

REVIEWS

UNDER THE STARS

BARRY MILLS: *8 Haiku* - mezzo soprano & flute; *Transitions* - piano; *Landscapes* - piano; *The Pavilion Gardens* - piano; *In The Mist* - piano; *Chief Seattle Fragments* - mezzo soprano and guitar; *Guitar Sketches - Across Water. Summer Wind, Rain, Fireworks, Under the Stars; Duo for Violin and Guitar.*

Julian Elloway- piano

Corinne Shirman-Sarti - mezzo soprano

Paul Gregory - guitar

Andrew Sherwood - violin

Claudio Records UK CC4324-2

SUMMER WAVES

BARRY MILLS: *Saxophone Sketches; Saxophone Quartet; Duo for Flute and Clarinet; Guitar Quartet; Trio for Flute, Viola and Guitar; Harp Sketches; Trio for Flute Viola and Harp.*

Featuring the English Guitar Quartet Claudio Records CC5153-2

MOSAICS

BARRY MILLS: *Wind Quintet; String Quartet; Clarinet Quintet; Flute Sketches; Mosaic - flute and piano; Duo for Flute and Violin; Three Movements for Viola; Violin Duo; Ocean for Double Bass; Duo for Mandolin and Guitar; Where the Sea meets the Shore - guitar duo*

Richard Hand and Tom Dupré.

Martin Vishnick - guitar

Nigel Woodhouse - mandolin

Claudio Records CC4325-2

Here is a composer who may not be familiar to the majority of classical guitar aficionados but his healthy output of compositions for the instrument and chamber works that include the guitar ensure a position of solidarity that comes from an appreciation of the subtle range of nuances and extremes of pitch that can be obtained from such combinations as a guitar quartet. The *Guitar Quartet* on *Summer Waves* is performed by the English Guitar Quartet and has Tom Dupre and Andrew Marlow on regular instruments with Richard hand on treble guitar and Tim Pells on classical bass guitar. This is a particularly engaging three-movement work based on the key points of day through to night. Scurries of tremolandos, clusters of harmonics and initially, in the first movement *The Play of Light on the Sea*, the thematic material sounds like a distant relative of Rodrigo's *Evocacion y Danza*. Atmospheric elements are focal points in Mills' work and the natural elements are never language. The *Guitar Quartet* is a particularly good starting point to be introduced to his music.

'Unassuming', 'unaffected' and even 'stripped of superfluity' from one of my own reviews (*Trio for flute, viola and guitar*) are ways to describe Mills's sound syntax. The campanela effects and flourishes of light and shade show a raw and unfettered control of the guitar in compositional terms. A particularly strident piece is the relatively short *Duo for violin and guitar* with dramatic unison passages.

Looking at the range of ensembles that Mills has composed for one can be assured of variety. The language is definitely accessible but is certainly uncompromising. Avoiding guitaristic cliché, on the whole, and sticking to harmonies that anyone whose ears have canied them further than post- Webern/Berg and even Messaien, although I wouldn't dream of comparing or setting up these composers in a line, will find stimulating and well worth checking out this consistently fascinating composer.

Mills's website (<https://www.barrymillscomposer.net/>) is an excellent way to access further information regarding biography, news etc. and his CDs can be bought directly from him. All are excellently produced by the man himself, with Colin Atwell as recording engineer.

Tim Punting