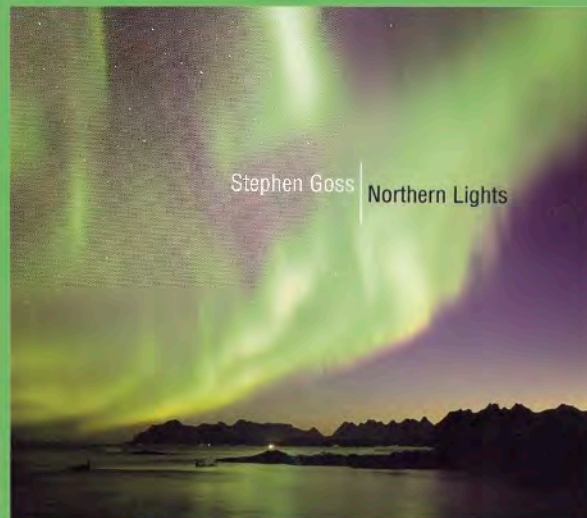


# Northern Lights

Susie Hodder-Williams & Chris Caldwell  
with Graham Roberts

*\* 'utterly captivating' The Independent Northern Lights is the title of our new CD featuring the music of the international composer Steve Goss. It is now recorded and was released on May 1st 2011 on the FMR label. [www.stephengoss.net](http://www.stephengoss.net) 'bristling intensity...music from the subtle side of things'* Downtown Music Gallery, New York



The new CD of Steve Goss' music includes the première recording of Northern Lights (for the trio) and The Sea of the Edge (for solo flute). Other works on the album are Autumn Song (for flute and guitar) a new arrangement of Welsh Folksongs and a piece inspired by The Cosmic Garden of Speculation

FMR CD



This album is a collection of musical landscapes. Northern Lights (2010) and The Sea of the Edge (2010) were commissioned specially and the other pieces have been arranged and adapted freely by the musicians. The northern lights or aurora borealis have fascinated people for countless generations and stories trying to explain their mysterious appearance have found their way into mythology and folklore. In Norse mythology the northern lights were thought to be reflections from the shields and armour of the Valkrior (maidens who take dead warriors to Valhalla). In Finland, the name for the aurora borealis, Revontulet, translates as 'fox fires.' The name comes from an ancient Finnish fable, in which the lights were caused by a magical fox sweeping his tail across the snow, spraying it up into the sky. The music begins with Echoes of Silence – a timeless meditation that places the listener in a vast open space.

The Sea of the Edge is one of the oceans of the moon. While much music depicts the moon romantically from the safe distance of the Earth, here the cold, desolate lunar landscape is placed in the foreground.

According to folklore, Dafydd y Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock) called for his harp as he lay on his death bed and composed this haunting melody. Lisa Lân (Fair Lisa) is a lover's lament. The heartsick lover asks Lisa to guide him to where she is, so that they may be reunited in death. In contrast Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf is a joyous love song dedicated to the white rose of summer. Suo Gân simply means lullaby and Hela'r 'Sgyfarnog is a lively hunting song.

The Autumn Song (2009) is roughly based on various ancient Chinese poems and stories about the parting of lovers. Specifically, due to the male partner having to go and serve in the building or guarding of the Great Wall of China. The music evokes the melancholic character of loss in the music – in particular, that quality of ambiguity caused by the fact that neither partner knows if the loss is temporary or permanent.

The Garden of Cosmic Speculation is one of the most original and important gardens of the 21st century, created by the architectural critic and designer Charles Jencks. The garden is conceived as a place to explore certain fundamental aspects of the universe. What are atoms made of and how should we imagine them? How does DNA make up a living organism? Charles Jencks has created a series of new and expansive visual metaphors that challenge misleading and frequently misunderstood concepts such as the 'Big Bang' and the 'Selfish Gene'. The music moves through the physical space of Jencks' garden exploring its sensuous surface in rich colours and varied musical styles while exploiting its underlying theoretical basis to generate the musical material. Originally for violin, cello, bass clarinet and piano, the music has been completely reworked by the musicians for this recording – sometimes (as is the case with Quark Walk) only taking the tiniest fragment of the original piece as the basis for improvisation.

