

TONIC

Finding Euphoria

A New Musical

Book, Music & Lyrics by Richard Ehrlich

Based on the GoYou! Book Series

Copyright © 2025 Richard Ehrlich

Running Time: 80 minutes, no intermission

CAST:

The ENSEMBLE represents six emotional voices — HOPE, FEAR, DOUBT, LOVE, COURAGE, and JOY. Flexible casting - any gender configuration works for the ensemble. "ENSEMBLE" (without label) indicates all voices together.

MALE VOICE (nameless)

FEMALE VOICE (nameless)

ENSEMBLE (6 performers):

HOPE

FEAR

LOVE

COURAGE

DOUBT

JOY

BAND: Visible on stage (piano/keys, guitar, bass, percussion, optional strings)

SETTING:

A theatrical space. Minimal set - perhaps a circular platform. The band is visible, integrated into the space. Warm lighting (amber, gold, soft blues). The focus is on bodies, light, and music. The stage should feel intimate - part concert venue, part sacred gathering, part living room.

PROLOGUE - THE TONIC NOTE

As the audience enters, curated music plays. House lights remain partially up. The band is visible, warming up casually. The ensemble sits scattered on stage, being human - stretching, breathing, present.

As "curtain time" approaches, the music fades. House lights dim slowly but do not go to black.

Cool blue light. A low hum fills the air. The audience is half-lit.

The male voice enters from the audience, walking casually. The female voice enters from the opposite side.

They reach the stage, look at each other, nod - like two old friends who know what they're about to do.

They turn to the audience. A breath.

MALE VOICE

Let me ask you something. Have you ever had a moment — just one — where everything around you finally stopped pulling at you? Not quiet, exactly. just a moment where life didn't feel like it needed an answer from you.

FEMALE VOICE

It doesn't happen often. Most days we're running, reacting, trying to stay upright. But every now and then, without warning, something settles. And in that tiny opening. you notice a part of yourself you forgot was there.

MALE VOICE

It's familiar. Calm without being still. A steady feeling the kind that doesn't perform or push. You don't have to go looking for it. It's been waiting for you to pause long enough to notice.

FEMALE VOICE

You feel it now, don't you? That quiet steadiness not in your body, not in your breath.
just you. The version of you that existed before the pressure, before the pace, before the
trying.

FEMALE VOICE

Right here.

MALE VOICE

That's it. That's the tonic note.

(Music begins.)

SONG 1: "THE TONIC NOTE"

The ensemble rises slowly, beginning to sway. Movement is natural, organic.

MALE VOICE: *(Starting quietly, building)*

I've been chasing louder rooms

Just to hear myself think

But the truth is in the quiet

Where the words don't have to link

There's a note that never wavers

Doesn't beg for anyone

When the noise begins to crumble

That's the place I call home

FEMALE VOICE: *(joining)*

I forgot it for a minute

Got distracted by the crowd

*By the headlines, by performing
By being brave out loud*

*But beneath the practiced smiling
There's a hum that doesn't move
If you listen for a heartbeat
You can feel it start to groove*

ENSEMBLE: *(soft harmonies)*

*Underneath the chatter
Underneath the fear
There's a tone that's saying
I am still here*

ALL:

*This is the sound that centers me
When the world spins out too fast
It's the hum beneath the chaos
That says, "You're safe at last."*

*This is the tonic note —
The home I can't misplace
The sound I knew before I knew
To hide a single face*

*When everything is off-key
And life is running fast
The tonic note reminds us
We've made it home at last*

ENSEMBLE: *(gentle reprise)*

*Underneath the chatter
Underneath the fear
There's a tone that's singing
I am still here*

ALL: *(final chorus reprise)*

*This is the tonic note —
The home we can't misplace
The sound we knew before we knew
To hide a single face*

*When everything is off-key
And life is running fast
The tonic note reminds us —
We've made it home at last
(soft vocal echo)
We've made it home...
At last.*

TRANSITION 1

The voices let the moment settle. They look at each other, slight smiles.

FEMALE VOICE: (to audience, conversational) Peace never lasts long though, does it?
(to Male Voice) My head's already drumming again.

MALE VOICE: Mine's humming headlines. Replaying that conversation from Tuesday.
Making mental lists of everything I should have said differently.

FEMALE VOICE: (to audience) You know that thing your brain does? Where it takes
one small moment - one awkward pause in a conversation, one email you sent too quickly
- and turns it into a full-scale catastrophe?

(She walks downstage.)

