

Give Thanks for All the Times of Your Life

Last week, on a windswept plateau in France's agricultural heartland, I walked around a pathless neolithic burial ground of dolmens. No other living person was there, yet the place felt serenely alive with memories of humanity's journey. The dignity of that collective past lives in each of us.



—Dolmen du Genévrier, Salles-la-Source, France

This vast, high plateau protects some 50 or 60 dolmens and tumuli, half-hidden in the high grass and brambles. The one in this photo is about 40 feet across and roughly 10 feet high. In the midst of the silent grandeur, my Being kept repeating one phrase: "I remember."

The past stretched back far, far behind my mind, and all of it seemed to line up and light up the thrill and honor of my being alive today. That's worth giving thanks for this holiday week, isn't it?

We should also give thanks to the many selves we have been in our current lives—all the meandering steps walked by earlier versions of us. Take a few minutes to honor the struggles, successes, despairs and delights that brought each of us to who we are today.

The late twentieth-century American composer Ned Rorem wrote a two-minute [Berceuse](#) that can take your imagination's hand and guide you through your own personal past. It's worth noting the harmonic tinges of sadness and regret that hide within the seemingly simple and sweet melody. Close your eyes and let the music help you resurrect your past. Silently say, "I remember," as your imagination shows you visions of you at different ages. Smile and applaud yourself for each happiness you found. Forgive

yourself for the mistakes. Console yourself for the lonely struggles you survived. Thank all of your selves for all of the times of your life.

And in doing so, you may find a greater capacity for remembering, forgiving and thanking the many others who touched all of your lives.

Ned Rorem, String Symphony: II. Berceuse, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Robert Shaw, conductor
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BbW4xQYtsg>