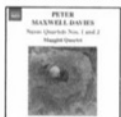


MAXWELL DAVIES

Naxos Quartets Nos 1 & 2

Maggini Quartet

Naxos 8.557396 74:38 mins £



Peter Maxwell

Davies's commission from Naxos to write a set of ten string quartets, all of which

will be released on disc by the label, would be daunting for almost any other composer. But for Maxwell Davies it is the kind of challenge he relishes, one to place alongside the set of ten *Strathclyde Concertos* and the cycle of seven symphonies, with an eighth, the *Antarctic Symphony*, added as an appendix. The quartets promise, though, to open up new expressive territory for the composer. If there is a suspicion in some of the *Strathclyde* works of producing music by the yard, almost of composition for the sake of it, then these first two quartets certainly have a real sense of compulsion and creative urgency about their invention. Both are big-boned, confident pieces, the First lasting approximately 30 minutes, the Second almost 15 minutes more, and the Maggini Quartet sustains both with huge assurance; neither is easy to play technically, but every detail is there, even though the sound could have more bite and immediacy.

All ten quartets, Maxwell Davies reveals in his booklet notes, will be unified by the use of the same 'magic square' through which he generates his rhythmic and melodic material, but the three movements of *Naxos Quartet No. 1* (the third movement is tiny compared with its predecessors) seem to inhabit a very different world from that of No. 2, whose massive and imposing outer movements frame two much shorter, though still intense ones. The composer cites Haydn as one of his quartet models, and the ghosts of Classicism do lurk behind many of the formal shapes, but on first encounter it will be the emotional range of the music, and its sheer fluency that will make the strongest impression. *Andrew Clements*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

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