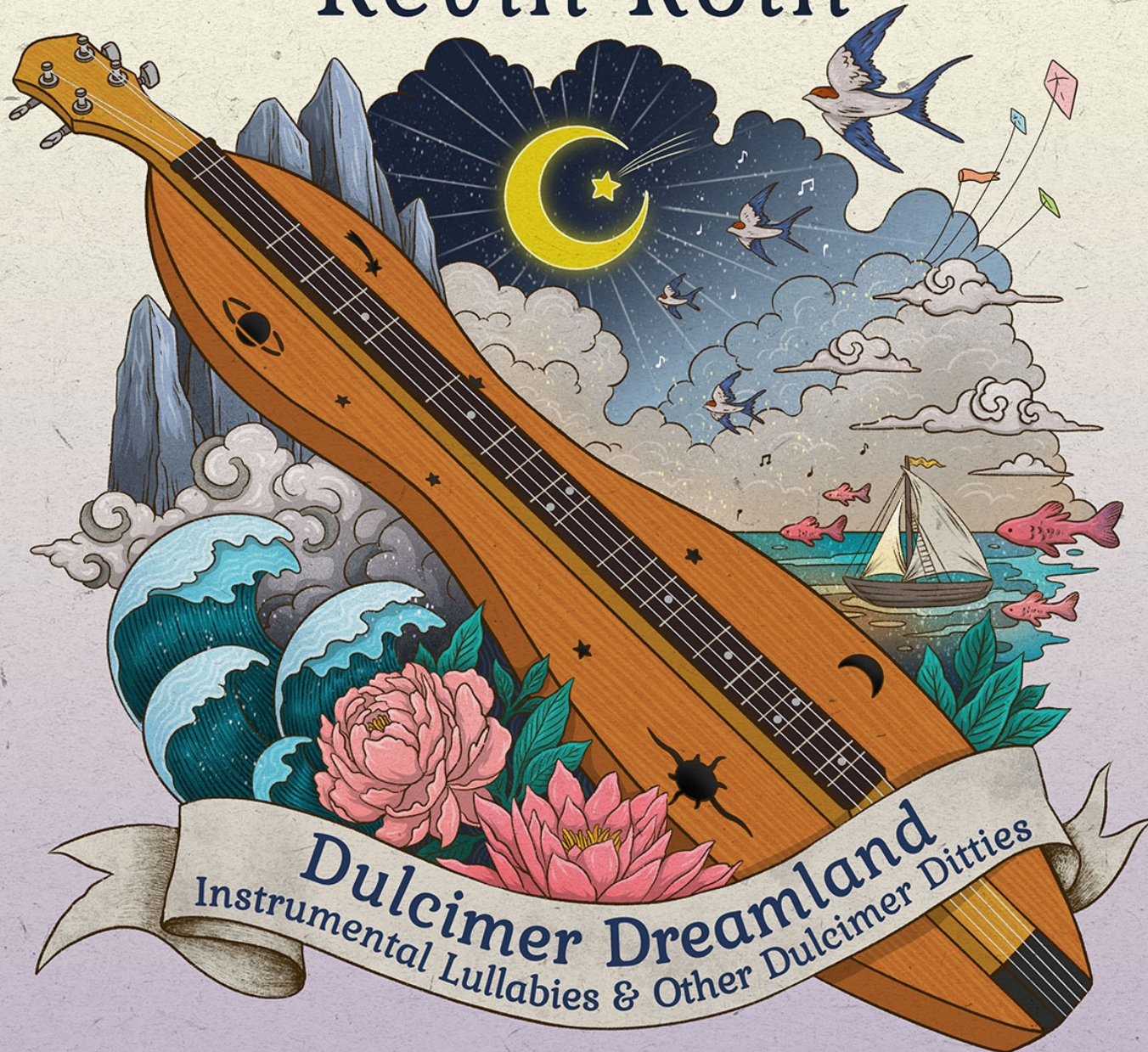


Kevin Roth



Dulcimer Dreamland

Instrumental Lullabies & Other Dulcimer Ditties

“Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened. Don’t open the door to the study and begin reading. Take down the dulcimer. Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.” — Rumi

Right around the time I thought about doing this project I happened to read a review of a ‘lost’ John Coltrane recording session that had recently been rediscovered. The reviewer mentioned how basic, simple, and spiritual his playing was during that period in his life. That rang a bell with me. I’ve been known as an innovative contemporary dulcimer player for nearly fifty-one years. I wanted to experiment with very simple, pure, and expressive playing this time around. I started out by searching for tonal resonances on the dulcimer and creating arrangements which were not only soothing but also explored a deeper expression of the muse during the recording session.

Rehearsing and arranging these songs was a bit of a challenge because I got very sleepy during the process. (I suppose a good sign for a lullaby album). So, I hung out at “Coffee and Plants” in Ocean Beach, San Diego practicing the tunes and coming up with arrangements while sipping cortados. Not all these songs are lullabies. There are sea shanties, folk songs, and a few new ones I composed -hence the ‘dulcimer ditties’ idea. Either way you play or listen, it’s pure dulcimer. I had a wonderful time creating this project. Thank you Bill, Ron, Jerry, and “Uncle Eddy” for making it fun.