I once spent an entire week convinced I'd ruined my career because I used the wrong
emoji in an email. A week. The person didn't even notice. But my brain was already
writing my resignation letter, planning my apology tour, catastrophizing my entire
professional reputation.

MALE VOICE: (laughs) I once had a panic attack in a restaurant because when the
server said "enjoy your meal," I said "you too." Spent the next hour convinced everyone
in that restaurant thought I was an idiot. They probably forgot about it in five seconds.
I'm still thinking about it.

FEMALE VOICE: (to audience) Our brains are wildly creative. I mean, truly. Olympic-
level overthinkers. World-class catastrophizers. Experts at turning absolutely nothing into
everything.

MALE VOICE: So let's give the noise a beat. (to ensemble) Show them what it sounds
like.

(Drum loop enters. Lights snap to bright rhythm. The ensemble becomes energized.)

SONG 2: "THE STATIC"

HOPE:

(soft, tense, almost whispered)

What if I said the wrong thing?

What if I don't belong?

*The room feels louder every day —
I can't hear my song.*

FEAR:

*What if I missed my moment?
What if I peaked last year?
Every time I say "I'm fine,"
The echo isn't clear.*

ENSEMBLE (layered entry, overlapping voices):

*What if, what if, what if, what if —
Static on the signal, buzzing in the line,
Every "what if" whisper saying "you're behind."*

(beat drop, drums pulse softly)

FEMALE VOICE:

*The mind makes lightning,
The mind makes storms,
It builds a thousand monsters
Out of normal forms.*

ENSEMBLE (growing intensity):

*All this noise, all this spin,
How do we ever let the quiet in?*

CHORUS (new, centered and cinematic):

But listen - underneath the noise, there's music,

Underneath the storm, there's tone.

Even when your mind's electric,

You are never alone.

There's rhythm in the chaos,

There's melody in fear —

Listen close, the harmony

Is trying to appear.

COMIC BRIDGE (character-driven):

MALE VOICE: *Brain, stop scrolling.*

ENSEMBLE: *Just one more thought!*

FEMALE VOICE: *Brain, please breathe.*

ENSEMBLE: *What if we're caught?*

ALL (half-laughing):

Static, static, let it play —

Till the noise starts fading away.

CHORUS 2 (lift, modulation to C major):

Static fades to harmony,

Fear becomes a tune.

Every mind a melody,

Learning to make room.

*What if the noise was music,
Just needing time to clear?
Listen — through the static —
Your heart is still right here.*

OUTRO (quiet, sustained chord):

(whispered ensemble)

Right here...

Still here...

Through the static...

You're here.

TRANSITION 2

The laughter settles. The voices and ensemble breathe. The energy shifts - going deeper now.

MALE VOICE: (smiling, then more serious) See? Your brain is hilarious. Absolutely ridiculous.

(Beat. The smile fades.)

But here's the thing. We make all that noise - all that static - so we don't have to hear what's underneath it.

FEMALE VOICE: The ache. The weight. The things we've been carrying so long we forgot they weren't always ours.

MALE VOICE: I spent years - decades, really - trying to be the right amount of everything. Not too loud, but not too quiet. Not too ambitious, but not too lazy. Not too serious, but not too silly. I thought if I could just find the perfect volume, the perfect tone... people would want me around.

(He looks at an ensemble member.)

I was so busy trying to be acceptable that I forgot to just... be.

FEMALE VOICE: I kept a polished version of myself on display. The one who had it together. The one who could handle anything. The one who never cracked under pressure. I showed her to everyone - my boss, my family, my friends. Even people I barely knew.

(Long pause.)

But underneath all that polish was someone exhausted. Someone who just wanted permission to not be strong for five minutes. Someone who was drowning while everyone thought she was swimming.

(She looks at an ensemble member.)

And the worst part? I thought that exhaustion meant I was failing. That needing help meant I was weak.

MALE VOICE: We carry these stories. Some we wrote ourselves. Some were written for us by people who loved us but didn't know better. Some we don't even remember picking up - we've just been carrying them so long, we think they're part of who we are.

FEMALE VOICE: But they're not. (to ensemble) Listen close.

(Lights fade to amber. Musical underscoring begins - tender, building.)

SONG 3: "WHAT WE CARRY"

This is the first tears moment. Each ensemble character steps forward with their specific story.

ALL

I keep a polished version Of who I'm meant to be I show myself to the people Who expect that side of me

But under every triumph There's a quiet little plea — Will anybody love me If I finally let them see?

