

Mp3 John Erickson - A Peaceful Christmas Eve



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A Christmas album of unique arrangements written for flute and piano that are both familiar and comforting bringing a sense of peacefulness to the holiday season, stirring a mood that allows for reflection that brings out the true spirit of Christmas. 11 MP3 Songs NEW AGE: Meditation, EASY LISTENING: Mood Music Details: This article appeared in the Sioux City (Iowa) Journal newspaper. John Erickson by Duane Beeson, Journal correspondent ALTON, Iowa-A flutist since he was in the fourth grade, John Erickson knew he wanted to record a CD "someday." After the Alton man suffered a heart attack last December at the age of 54, Erickson decided his lifelong dream shouldn't wait. Erickson, the director of the MOC-Floyd Valley Middle School band since 1992, recorded a CD of flute and piano Christmas music in August. "A Peaceful Christmas Eve" features arrangements of 11 standards such as "The First Noel," "In the Bleak Midwinter" and "O Holy Night" by David Moore of Le Mars, the band director in Homer, Neb. "These arrangements had been out for four or five years. I think they're great," says Erickson, who has used other Moore arrangements with his middle school concert band. "The CD is not 'in-your-face' concert material; it's 'sit-down-and-put-it-on-as-background' music as you sew or whatever. "I would call the arrangements neotraditional. You can tell they are Christmas carols, but he twists arrangements in intriguing ways." Erickson recorded the album in Paramus, N.J. He was accompanied on piano by Garah Landes, a performer/clinician for the Baldwin Piano Co. who has played in Carnegie Hall and toured throughout the United States and Europe. Landes is organist at First Presbyterian Church in Ramsey, N.J., Erickson's home church. After first meeting a year ago, they worked together on music for a Sunday worship service in June when Erickson was visiting his father. Their collaboration went so well that Erickson asked Landes to accompany him on the CD two months later. The duo rehearsed for four hours on a Monday, recorded from 10 to 5 at the studio on Tuesday,

and spent three and a half hours recording on Wednesday, followed by eight hours of digital editing. "The recording was very physically draining. The whole process was much more involved than I thought it would be, but it was an excellent education for me," says Erickson, who serves as principal flutist in the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra. "Garah had to be 100 percent satisfied with everything." The CD's brisk sales indicate listeners apparently are satisfied, too-and telling their friends. Relying mainly on word-of-mouth advertising, Erickson began selling his first batch of 200 CDs in mid-November. He has now sold 400 and ordered an additional 200. "The response has been very positive," says Erickson, who expects to break even on his recording venture-if he can stop handing out free copies. "I'm glad people enjoy it, but I didn't expect the reviews I've gotten." Erickson's journey to becoming a recording artist began with a 1925 vintage flute in a hall closet at his New Jersey home. "My dad had played flute in high school. If I was going to play an instrument, it was going to be that flute," he says. After an inauspicious beginning-it took him two weeks to get a sound out of the flute-he quickly graduated to a higher-quality instrument and took six years of lessons from the assistant principal flutist of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. "I had lessons at 7 on Tuesday night. There were times I did not leave till midnight. We played and sight-read for hours." Erickson studied flute performance for two years at Manhattan School of Music. His next move was fortuitous for music students in Iowa and South Dakota. "I was going to go to the West Coast but decided it couldn't be much different from the East Coast. I looked at a map-South Dakota was halfway across, so I decided to go there." He enrolled at Huron College, earning his degree in 1971. He taught music in South Dakota schools and spent a year pursuing a master's degree in music history and literature at the University of Wyoming. After working several years as a freelance court reporter, he returned to the classroom, teaching for seven years in Winner, S.D., before coming to Alton. One of the reasons for that move was his desire to return to working with middle-school students. "I've taught grades five through college, and I'll take middle school anytime," he says. "They're excited, they want to learn, and they're not spread in 25 different directions." Erickson's personal goal to not be spread so thin has grown after his heart attack. Realizing life is short, he has chosen to cut back on some responsibilities to pursue dreams. One of them is to start a vineyard at the farm he and his wife own near Platte, S.D. The Ericksons plan to spend their summers at the farm-where she grew up-five miles from the Missouri River. "It's very, very peaceful," Erickson says of the farm, "just like the CD." And there could be another recording in the teacher's future. "It all depends on what David Moore is going to arrange. I'm interested in

doing a religious CD. It would have to be in the same genre-mood-adjusting music." "A Peaceful Christmas Eve" can be purchased for \$17 plus tax at The Dove, The Old Factory and Windmill Park Jewelers in Orange City, and Close to Home in Le Mars. It can be ordered via mail for \$20, which includes shipping, from Erickson at 410 12th St., Alton, IA 51003.

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