



Tom Kerstens' G Plus ensemble UTOPIA

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Real World Records (CDRW175)

"A true poet of the guitar." Gramophone

For over one hundred and fifty years, the guitar has been languishing on the periphery, often overlooked by composers and out of touch with mainstream developments. With very little repertoire written, guitarist **Tom Kerstens** has taken the lead in commissioning new work for himself. Talented young writers such as **Joby Talbot**, **Errollyn Wallen**, **Max Richter**, **John Metcalfe** and **Graham Fitkin** have created some truly original work for Kerstens to play, bringing the guitar to the heart of classical and contemporary music. Two of these composers are responsible for the music on **Utopia** and approaching composers from outside the classical world is all part of Kerstens' desire to get compositions for the guitar out to a much wider audience and free from the concert hall.

So it is no accident that the two composers he approached for this debut **G Plus** recording both come from a background that combines art rock and classical training. **John Metcalfe**, from New Zealand, was, in an earlier incarnation, the viola player for Manchester-based **Durutti Column** and came later in his career to composition. John plays viola with the Duke Quartet, and is the arranger for **Peter Gabriel's** new '**Scratch My Back**' album. He was introduced to Peter at Real World whilst producing his compositions on **Utopia**.

Joby Talbot is one of the brightest and most sought after young composers around. He has written for classical artists as well as for film (*Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*), TV (*League of Gentlemen*, which won the Royal Television Society Award for Best Title Music) and co-written a string of hits as member of the 'art rock' group *The Divine Comedy*. As an arranger/writer he has worked with a wide variety of top musicians such as Paul McCartney, Travis, Ute Lemper and the White Stripes. He is currently working on a new ballet score for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden – to be premiered in July 2010 – the first new ballet score commission from ROH in over 30 years.

G Plus means guitar with something else. This can be guitar with other instruments, (e.g. the G Plus ensemble) or guitar with electronics. Both ideas are explored on **Utopia** and the album features **Tom Kerstens** (guitar & bass guitar), **Amanda Cook** (guitar), **Dan Gresson** (percussion) and **The Tippett Quartet**.

Tom Kerstens is a major figure in the guitar world - a versatile performer and an influential champion of the guitar in his roles as player, recording artist and artistic director. His recently formed ensemble, **G Plus**, is dedicated to performing especially commissioned new work. Tom Kerstens is also Artistic Director of the International Guitar Foundation and Festivals (IGF)

Tom Kerstens' G Plus Ensemble will support **José González** at the **Royal Festival Hall** on **May 14th**

www.igf.org.uk

For more information please contact Siân Williams at Riotsquad Publicity:
020 7223 7456 or email sian@riotsquadpublicity.com