

TONIC

Finding Euphoria

Book, Music & Lyrics by Richard Ehrlich

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Running Time: 80 minutes, no intermission

Scene-by-Scene Overview

Cast: 2 Voices (leads) + 6 Ensemble (HOPE, FEAR, DOUBT, LOVE, COURAGE, JOY) + visible band

PROLOGUE: The Tonic Note (4 min)

The Voices enter casually from the audience as house lights dim. They introduce the central idea: beneath all life's noise (traffic, deadlines, pretending) there's a steady sound. A "tonic note" we've always known but forgotten.

"The Tonic Note" (3.5 min) - Opening anthem establishing that steady hum beneath chaos. Warm, grounding, with soft gospel harmonies.

SCENE 1: The Static (7 min)

The Voices acknowledge how quickly the mind returns to anxiety. They share comedic personal stories about catastrophizing over tiny things (wrong emoji, awkward restaurant moment). Our brains are Olympic-level overthinkers.

"The Static" (3 min) - High-energy, comedic explosion of "what-if" spirals. The ensemble embodies increasingly absurd anxious thoughts. Physical comedy. The audience laughs while recognizing themselves.

SCENE 2: What We Carry (9 min)

Energy shifts deeper. The Voices reveal why we create all that noise: to avoid hearing what's underneath. They get vulnerable, sharing stories about performing perfection while drowning inside. The Male Voice tried to be the "right amount of everything." The Female Voice kept a polished version on display while exhausted underneath.

"What We Carry" (4 min) - Ensemble members step forward with different struggles: perfectionism, people-pleasing, self-erasure, emotional overwhelm. First major tears moment.

SCENE 3: Breathe It Out (5.5 min)

After the weight, the Voices offer something practical: when everything's in your head, come back to your body. Not thoughts about breath, just breath itself. Almost too simple, which is why we forget.

"Breathe It Out" (2.5 min) - Meditative grounding. The ensemble moves in synchronized breathing. Repetitive, hypnotic. The room resets.

SCENE 4: If You Were My Friend (9 min)

The Female Voice shares her turning point: someone asked, "What if you talked to yourself the way you talk to people you love?" She realized she would never speak to anyone the way she speaks to herself. Started small, replacing "you're an idiot" with "you made a mistake."

The Male Voice asks: if your best friend was here telling you all the ways they're failing, what would you say to them?

"If You Were My Friend" (4 min) - The emotional climax. An ensemble member leads: "Why can't I give myself the grace I'd give to anyone else?" Builds to powerful release. Deep catharsis. Extended silence after.

SCENE 5: Before the World Told You (8 min)

Once you start speaking to yourself with kindness, you remember things. The Voices recall who they were before the world told them who to be: dancing without mirrors, creating without judgment. When did we stop doing things just because they made us feel alive?

"Before the World Told You" (3 min) - Tender, nostalgic reclamation. "You were enough. And you still are."

SCENE 6: Euphoria (11 min)

The Voices notice: somewhere between the noise and silence, we found ourselves breathing again. That sound underneath? That's you. This is what euphoria actually is, not a mountaintop or future moment. Just being here fully, without fighting anymore.

"Euphoria" (4 min) - Gospel-soul that builds from tender to celebration. Starts soft and intimate, builds to joyful peak with full company ("I found it! We found it!"), then settles to whispered harmonies. The discovery of peace.

SCENE 7: I Choose Me (Finale) (10 min)

The Voices ask: we found it, now what? Now we choose to stay. The Male Voice has spent his life waiting for permission. The Female Voice has spent hers saying yes to everyone else. But what if they chose themselves? Not selfishly, but clearly: "I'm on my own side."

"I Choose Me" (4.5 min) - Empowerment anthem, earned not given. Call-and-response building ("I choose rest!" "I choose joy!"). The commitment to live from the place of peace they just discovered. Energy peaks with the entire company.

CLOSING (3 min)

Quietly: "That sound, that's you. Keep it." The Voices don't bow, they simply stand present. The ensemble holds this empowered presence. Lights fade slowly. Blackout.

The Journey

The show moves from recognizing the noise in our heads, to releasing the weight we carry, to learning practical grounding, to turning compassion inward, to reclaiming who we were before judgment, to discovering euphoria (the peace that was always here), and finally choosing to live from that place. Eighty minutes.

Production Notes

The show should feel intimate while avoiding preciousness. It's emotional without being manipulative. Conversational, never preachy. Minimal set with visible band: the focus is on bodies and light. House lights stay partially up at beginning and end. Silence matters as much as sound, so don't rush the pauses.

The lighting design is where the budget should go. By the finale the theater should feel bathed in golden light.

For complete script or production materials:

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