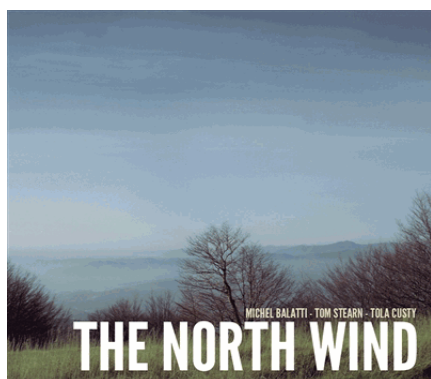




## **Balatti, Michel / Custy, Tola / Stearn, Tom**

### **The North Wind**

|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Cat-Ref.</b>     | VM3062                  |
| <b>Barcode</b>      | 8392347030621           |
| <b>Release date</b> | 12.12.2025              |
| <b>Label</b>        | VISAGE MUSIC (LC-12661) |
| <b>Style</b>        | World Music / Allgemein |

### **THE NORTH WIND – THE ALBUM**

“We heard it first, coming in off the wind. Not a word, not a note; maybe, a notion all the way from a direction where air and light walk with joined emotion. Where land, sky and water sing in full calling. We endeavour to venture there.”

The North Wind is the meeting of three artists from very different backgrounds: Italian flutist Michel Balatti, Irish fiddler Tola Custy, and Scottish singer and multi-instrumentalist Tom Stearn. This meeting point sees tradition merge with personal exploration, striking a refined balance between memory, emotion, and modernity.

At the heart of the project lies a deep dedication to traditional music, particularly Irish music, approached with both respect and expressive freedom. The three musicians share an approach that places melody and emotion at the centre, carving sonic paths that capture the lyrical beauty and evocative power of the repertoire.

The North Wind presents a selection of traditional tunes, songs, and original compositions from Ireland, Scotland, England, Brittany, Northern Italy, Scandinavia, and the United States. The trio works with great attention to arrangement, crafting something essential, yet profound and rich in its soundscapes. Their music sways between intimate, whispered melodies, and intense, soaring peaks, creating a dynamic flow that carries the listener on a journey.

Tradition, here, is not seen as something to be preserved unchanged, but as a living language open to transformation. It is precisely in the dialogue between reverence and interpretative freedom that the trio forges its own musical identity.

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

Tola Custy comes from Toonagh, County Clare, Ireland: a tiny place large in musical activity. Tola has created an unmistakable sound of his own with strong links to the music of his home territory. His travels have exposed him to the music of Brittany, Scandinavia, Asturias and Galicia: musical worlds that have contributed to the truly unique sound he has become known for. He released his acclaimed solo album ‘Setting Free’ in 1993 and went on to form the influential groups Calico, The Bowhouse Quintet, and Guidewires. He has collaborated with Eddi Reader, Liam O Maonlaoi, Heidi Talbot, Lunasa, Laoise Kelly and Arty McGlynn, among others.

Michel Balatti is an Italian flutist who has dedicated himself to traditional Irish music for over twenty years. Since 1999, he has been a member of Birkin Tree, the most renowned and respected Italian band in this field, with whom he has recorded three albums and performed in thousands of concerts in Europe and Canada. Throughout his career he has collaborated with some of the most important artists in the Irish music world, including Martin Hayes, Mick O'Brien, Aoife ni Bhriain, Derek Hickey, Caitlin nic Gabhann, Nuala Kennedy and many others. In 2016, he released his solo album 'The Northern Breeze', which received unanimous international critical acclaim. He was a founding member of I Liguriani, a traditional music group from northern Italy with which he has performed throughout Europe for the past 15 years.

Scottish singer, bouzouki player and guitarist Tom Stearn started his career in the vibrant Glasgow scene, where strong cultural roots and new trends in international music intersect. He has performed extensively throughout the UK with various bands related to traditional Scottish music. He was guitarist and vocalist in Alistair Ogilvy's Scottish folk project for the Greentrax label, a finalist for the BBC Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year 2012 and nominated for the BBC ALBA MG Trad Awards 2012. Moving to Italy in 2012, he founded Kettle of Kites, an alternative/folk/rock band that has several albums and tours in the UK, Italy and Europe to its credit. He also has several record productions and recordings for BBC Radio, BBC Scotland and Rai 3. Since 2022 he has been a member of Birkin Tree, with whom he recently recorded 4.0 (Felmay, 2022).

## Featured artist

Custy, Tola  
Stearn, Tom

## Band member

|                |                                                                  |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Michel Balatti | flutes                                                           |
| Tola Custy     | fiddle, viola                                                    |
| Tom Stearn     | lead vocals, bouzouki, nylon string guitar, acoustic guitar, 5 s |

## aufnahmestudio

Alessandro Mazzitelli c/o  
Mazzi Factory

## Tracklist

- |    |                                                                                                                  |       |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Balatti's Downfall (Josie's Visit/Ralph's jig/Balatti's Downfall)                                                | 05:45 |
|    | M: Brendan Tonra, Tom Stearn, Michel Balatti   P: Visage Music                                                   |       |
| 2. | A few Bob (A few bob/Repeal the Union)                                                                           | 06:08 |
|    | M: Traditional   P: Visage Music                                                                                 |       |
| 3. | The Scarecrow                                                                                                    | 05:38 |
|    | M: Mike Waterson   T: Mike Waterson   P: Visage Music                                                            |       |
| 4. | Coleman's cross (Coleman's cross/Johnny "Watt" Henry's)                                                          | 02:27 |
|    | M: Traditional   P: Visage Music                                                                                 |       |
| 5. | Pride of Rockchapel (An Pangur Ban/Pride of Rockchapel)                                                          | 05:11 |
|    | M: Liz Kane, Traditional   P: Visage Music                                                                       |       |
| 6. | The Ballina Whalers                                                                                              | 04:35 |
|    | M: Harry Robertson   T: Harry Robertson   P: Visage Music                                                        |       |
| 7. | The Humors of Ballyconnell (The Humours of Ballyconnell/Jessie over the bridge/The black haired lass/Bonnie Ann) | 06:29 |
|    | M: Traditional   P: Visage Music                                                                                 |       |
| 8. | Future Tents (Future Tents/30-Års Jiggen)                                                                        | 07:08 |
|    | M: Tola Custy, Roger Tallroth   P: Visage Music                                                                  |       |
| 9. | Shenandoah                                                                                                       | 04:19 |
|    | M: Anaïs Mitchell   T: Anaïs Mitchell   P: Visage Music                                                          |       |

10. Valzer in Gennaio (Valzer in gennaio/An Damen Kohz, Son Ar Soner)  
M: Stefano Valla, Gilles Le Bigot, Gilles Le Bigot | P: Visage Music

06:20