

The Rhythm of Your Life

By Eugene Taylor

Have you ever had one of those days? You know the kind, where things went from bad to worse and just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, it did. The rhythm of your life suddenly replaced by a feeling of dread.

Remember how you felt when someone stepped in and helped replace the horrible feeling in the pit of your stomach with hope?

HOPE IS POWERFUL MEDICINE

While I am not a doctor or therapist, and I don't write prescriptions, I do dispense hope. I dispense it generously and there is no danger of overdosing, but there is a possibility of addiction.

HOPE IS ADDICTIVE

Hope is a core component for the mental and emotional well-being of an individual or a functioning group. It is the key factor in my music, which I deliver with the aid of a djembe drum originating in West Africa. The deep penetrating sound is reminiscent to a heart beating. It has a soothing power, uniquely its own. I also use carefully crafted lyrics. It all comes together in music that matches our body's natural rhythms and affects our emotional state.

I spend a lot of time at Rex Hospital where patients are constantly going to and from surgery or testing—times when people are experiencing anxiety and hopelessness. As I transport them, I sing to them and gently tap out rhythms to ease their apprehension and fear. I visit their rooms and lighten their load by being a caring presence. They are surprised and delighted by a simple rhythm and positive song; I'm with them when they are most vulnerable. Often, I will see tears of relief and hope. Often they become my tears.

*Be well my friend, be well
Glad to visit for a spell
Be well my friend, be well
A healing power in you dwells*

Those lines are the chorus from one of the songs I frequently sing. There is hope in those words. There is also care, friendship, and power.

On one occasion, as I had just finished helping a patient to their car, there was a group of motorcyclists at one end of the entrance. One of them came up to me and asked me to sing that song he heard me sing to the released patient. He told me that one of the men in his group had recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness. I glanced at the group and started to play my rhythm and sing as I made my way toward them.

I wasn't sure which of them was the man for whom I was supposed to be singing. I noticed one of them glancing about

nervously; his eyes met mine. I continued to sing. Tears ran down his cheeks. Many tears flowed that afternoon, mine among them.

On another occasion, I was called into Rex Hospital because there was a patient for whom I had sung a few days earlier. The man had received a pretty bad diagnosis and wanted to marry his fiancée as soon as possible, that day, and he wanted me to sing and play the rhythm he'd experienced before.

I've had terminally ill patients take my hand and have been privileged to be part of their reason to smile. They have blessed me beyond words. I am humbled by this gift with which God has entrusted me to bring hope to people, especially those that are undergoing life changes.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History

Eugene Taylor performing at the reception for the museum's online exhibit, "A Change is Gonna Come, Black, Indian, and White Voices for Racial Equality."



When I perform at nursing homes, it is a similar story. People who appear disconnected from reality will often find a connection through this special kind of music. It becomes evident in the glimmer in their eyes and the tapping of their feet.

I frequently play at exercise classes at various gyms. I also perform at festivals, museums, schools, churches, corporate and private affairs. What most people don't realize is that true mental and emotional health requires that we let go of negative emotions to allow room for positive healthy feelings to take root. Then, we must reinforce ourselves with positive messages. This is one of the reasons *The Rhythm of Life* album was produced. Here are a few lines from "Make a Joyous Noise."

*Make a joyous noise
Be free from pain and sorrow
Shout it without care
Today's your new tomorrow
Shout it from your heart
Shout it on the train
Shout it in your car
Shout it in the rain
Make a joyous noise
Let love and mercy reign
Shout your joy with others
Shout it all your days
Shout it when you're working
Shout it when it's busy
Shout it when you're walking
Let 'em think you're crazy*

In working with clients of all ages, I am particularly amazed at how children respond as we engage in this powerful music. I witness remarkable transformations. It's hard to be sad when you are having fun, and it's hard not to have fun while you're beating a drum. There is something magical about it. The children become fully engrossed in their connection. It is a powerful learning experience on so many levels. They learn group dynamics, teamwork, rhythm, counting, self-expression, confidence, and respect.

I am the father of two wonderful little girls—Chloe, 6, and Sasha, 3. They teach me as much as I teach them about the power of this remarkable instrument with the funny name. We share the experience, the rhythms of our lives, and the power we have to shine the light of hope and make other people happy. **hkh**



Eugene Taylor singing to Charles Horton, a patient at Rex Hospital.

THE WELLNESS AMBASSADOR

For over 20 years, Eugene Taylor—"Drum Prophet"—has been entertaining audiences with his unique musical style—an eclectic mix of whistling, finger snapping, drumming, and tapping. And for the past decade, his music has provided therapy to patients at Rex Hospital in Raleigh, as he routinely transported patients to and from surgery while singing to them and tapping out soothing rhythms on a small drum that he carries with him everywhere he goes.

He has carried his unique form of music therapy to patients and healers throughout the region, serving hospital populations with his soothing voice and hopeful words as a "wellness ambassador." His audiences have included staff and patients in hospitals, residents of nursing homes, and schoolchildren from pre-K to eighth grade.

Mr. Taylor is also available for small and large businesses gatherings such as retreats, team building and general celebrations for private and institutional clients; he will also occasionally perform at private parties. He also is available for musical performances as well as talks on *The Rhythm of Life*—his ground-breaking debut album produced with fellow artist songwriter, Diogenes Ruiz.

Fees vary and he can be reached via his on-line form on the website or by email or telephone. For more information or to schedule a visit, **contact Eugene Taylor at: Telephone: 919-522-5558. Email: etdrumprophet@gmail.com. Website: drumprophet.com**