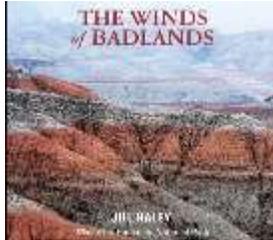


Jill Haley

The Winds of Badlands

Music For Badlands National Park



Probably one of the staunchest allies for the United States Park System is multi-instrumentalist and composer, **Jill Haley**. With her latest release **The Winds of Badlands**, which consists of twelve contemporary/New Age ballads, she now has half a dozen albums that celebrate, through her glorious music, the beauty and majesty of America's parks. Her English horn, oboe, and piano creates an incredible sound vista to enjoy not only these natural wonders, but also the everyday world around us. Joining her on this album are her constant companions **David Cullen** on guitar and **Graham Cullen** on cello that enhance the earthy, organic sound on every level. Sometimes three humble instruments do an orchestra make.

Situated in South Dakota and much like the Grand Canyon, the Badlands National Park was created by water, wind, and time. About 500 million years' worth. The striations of the mountains and depth of the canyons are a testament to a time when all was covered by an immense ocean. That ocean also left behind a vast prairie region in a landscape that is unique to the northern hemisphere. It only makes sense that Jill's music is unique as well.

The album open with the tune **Whirlwind**. The prairie is a flat open space that allows the winds to have their way. They are wild and capricious, dancing on the earth like some unseen God who treads very lightly. Jill's lively tune captures a snapshot of the Spirit of the West Wind as he shakes the grasses on his way east. It is a natural segue to the next tune.

Layers of cello and piano are the framework for the beautiful song **Wind Hymn**. Haley's English horn reverently leads this gentle prayer. It sounds like an anthem for the westerly airstream that touches every part of the land from high mountaintop to lower valley, caressing, forming, and invisibly eroding all that is touched.

Silhouettes at Dusk features piano and English horn in a slow, spiraling dance at sundown. Sunlit shadows rise and fall on the canyon walls like a romantic ballet in fading light. Although the heat of the day falters, Haley's melodic instrument furnishes breathy warmth to the piece.

Sculpted by Water features the movement of water as it flows and cascades throughout the countryside. Jill's sumptuous solo piano takes the lead in this tune as it curves and courses over everything. The power of water is sometimes unseen until the metamorphosis is well advanced. The results are then deemed miraculous. The multi-colored contours and rifts of the Badlands' landscape are that miracle.

If you gaze upon the landscape long enough there comes a point where the ground and the sky melt into one another. **Floor of the Sky** is the song for just that moment. I love the quirky title, but when I thought about it, it was quite apropos. The acoustic guitar and English horn always seemed to make friendly companions on many of the songs and this is one. Cullen's harmonics echo the final meeting of day and night, sparkling like stars in the heavens.

From butterflies to prairie dogs to buffalo, the **Sage Creek Basin** is alive with life. Jill's song of the same name captures the incredible vistas that await the traveler to the Sage Creek Wilderness Trail, which really is not a trail at all. Like the song, be prepared for stunning beauty as the grasslands come into view overshadowed by the sediment-colored mountains, but also be prepared for an unearthly solitude. That is in the song as well.

Many times Jill Haley is the Artist in Residence in the park, which affords her the time to experience sights and sounds we as visitors might not have enough time to enjoy. That is what makes her music so much fun and so poignant at the same time. When we listen to *The Winds of Badlands*, we too can experience the endless azure skies, the vastness of the prairie, and the extraordinary beauty that our planet has to offer. Highly recommended.

– R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews