you back.
Alone--dark seam—I came to touch that line,
Where a silent fish bends the light.

If I could touch the seam where sky meets sea.
At dawn, the clouds will break. And I will see.
And cresting ocean heaves a shadowed sigh.
This empty silver night, I let you die.



The Seam – Response

Written by Eric and Bandelion (2015)

I can hear the words that you're saying.
But I don't know, what do you mean?



What Soft Hand

Written by Eric on a solo trip to Taos, New Mexico (2015)

It's like leaning over a bridge that crosses the canyon.
It's like watching the train come in only inches from where you're standing.
It's like sitting behind the wheel, when just one slip will bring your ending.

It's like asking each other if something could have been different.
It's like looking at someone's kids, knowing all the pain they're in for.
It's like seeking another chance, when your heart is raw and winded.

You've been thinking, when you should act. You've been hoping, when you should move on.
You've been searching, through your past, wonderin' where has all your truth gone.
You've been knowing there's no return and can't find nothing to get a boost from

What knocks you down? What dusts you off?
What helps you forget just enough?
What whispers deep, just out of reach?
What brings a song when you've given up?

When the going has been too hard, and there's no sign of it easing.
When your love has lost its charge and you don't know who you're pleasing.
When the stories that led you on now just leave you dry and empty.

It's like walking way too far, without water, or a companion.
It's like waking in the dark, filled with fear of all you can't know.
It's like nothing seems to help but, somehow, you're still standing.

What moves your breath? What tells you when?
What gives the glimpse, beyond wrong and right?

What keeps you here? What holds you near?
What soft hand guides you through the night?



**EXPERIMENTS IN THE KEY OF PRAYER, VOLUMES I – III
& STORIES OF OUR PEOPLE**

Recorded, Engineered, Mixed, and Mastered at
Flowinglass Music in Oakland, CA, by Kristoph Klover
www.floatingglass.com

Produced by Eric Kupers, Dandelion Dancetheater, the Dandelion Seeds,
and the CSU East Bay Department of Theatre and Dance
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Special thanks to all our collaborators, teachers, ancestors, heroes, partners, families, pets,
and the fertile, spiraling circles of Dandelion Dancetheater.

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