

Thirty years since it was released, it's no easier to figure out quite what is happening in Anna Homler and Steve Moshier's "Ee Chê" than the day it was put to tape. What language is she singing? Is that a machine pulse, a drum line on a tin roof, or a freight train? And that deep, bassy sigh—is there even a name for that sound?

We sort of know the answer to the first question: Homler, a Los Angeles performance artist, conceived of her vocalizations as "divining speech." This cosmic speaking-in-tongues channeled the voice of a character called Breadwoman—a woman so old she has turned into bread—through a handheld cassette recorder. Steve Moshier, a member of L.A. chamber ensemble Cartesian Reunion Memorial Orchestra, became Breadwoman's translator, in a sense, writing compositions based on Homler's cassette transcriptions. The score completed, Homler would summon Breadwoman anew, and Moshier, equipped with electronics, would knit the sound into a new whole. That iterative process yielded "Ee Chê", along with six other songs to be released in February on Breadwoman & Other Tales, via New York's RVNG label. Its ritualistic air remains apparent; across eight minutes, it builds almost imperceptibly. Multi-tracked voices are woven into a hypnotic call and response over eerie synthesized tones that shimmer in the middle distance like a heat mirage. By the end, you might even think you know what she's saying. Or almost, anyway. It's right on the tip of your tongue.

