Northern Lights

music by Stephen Goss

Susie Hodder-Williams
flute, alto flute and piccolo

Chris Caldwell
bass clarinet, C clarinet and soprano saxophone

Graham Roberts
guitar

"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 film scores of former Python Terry Gilliam, Goss's musical language comes across as brilliantly integrated… ."

- International Record Review, April 2008.

This album is a collection of musical landscapes. Northern Lights and The Sea of the Edge were commissioned specially and the other pieces have been arranged and freely adapted by the musicians. In Norse mythology the 'northern lights' or 'aurora borealis' were thought to be reflections from the shields of the Valkyrie (maiden warriors who take dead warriors to Valhalla). In Finland, they were named Revontulet (literally 'fox fires'), after 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. The Welsh folksong settings are followed by The Autumn Song, which is based on various ancient Chinese poems about the parting of lovers. Specifically, this is 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 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, created by Charles Jencks, is one of the most original and important gardens of the 21st century. Through large-scale sculptures and earthworks, it establishes many concepts central to modern science. The music moves through the physical space of Jencks' garden exploring its sensuous surface. Originally for violin, cello, bass clarinet and piano, the music has been completely rewritten by the musicians for this recording – sometimes only taking the tiniest fragment of the original piece as the basis for improvisation.

Northern Lights (2010) 16:40
1. Echoes of Silence 7:02
2. Revontulet 2:35
3. Nocturne in Blue and Silver 3:47
4. Valkyrie 3:15
5. The Sea of the Edge (2010) for solo flute 5:56

Welsh Folksongs (2008) 9:07
6. Daffydd y Garreg Wen (Davy of the White Rock) 2:30
7. Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf (The White Rose of Summer) 3:05
8. Lisa Llun (Fair Lisa) 3:00
9. Suo-gân (Lullaby) 3:11
10. Hela'r 'Sgyfarnog (Hunting the Hare) 0:52

Reflections on 'The Garden of Cosmic Speculation' (2005) 20:14
12. Quark Walk 3:29
13. The Snail Mound 4:14
14. Soliton Gates 1:03
15. The Nonsense 0:34
16. The Symmetry Break Terrace 2:35
17. Octopuses 1:20
18. The Snake Mound 2:56
19. Two Ways to Paradise 4:14

Total playing time 61:56

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flute, alto flute and piccolo

Chris Caldwell
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Graham Roberts
guitar

Recorded at Coombehurst Studio, Kingston University, London, 2010

Producers: John Taylor and Stephen Goss
Editor: Jane Taylor

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www.northernlights.net
www.cadenzamusic.com

FMR R ecords 2011

www.fmr-records.com

www.musicontheedge.com

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