

Review of “Elan Valley”

Classical Guitar Magazine Summer 2018

Compelling concertos and orchestral works from English composer.

The music of Sussex England-born Barry Mills certainly deserves to be heard. Of the pieces on offer here, only two works include the guitar, but one of them – the beautiful *Guitar Concerto (The Travels of Turlogh O’Carolan)* is quite substantial in six movements and lasting more than 32 minutes. O’Carolan was a 16th century Irish harpist, popular today with many guitarists, and here Mills has interwoven some of O’Carolan’s melodies with musical episodes of his own evoking wind, sea, rivers, mountains, and night, to give the listener a sense of the blind harpist’s lifestyle of constant travelling. The music is magical from start to finish, and this concerto really deserves to be discovered and played. The style, naturally, is very Irish-folk and therefore highly accessible, but also gripping. Sam Brown is the guitarist, and he plays the piece wonderfully well. The Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra is conducted by Peter Vronsky and, of course, adds much to the piece.

The other guitar work is the *Mandolin and Guitar Concerto*, in four movements, and again concerned with nature – three of the movements are “Rainfall”, “The Piercing Wind”, and “The Ever-Changing Sea”. The style is more modern, but very tonal throughout, and again full of wonderful moments, effortlessly played by both soloists.

The non-guitar pieces are *Mandolin Concerto* and two orchestral works, both in the same lovely, almost ethereal style. A wonderful recording!

Chris Dumigan, Classical Guitar Magazine Summer 2018