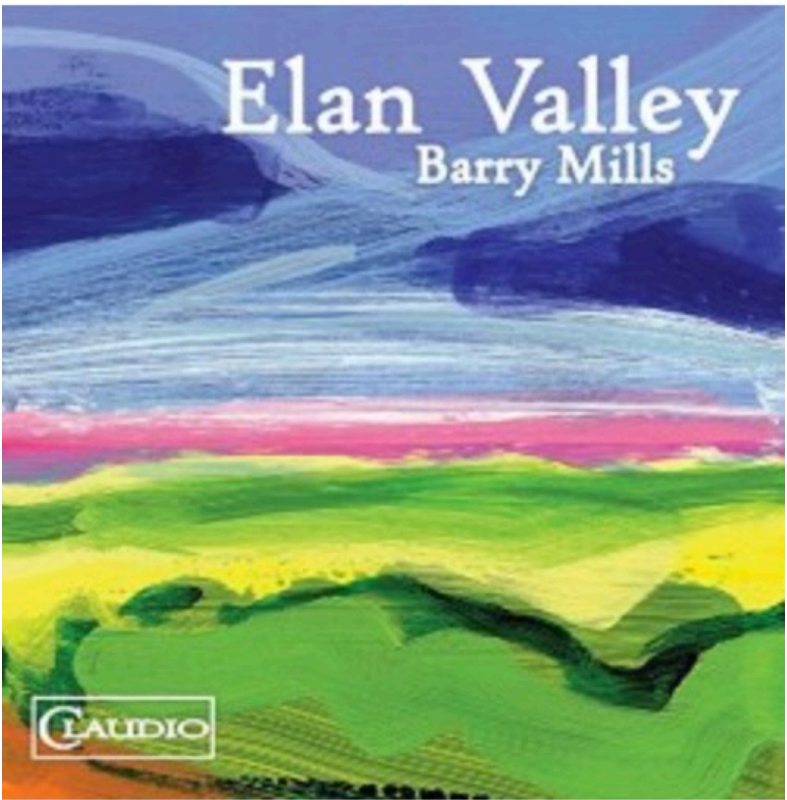


# Review of “Elan Valley”

## MusicWeb International

Barry MILLS (b.1949)  
Elan Valley – orchestral (2016) [8:24]  
Mandolin and Guitar Concerto (2003) [13:28]  
Evening Rain – Sunset (2012) [6:51]  
Guitar Concerto (2014) [31:48]  
Mandolin Concerto (2016) [13:20]  
Daniel Ahlert (mandolin)  
Birgit Schwab (guitar)  
Sam Brown (guitar)  
Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra/Vronsky  
rec. Redula Hall, Olomouc, Czech Republic, 2017  
Stereo 24/192 (as reviewed) and 24/96; also  
available on CD CC6040-2

**CLAUDIO BD-A CC6040-6 [71:33]**



Barry Mills is a new name to me, and it makes a change to review music by someone who is both alive and younger than I am. Mills seems to be active around the Brighton area and has a considerable quantity of music of all sorts to his name. This is his fifth disc for Claudio. His website at [barrymillscomposer.com](http://barrymillscomposer.com) is full of interest. It reveals amongst other things that he is mostly self taught and cannot be described as a professional composer because he worked as a postman to give himself afternoons to compose. One has to admire such dedication. One suspects that there are a lot of such people in the arts world who wish to create but cannot earn enough from it to live on. The history of music is full of such. It would seem that riches are not the expectation of most creative artists.

The two short orchestral pieces and the three concertos presented here were all written well within the last two decades. On this occasion he has gained the cooperation of a fully professional orchestra, in the Czech Republic, to present his works in the best possible light. Engaging with Claudio records to advise on, master and market the disc, as he has before, Mills has guaranteed one thing few can claim, even some of the biggest names, and that is well nigh perfect recording quality. Listening to these beautifully crafted works, full of the most delicate and attractive orchestral effects has been an easy job for this reviewer. Mills does not believe in making life uncomfortable for the audience in that these pieces, though clearly modern, are never raucous or noisy, and indeed often have a very tuneful quality. The tunes are sometimes folk melodies but treated to a rather atmospheric development. I am tempted to draw parallels with some of the gentler minimalists but Mills gets somewhere quite quickly and here at least none of his music outstays its welcome. The three concertos are each in several movements which have descriptive titles referring mostly to the environment. Mills is very much a landscape artist in music. The music has a meditative quality mixed with rhythmic flourishes that enliven the flow of colourful sounds giving a certain narrative quality to the experience. The soloists are all very expert players and articulate the music very cleanly under the intense audio scrutiny of a microscopically clear recording.

As implied above, all five works are well played and recorded with the usual outstanding Claudio fidelity, resulting from using very simple recording arrays placed in exactly the right position and of course using the finest microphones. The majors could learn much from this.

*David Billinge of Musicweb International*