## Reviews

\*\*\*\* Rendered here in woodwind tones and acoustic guitar, the ambient landscape compositions of Stephen Goss exist in the grey area where ECM chamber-jazz and Hatut minimalism shades into Windham Hill new-ageism. At its best, it's utterly captivating: the solo flute piece "The Sea of the Edge" is as hauntingly desolate as the moon feature after which it's named, and the four-part suite "Northern Lights" hangs like East Coast fog, clarinet and flute in sparse, unhurried collusion akin to a meditative Feldman work. And the transcription to flute, guitar and clarinet works particularly well on the eight-part "Reflections on the Garden of Cosmic Speculation".

**The Independent Andy Gill 10/06/2011**

I wasn't familiar with Stephen Goss before this but I am most impressed by his music here. There are some 19 pieces on this disc for trio, duo and solo flute. The title piece, "Northern Lights" begins stark with each note carefully placed. The trio of flute, bass clarinet and acoustic guitar is warm and enticing on the second section, similar to the more melodic parts of Oregon. There is a suite called "Welsh Folksongs" which is somber and quite lovely when it begins and then becomes more lively and intense as it evolves. The final suite is called "Reflections on 'The Garden of Cosmic Speculation'" and it not as hokey as it sounds. Parts sound like medieval chamber music, yet more restrained with some more delicate and contemplative sections. For me, it was nice to hear music from the subtle side of things even with those brief moments bristling intensity.

**Downtown Music Gallery, New York Bruce Lee Gallanter 29/04/201**

[www.fmr-records.com](http://www.fmr-records.com)  
[www.musicontheedge.com](http://www.musicontheedge.com)  
[www.stephengoss.net](http://www.stephengoss.net)  
[www.cadenzamusic.com](http://www.cadenzamusic.com)

"Composer Stephen Goss draws on a variety of sources for his eminently listenable music. Despite the eclectic nature of his influences, which range from Beethoven's late piano music to the films of former Python Terry Gilliam, Goss's musical language comes across as brilliantly integrated...."

**- International Record Review, April 2008.**

Stephen Goss's music receives hundreds of performances worldwide each year and has been recorded on over 40 CDs by more than a dozen record labels, including EMI, Decca, and Telarc. His music has been performed in many prestigious venues including - Lincoln Centre in New York; the Wigmore Hall, The Royal Albert Hall, the Barbican Centre, and the South Bank Centre in London; and the National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing, China and Mumbai, India. Xuefei Yang's recording of Goss's The Chinese Garden (2008) won 'Best Instrumental CD' in the Canton Radio Classical CD Awards in China.

Recent commissions have come from: Grammy® winner David Russell, cellist Natalie Clein, flautist William Bennett, The Choir of St Paul's Cathedral, London and The Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.

Stephen's collaborative project with Prof. Charles Jencks, The Garden of Cosmic Speculation (2005), was profiled on The South Bank Show on ITV1. His music was recently featured on the CD, The Best of the Classical BRITs and has been broadcast on BBC2, BBC4, Classic FM and BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4 in the UK and various radio and TV stations in the US and overseas. He has received funding from Sir Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, the Wellcome Trust, and the Arts Council England.

In October 2009, The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra gave the first performance of his Albéniz Concerto (2009); the piece was released to great critical acclaim on EMI Classics in November 2010.

As a guitarist, Stephen Goss has worked with many of today's leading composers, such as Toru Takemitsu, Hans Werner Henze and Elliott Carter. He has toured and recorded extensively with the Tetra guitar quartet, and performed alongside John Williams and Paco Peña.

Stephen Goss studied at the Royal Academy of Music (where he won the Julian Bream Prize) and the Universities of Bristol and London. His main publisher is Cadenza Music, but his music is also published by ABRSM Publishing, London; Chanterelle, Heidelberg, Germany; and Editions Orphee Columbus, Ohio, USA. He is Head of Composition at the University of Surrey, UK and is an Arsenal season ticket holder.