ENSEMBLE - THE GHOST: *I mastered disappearing Being easy, being small If I never take up space here I'll never risk a fall*

But I'm tired of this nothing Of this pretty, painted wall — I was made to be a voice Not an echo down the hall

ENSEMBLE - THE FIXER: *I save everyone but me I fix what isn't mine If I keep everyone else steady Maybe I'll feel fine*

But who catches me when I'm falling? Who hears me when I call? I'm drowning while I'm saving Everyone but me at all

ENSEMBLE - THE HEART: *They said I feel too much Like that's something to correct So I learned to smile through everything And never let it affect*

But all that swallowed feeling Has to go somewhere inside And I'm so tired of pretending That I'm fine when I've just cried

FEMALE VOICE: (soft, over music) *None of this is weakness — it's just weight*

MALE VOICE: *You were never broken — just late*

ALL: *These are the stories we carry Heavy and holy and real Some that we wrote Some that were spoken Some we were forced to feel*

But right here, the burden is lighter Right here, the truth can be heard Lay it down, lay it down, lay it down — We'll honor every word

TRANSITION 3

The voices and ensemble stand in the silence. Breathing together. The male voice sits on the edge of the stage.

MALE VOICE: (after a long pause, to audience) Okay. So. Now what? When the weight feels heavy and the stories start looping and the static starts buzzing again... what do we actually do?

(He looks at Female Voice.)

FEMALE VOICE: Here's what I learned. (she sits beside him) When everything is happening up here (points to head), we come back here. (gestures to body, to chest, to feet)

MALE VOICE: Not the thoughts about the breath. Just the breath itself. Not the story about what's happening. Just what's actually happening. Right now. In this body. In this moment.

FEMALE VOICE: It's almost too simple. Which is probably why we forget. We think the answer has to be complicated. Has to involve fixing ourselves or figuring everything out or finally getting our shit together.

MALE VOICE: But sometimes the answer is just... breathe. Feel your feet on the ground. Come back to what's real.

FEMALE VOICE: (to audience) Want to try it with us?

(They stand. Band begins a steady groove - grounding, rhythmic, almost meditative.)

SONG 4: "BREATHE IT OUT"

The ensemble moves in unison - not choreographed dance, just synchronized breathing and swaying. This is grounding, resetting.

MALE VOICE (spoken rhythm over groove): *When the thoughts get loud And the spiral starts There's a way back down It's not in your head It's in your body*

FEMALE VOICE (singing): *Breathe it in Breathe it out Feel your feet On the ground*

ENSEMBLE (echoing): *Breathe it in (breathe it in) Breathe it out (breathe it out) Feel your feet (feel your feet) On the ground (on the ground)*

MALE VOICE: *You're right here Right now This moment That's all*

ENSEMBLE: *Right here (right here) Right now (right now) This moment (this moment) That's all (that's all)*

BOTH VOICES: *Not yesterday Not tomorrow Not the story Not the sorrow Just this breath Just this beat Just this moment Just your feet*

FULL COMPANY: *Breathe it in, breathe it out Feel your feet on the ground Right here, right now This is all we've got*

Your body knows What your mind forgets Your body knows How to reset

Breathe Just breathe You're here Just be

(Music fades to a heartbeat, then silence. A long pause. Everyone breathing together.)

TRANSITION 4

The voices stand in the silence. The ensemble sits or stands quietly. The energy has shifted - we're in the deepest, most vulnerable territory now.

FEMALE VOICE: (sitting on the edge of the stage, intimate) Can I tell you the moment everything changed for me?

(The male voice sits beside her. They are both vulnerable now.)

I was at my lowest. Like... rock bottom. The kind of low where you wake up and you can't remember what hope feels like. Where you're convinced this is just how it's going to be forever - this heavy, this hard, this exhausting.

(Long pause. She looks out at the audience.)

And I was sitting with someone - a friend, a therapist, I honestly can't even remember who it was now - and they said something so simple it almost felt stupid. They said: "What if you talked to yourself the way you talk to people you love?"

(Beat. She looks at the audience, then at Male Voice.)

And I just... sat there. Because I realized I would never - never - talk to anyone the way I talked to myself. I wouldn't let my worst enemy speak to my best friend the way I spoke to myself in my own head every single day.

(She stands, paces slightly.)

So I started. Small. Really small. Instead of "you're an idiot," it became "okay, you made a mistake." Instead of "you're failing at everything," it became "you're learning, and learning is hard." Instead of "what's wrong with you," it became "you're having a really hard time right now, and that's okay."

(Long pause.)

