

# **Ethereal Escapes**

**By**

**Merrill Collins**

**Written by**

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**Merrill Collins** has an amazing way of lifting the spirits through her compositions, she creates magical arrangements that in turn manifests vast soundscapes to explore, and that is exactly what we are about to do dear reader and listener, lets explore the latest release called **Ethereal Escapes**.

Following on from the last moment of brilliance called *Echappées Ethériques*, we now arrive in a similar realm of beauty and start with a simply delightful piece called **The Fountain of Jewels Activated**. It's always a good sign as a writer, when you hear the first refrains and fall instantly in love with the music, this is quite beautiful, perfectly performed and with a great lightness of spirit, the team of *Laura Halladay* and *Maksim Velichkin*, (Flute and Cello) partner with Collins on piano and reign supreme here in this perfect beginning.

With great care we float into the second piece called **Our Ears Tinged**, this is so loving and gentle, it creates warmth around you and surrounds us with a calming energy akin to that of a late spring day. The beautiful combination and fluency here is something to really enjoy.

**With Every Heartbeat** is next, the subtle opening of this track was played with craft and skill and through the music one can sense a heartbeat, one that is in total balance with the universe, please pay special attention to the Cello of Velichkin here, it is truly sublime and heartfelt. With Halladay's uplifting flute and Collins constant positive narrative on piano, we have a real winner of a track here.

The sombre but respectful **Listening with our Ancestors** is now upon us, the classical style is so evident here, but one that works so well. Collins on Piano is at her very best on this composition and the team manifest something truly spectacular here. There is something very addictive about the tempo and melody; it has a sense of age and wisdom contained within, but also a deep essence of knowledge as well. This is without doubt one of the stand out pieces from the release.

The next composition created a whole new feel, but retained the feeling of lightness throughout, an ambience is created here that is so valuable at this stage of the journey, however one can also sense on the track **Our Peaceful Uprising Continues**, a constant but careful gathering of energies in this short form composition.

**Flowing Directly to Love** is outstandingly beautiful, listen to Collins in full flow on piano here, and with every brush stroke of her masterful genius a new dimension of love is created, and Velichkin and Halladay just add a totally new momentum and musical brilliance to this quite amazing arrangement.

Now for something completely different as someone once said, this is a piece called **We Heard Earth Weeping**, this is such an emotive composition; Velichkin's Cello is so mournful and sad, while Halladay creates an imploring narrative on flute, **Merrill Collins performance** here is deeply moving and her performance is almost like listening to the planet cry, this is simply stunning.

As we reach the half way marker we find a charming arrangement called **Remembering the Emerald**. Slow, but purposeful, this piece seems to create a picturesque motif all of its own for us to enjoy, here flautist **Laura Halladay** really comes into her own, I have listened to this one now a few times and it is like feeling a summer breeze blowing across your face, simply brilliant in all areas.

The build and intent on this next offering was more than impressive and called **In the Bigger Picture**. Velichkin on Cello created a real depth here, while Halladay's flute drifted with the clouds, and Collins sparkling performance on piano demonstrated just how much she is in tune with her musical soul.

We now move to one of my favourite pieces **With Our Timeless Elders**. There is simply something so moving about this track, the energy of performance here is so passionate and meaningful, this is a composition that has an impression of timelessness interwoven with an insightful sense of wisdom. I had to play this one several times to really appreciate all the little nuances within this piece and I recommend you do the same as well dear reader.

We're venturing within the deeper realms of the album now and as we do so we come across a charming opus called, **We are Whole together**. The strum of the strings by Velichkin creates a profound moment we can all appreciate in the early stages and then flows with perfection throughout the track, this intricate arrangement is yet another to go back to and enjoy again.

On **Living in Harmonious Worlds** we are gifted something familiar, something colourful, rich and melodic, Halladay is sublime here, and touches the hem of the classical style with ease. One could see this being used in a movie; it has a cinematic quality about its construction.

As we open the doorway to a composition called **Particles in Space**, we come across the longest arrangement on the album at just over 6 minutes. **Merrill Collins** sets her stall here and performs one of the most empowering performances on the release, there is a confidence and a sense of oneness about this track I loved, and after all, are we not all just stardust? This was my favourite piece off the album and Halladay's performance here reminded me of old style *Terry Oldfield* in style and presentation.

We still have a few more moments with the artist on this compilation of quite breath-taking songs and one of those is this one called **Returning Home**, a narrative of a journey done can be found here, but also a sense of accomplishment and happiness to, this is a beautifully light hearted piece for us all to enjoy and embrace.

We have arrived at the gateway of the penultimate offering and it is called **Riding on Waves of Gold**. Listening to this composition one feels like they have arrived on the shores of Atlantis themselves, this is a sun kissed and bright arrangement that you just can't help but adore.

Sadly we must now leave this ethereal dimension, but before we do so, the artist has a gift for you all, that present of musical beauty is called **Triumphant upon Arrival**. By the time you have arrived at this juncture, you should be feeling revived, at peace and in total harmony with all that is around you. This ending piece highlights what a superb team effort this has been and is simply the best way one could imagine leaving an album of such quality.

**Ethereal Escapes** (*Echappées Ethériques II*) is just what we all need, a musical sanctuary of the soul. This is an album that anyone with a desire for something uplifting and spiritually empowering will fall head over heels in love with, the performances are quite brilliant and the mood that this release manifests is one of utter calm and complete peace, it's like bathing in the well of timeless tranquillity itself.