



A PRESENT FROM A SMALL DISTANT WORLD VOCAL MUSIC BY ALEX EDDINGTON

OUT: February 19th, 2021 on [Redshift Records](#) (TK483 — CD & digital)
RYL: Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Luciano Berio, John Adams.

1. A Present From a Small Distant World (*39th President of the U.S.A., Jimmy Carter*)
2. Sonnet XVIII (*William Shakespeare*)
3. HELIOSPHERE
4. The Stolen Child (*W.B. Yeats*)
5. TERMINATION SHOCK
6. Time Will Erase (*Kristin Mueller-Heaslip, Anna Akhmatova*)
7. HELIOSHEATH
8. Dennis Lee Songs (*Dennis Lee*)
9. HELIOPAUSE
10. Scintillator
11. INTERSTELLAR / To the Makers of Music (*transcription on the Voyager Spacecraft's "Golden Record"*)

Kristin Mueller-Heaslip — voice, **Jennifer Tran** — saxophone,
Elaine Lau — piano (track 4), **Joseph Ferretti** — piano (track 8),
Daniel Ramjattan — guitar, **Alex Eddington** — electronics.

Recorded by: **Paul Talbott** at Union Sound Company
Editing and Mixing: **Paul Talbott**
Mastering: **Sage Kim** at Lacquer Channel

Toronto composer **Alex Eddington's** unorthodox debut album *A Present from a Small Distant World* is many different things all at once. Sometimes dark, sometimes downright silly, certain moments bear a resemblance to traditional art song, whereas on other occasions Eddington unfurls strange synthetic textures. Its uncharacteristically broad aesthetic reach is matched by its temporal span. Traversing — and often revisiting — music from the past 18 years, it serves as a portrait of his close collaborative relationship with soprano **Kristin Mueller-Heaslip**, who plays a number of different protagonists throughout the album.

While its nearly two-decade coverage accounts for a certain amount of the album's gleeful heterogeneity, this can also be attributed to its underlying inspiration, which is revealed in the opening cut. There a faded-xerox-choir of Mueller-Heaslips intones Jimmy Carter's 1977 speech that launched the Voyager spacecraft and its so-called Golden Record—a phonographic disc containing an encyclopedic dog's breakfast of earthly texts, images, and music—into space. "The chances that an alien civilization will intercept and decode the record are not high," explains Eddington, "but there is something wonderful about sending greetings hurtling outward."

Of course, *A Present from a Small Distant World*, makes no pretenses of being as ambitious or all-encompassing as its golden counterpart. Its relationship to it lies more in this spirit of interstellar benevolence; the ramifications of putting a document of one's world out into the unknown. That being said, Eddington has managed to cram quite a bit of information onto this disc. Shakespeare receives a forlorn solitary voice treatment, whereas the titular beloved children's author is cast as a set of feverish genre-hopping cabaret songs on Eddington's celebrated *Dennis Lee Songs*. His episodic treatment of Yeats lunges between slow, hovering minimalism and moments of perverse word-painting. *Time Will Erase* (featuring a text authored by Mueller-Heaslip) is billed as a chamber opera for soprano and alto saxophone and draws upon Eddington's background as a playwright and actor to spin richness from its spartan resources (and—crucially—silence.) Its libretto, authored by Mueller-Heaslip frames a poem written by its subject, Russian poet Anna Akhmatova. *Scintillator's* gibberish text, on the other hand was excavated from Mueller-Heaslip spam and her reading carries maximum urgency, the intensity only magnified by searing electronic effects that Eddington integrated for this recording. *INTERSTELLAR / To the Makers of Music*, continues this electronic trajectory, and offers the culmination of the brief and cryptic miniatures scattered throughout the album. Where Eddington's scores for these short guitar-and-electronics interjections are collages of chopped-up morse code and Bach, the grainy synthesized sound foreshadow his recent move toward noisier terrain. Meanwhile as the album concludes the aforementioned multi-tracked chorus of Kristins returns atop the electric flurries and gnarly guitar to sing the words etched onto the Golden Record itself, "To the makers of music: all worlds, all times."

Alex Eddington's restless creativity has led him into collaborations with some of Canada's most renowned ensembles including Continuum, Quatuor Bozzini, the Toronto Consort, the Talisker Players, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Mujirushi, and junctQín as well as performances across the globe. Winner of a 2004 SOCAN Award for his soprano and ensemble monodrama *Death to the Butterfly Dictator!* (another collaboration with Mueller-Heaslip, also featuring her as a librettist), Eddington's eclectic and often playful oeuvre embraces everything from choral music to electroacoustics, from period instruments to steel pan ensemble. He's held composer-in-residence positions with the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra, and Da Camera Singers, while exploring the intersection of contemporary music experimentation and music pedagogy through Canadian Music Centre's New Music For Young and University of Ottawa's Making Music Project. Soprano **Kristin Mueller-Heaslip** was the winner of the 2008 Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition and featured the solo voice version of *Scintillator* on the ensuing national tour. Having collaborated with a number of leading composers, she has remained a fierce advocate of contemporary music in Canada and has made appearance with the Montréal Chamber Orchestra, at the PowerPlant's annual Powerball, and as a guest of Brock and McMaster Universities. She was also known as the front-woman for Toronto art-pop oddballs The Parkdale Revolutionary Orchestra, and as a member of fellow eccentrics Friendly Rich and the Lollypop People.

PRAISE FOR ALEX EDDINGTON

"The highlight of the concert [...] Shone not just with wit and assurance, but with subtlety and truthfulness[...] Brava, too, to Mueller[-Heaslip], who tuned into all these levels of meaning." —**Tamara Bernstein, The National Post**

"More successful was a brand new composition[...] from Toronto's Alex Eddington, his clever collage of 20 Quebecois folk songs [...]was both musically and historically interesting." —**Murray Charters, Brantford Expositor**

"The composer [...] clearly displayed skill and wit, qualities also shared by the soloist, soprano Kristin Mueller, for whom the piece was written[...] Miss Mueller charismatically projected the eight humorous songs with Eddington's slinky accompaniments infused with punchy pastiche, Weill-like tangos, Gershwin-esque harmonies, [...] while the longer songs were reminiscent of Berio in their vocal demands. The final song, a gentle lullaby, luxuriated in cool, accessible and distinctive harmonies." —**Malcolm Miller, Classical Music Daily**

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