It felt ridiculous at first. Like I was lying to myself. But slowly - really slowly - it started to shift something.

MALE VOICE: (quietly, to audience) Because here's the thing. If your best friend was sitting here right now, telling you all the things they're worried about, all the ways they think they're failing, all the reasons they think they're not good enough... what would you say to them?

(He looks at an ensemble member who steps forward.)

Show them.

(Music begins - tender, building.)

SONG 5: "IF YOU WERE MY FRIEND"

This is the emotional center of the show. An ensemble member features, but others join.
This is where deep tears happen.

LOVE: (intimate, almost spoken): *If you were my friend Sitting here with me Telling me the stories That you tell yourself each day*

I'd say...

(Singing begins, gentle)

You're doing your best Even when it doesn't feel like enough You're carrying more Than anyone sees on the surface And I know you're tired I know you're scared But you're stronger than you know And you're not alone out there

FEMALE VOICE (joining): *If you were my friend I'd never let you talk the way You talk to yourself I'd never let you say The things you say*

I'd tell you you're worthy Just as you are I'd tell you you're human And that's not a flaw

ENSEMBLE: *I'd tell you it's okay To not be okay I'd tell you you're learning I'd tell you you're brave*

LOVE (building to powerful): *So why can't I say that To the person in the mirror? Why can't I give myself The grace I'd give to anyone here?*

(Peak emotion - this is the major release moment)

What if I told myself "You're doing your best Even when it doesn't feel like enough" What if I said to myself "You're carrying more Than you should, and that's tough"

What if I whispered "I know you're tired I know you're scared But you're stronger than you know And I'm right here"

ALL (gentle but powerful): *I'd tell a friend They're gonna be okay So maybe it's time I heard those words today*

If I were my friend I'd never let me speak The way I do To me

So here's what I'll do: I'll talk to myself The way I'd talk to you

(Final, tender)

You're doing your best You're gonna be okay You're stronger than you know One day at a time One breath One day

(Music ends. Silence. Breath. A very long pause to let this land fully.)

TRANSITION 5

MALE VOICE: (after a long, long pause, quietly) That one gets me every time.

(More silence. They let it sit.)

FEMALE VOICE: (standing, energy shifting slightly) You know what's strange? Once you start talking to yourself with a little more kindness... you start remembering things.

MALE VOICE: Like who you were before all the voices started telling you who you should be.

FEMALE VOICE: I used to dance. Just... dance. In my room, in the kitchen, wherever. I didn't think about whether I looked good or whether I was doing it right. I just moved because it felt good.

MALE VOICE: I used to draw entire worlds. Planets with their own languages. Cities with impossible architecture. I'd spend hours making maps of places that didn't exist. And I never once thought, "Is this good enough? Will anyone like this?"

FEMALE VOICE: When did we stop doing things just because they made us feel alive?

MALE VOICE: Somewhere between childhood and now, someone convinced us that joy had to be earned. That we had to be productive or perfect or approved before we were allowed to just... be.

FEMALE VOICE: (to audience) What did you love before the world told you how you should be? Before someone said you were too loud, or too quiet, or too much, or not enough?

(She looks at an ensemble member.)

Who were you before you learned to hide?

(Acoustic guitar enters - warm, nostalgic.)

SONG 6: "BEFORE THE WORLD TOLD YOU"

This is tender, nostalgic, reclaiming innocence. The ensemble moves like memories - soft, childlike.

FEMALE VOICE: *You used to dance without mirrors You used to sing off-key You used to draw whole planets And name them after you and me*

MALE VOICE: *I used to wear loud colors I used to talk too much Then someone said "be smaller" And I lost my superpower touch*

ENSEMBLE: *Before the world told you How you should move Who you should love What you should prove —*

You were enough You were enough You were enough

COURAGE: *I used to burn so brightly I used to light the room Then someone said "tone it down" So I learned to hide my bloom*

HOPE: *I used to play without winning I used to try and fail Then someone said "be perfect" And I lost my own trail*

ALL: *Before the world told you How you should move Who you should love What you should prove —*

You were enough You were enough You were enough

(Music swells with warmth)

And you still are You still are You still are

(Soft instrumental outro - warm, hopeful. The feeling of remembering.)

TRANSITION 6

The music fades. The voices stand together center stage.

MALE VOICE: Sweet memories aren't destinations though.

FEMALE VOICE: (nods) They're maps. And this one points here. Right now.

MALE VOICE: (looking at ensemble, then audience) You know what's wild?
Somewhere between the noise and the silence... we found ourselves breathing again.