Per Rumi’s suggestion from many years ago, I took down the dulcimer and let the beauty I love be what I do. I hope you love it too.

Kevin Roth — June 26, 2023

The Dulcimers

Jerry Rockwell built a beautiful hourglass dulcimer for me as a gift back in 2016. He's been after me to put together an album like this ever since. This dulcimer, which I call Uncle Eddy, based on Ed Thomas's dulcimer heart design, has an amazing sound and is built with a player's action in mind, along with a surprising simplicity and subtlety (which only a very experienced and talented builder AND player would know how to do). It reminds me of Shaker art. Most of the songs are played on "Uncle Eddy". The songs, *Clowns' Last Dance*, *Jakey's Lullaby*, and *Hush Little Baby* are all played on a baritone dulcimette built by Ron Ewing, another great builder/player.



The Songs

1. **John of Dreams, Little Boat** — I learned these from singer and instrumentalist Gordon Bok. *John of Dreams* is based on Tchaikovsky 6th Symphony. I don't recall where *Little Boat* comes from, but I think it too is a classical piece. Mozart?
2. **There Is a Ship, Waves Upon the Sea** — I learned *Ship* from the singing of Mary Travers on the Peter, Paul & Mary album "In Concert". Mary once invited me to perform with her at The Kennedy Center and I sang this song. When I finished, I looked at her and she was crying. I always loved Mary and was equally as moved by her response. I think I heard *Waves Upon the Sea* in New Jersey from a folksinger whose name I can't recall. It had beautiful lyrics which I never remembered fully but I wanted to finally record the melody because it's haunting and beautiful.
3. **Blow the Man Down, Little Fishies** — Two Whaling songs that are played as lullabies. One often thinks of Whaling songs as rip-roaring, keep the whaling boat going type of bouncy tunes. I'm hardly the bouncy type but have always been fascinated by the sea and all the stories of those who sailed in storms and lost their lives to watery graves.
4. **Paidu Vidu, Tudor** — I learned these from The Pennywhistlers' album on Folkway Records. European melodies are very haunting, and nobody sang them like The Pennywhistlers. I've known these songs for years but never recorded or performed them before. I especially love the very popular song *Tudor*.
5. **All Things Are Quite Silent, Rosemary Lane** — Judy Collins sang a beautiful version of *All Things Are Quite Silent* on her "Living" album. I learned *Rosemary Lane* from Bert Jansch and recorded a different version on my very first album back in 1974 called "Kevin Roth Sings & Plays Dulcimer" on Folkways.
6. **Danny Boy** — Good old Irish tune that warms the hearts of many who hear it. My favorite version is from the singing of Rosemary Clooney.
7. **Idyllwild** — I wrote this on the porch of a cabin I rented in Idyllwild California. I love going there to hike. This quaint mountain town is in Southern California's San Jacinto Mountains. My cabin faced the woods, and with a small bottle of Bourbon and my dog Bosco curled up next to me, this instrumental came to me right before bedtime.
8. **Clowns' Last Dance** — One day I decided to tune my third string up one whole step to see what chords and ideas would come from it. I usually play in the tuning DADD. This time I changed it to DBDD. I discovered some funky chord changes which I really liked. When I imagined this song, I thought of two old clowns who had fallen in love at the circus many years ago. This waltz is their final performance together before retiring from circus life.
9. **Hush Little Baby, Frere Jacque, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star** — Classics.
10. **Simple Gifts** — This is the very first song I ever heard played on the dulcimer. It's a Shaker Hymn whose lyrics offer all the wisdom one would ever need in life. "Tis a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free, tis a gift to come down where we ought to be. And when we find ourselves in the place just right, we will be in the valley of love and delight. When true simplicity is gained to bow and to bend, we will not be ashamed. To turn, turn will be our delight for by turning, turning we'll come round right."
11. **Farewell to Tarwathie, Silkie** — Two beautiful melodies once again about the sea, whales, and mystical creatures.
12. **Scarborough Fair** — I rarely play this, but really enjoyed working in a minor tuning and discovering the musical story within the melody.
13. **Jakey's Lullaby** — My father's name was Jake. He loved old Jewish music. I thought of him when I composed it. This song is in DADD tuning. I used a capo on the first fret which puts it in a minor tuning.
14. **The Brean Lament** — Another fine tune I learned from Gordon Bok
15. **Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen, Hard Times Come Again No More** — I always liked this gospel song, and *Hard Times* seemed a fitting and positive conclusion.

Kevin Roth June 26, 2023

Dulcimer Dreamland by Kevin Roth, All songs and arrangements,
All Rights Reserved. © & ©2023 Kevin Roth / Kevin Roth Music/BMI
<https://kevinroth.org> www.kevinrothmusic.com

