

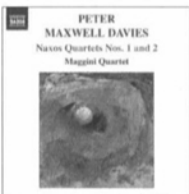
Naxos Quartets – No 1; No 2

Maggini Quartet (Laurence Jackson, David Angel *vs* Martin Outram *va* Michal Kaznowski *vc*)

Naxos © 8 557396 (75 minutes: DDD)

A magnificent start to what promises to be a rewarding project

If this initial instalment is anything to go by, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's ambitious series of 10 Naxos Quartets is already shaping up to be quite a journey. Not only does the septuagenarian composer rise superbly to the technical challenges of the medium, the first two movements of the First Quartet evince a formal strength, expressive scope and thematic ingenuity that launch the cycle in sure-footed fashion; both attain a dramatic and emotional resolution in some



arresting unison writing. The compact concluding *scherzo* could hardly provide a bolder contrast; its ghostly, Will-'o-the-wisp dialogue will re-emerge in the Third Quartet.

Having attended the London première of the Second Quartet just a couple of weeks after the date of this recording, I must say it was gratifying to be so deeply absorbed afresh by Maxwell Davies's eloquent inspiration. There are four movements this time, the second and third of which comprise a self-contained diptych (and the former's recitative first half harks back to No 1's *Largo* centrepiece). The outer movements are more expansive. An expectant *Lento* introduction leads to a bracing *Allegro*, its progress stimulating and satisfyingly proportioned. The *Lento flessibile* finale is finer still: a memorably serene and utterly inevitable essay.

The Magginis are most accurate and cogent guides, realistically recorded within the sympathetic acoustic of Potton Hall in Suffolk. A most rewarding coupling.

Andrew Achenbach

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies discusses his Naxos Quartet cycle on page 11