FEMALE VOICE: (quietly) That sound underneath everything?

MALE VOICE: That's you.

FEMALE VOICE: That steady hum we've been looking for—

MALE VOICE: —it was never missing.

FEMALE VOICE: We were just too loud to hear it.

(Beat. They look at each other.)

BOTH: This is what euphoria actually is.

(Music begins - soft piano, building gradually. Gospel soul.)

SONG 7: "EUPHORIA"

This is soft gospel-soul that builds to celebration. Discovery turning to joy.

FEMALE VOICE: (tender, almost a cappella) *You don't have to chase it — It's been here all along You don't have to earn this peace By proving you were strong*

MALE VOICE: *You don't have to climb the mountain You don't have to pray for signs The sound you've been searching for Was humming through the lines*

BOTH: *This is euphoria — Not loud, but true Not perfect, just present Not somewhere new*

When the noise becomes music And the heart says "I'm home" That's euphoria — That's your own

ENSEMBLE: (soft harmonies entering - gospel-influenced) *Ooh... euphoria Ooh... you're home*

FEMALE VOICE: (solo bridge) *All the running, all the reaching All the wanting to arrive — You were already golden Already alive*

MALE VOICE: *Every silence was a promise Every tear a little door — You walked yourself to freedom Without knowing what for*

BOTH: (building gently) *This is euphoria — A breath, a tone A quiet remembering That you were never alone*

ALL: (full company, reverent) *When the noise becomes music When the heart beats slow — That's euphoria That's how you'll know*

(A cappella moment - just voices in harmony)

Euphoria... You're home... Euphoria... You're here...

BOTH VOICES: (whispered) *You're here.*

TRANSITION 7 - FINAL

(The whispered ending of "Euphoria" settles. Everyone breathing. A long pause.)

MALE VOICE: (quietly, wonderingly) So... we found it.

FEMALE VOICE: (smiling, almost laughing) We're here.

(Pause. They look at each other, then at the audience.)

MALE VOICE: Now what?

FEMALE VOICE: (considers this, then looks at him) Now we choose to stay.

MALE VOICE: I've spent a lot of my life waiting for permission. Permission to take up space. Permission to be exactly as I am.

FEMALE VOICE: I've spent a lot of mine saying yes to everyone else. Shrinking to fit. Calling that love.

MALE VOICE: But what if we just... chose ourselves?

FEMALE VOICE: Not in some selfish way.

MALE VOICE: But in a "I'm on my own side" way.

BOTH: What if we decided our own approval was enough?

(Music begins - mid-tempo, building empowerment.)

SONG 8: "I CHOOSE ME"

This is empowerment - earned, not given. The ensemble moves with growing confidence.

MALE VOICE: *I've been renting out my heartbeat To opinions in the room I've been shrinking for approval Calling that my truth*

FEMALE VOICE: *I've been saying yes to everyone So no one leaves I've been loving like a bargain Paying triple underneath*

BOTH: *But today, right here, right now I'm drawing my own line*

ALL: *I choose me — not the perfect, just the true I choose me — even messy, even blue You can stay, you can go You can doubt what I know — But I choose, I choose me*

ENSEMBLE (callouts building): *I choose rest! I choose joy! I choose late-bloom! I choose my voice! I choose trying! I choose failing! I choose learning! I choose me!*

ALL (powerful): *I choose me — not the version they prefer I choose me — even when it makes them stir I'm done apologizing For taking up my space — I choose, I choose me*

MALE VOICE (over the music): *And here's what's wild —*

FEMALE VOICE: *When you choose yourself—*

BOTH: *You give everyone else permission too*

ALL: *One voice steady in a shaky room Is enough to retune everything It ripples, it ripples The second you get clear*

What happens in your chest Starts happening right here It ripples, it ripples Through bodies, breath, and sound

One steady human Can shake the whole room down

(Music builds - celebratory, joyful)

I choose me We choose us I choose me We choose us

(The energy peaks, then begins to settle. The music doesn't stop - it transforms.)

CLOSING

(A gentle instrumental echo of "Euphoria" or the tonic motif continues under this moment and into the audience exit.)

Silence. Then:

MALE VOICE: (very quietly) That sound—

FEMALE VOICE: —that's you.

BOTH: Keep it.

(They don't bow. They simply stand, present, looking at the audience with warmth.)

(The ensemble remains still, holding this empowered presence.)

(Lights fade very slowly - letting the audience stay in this feeling as long as possible.)

(Blackout.)

END OF SHOW