

# the Strad

November 2017



**RILEY** *Dark Queen Mantra*; *The Wheel and Mythic Birds Waltz* **SCODANIBBIO** *Mas lugares* (su madrigali di Monteverdi)

**Del Sol Quartet, Gyan Riley (guitar)**

SONO LUMINUS DSL-92215

**Minimalism has come a long way in these focused performances**

Godfather of minimalism Terry Riley has come an awfully long way since the days of *In C* and tripped-out improvisations half a century ago, as the two works on this engaging disc demonstrate. *Dark Queen Mantra* from 2015, written for San Francisco's Del Sol Quartet and the composer's son, guitarist Gyan Riley, is all sun-flecked Spanish hedonism, bringing together intricate electric guitar patterns (which can't help but summon Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint* to mind) with pulsing, jazzy harmonies from the quartet, who take on an arresting folksy rawness in its closing movement.

The disc's closing *The Wheel and Mythic Birds Waltz* from 1983 brings more jazzy harmonies to bear on Indian-inspired tabla rhythms, but, as also in *Dark Queen Mantra*, it's the Del Sol players' elegance and restraint that really mark out their performances. They're far less flamboyant than the Kronos Quartet in similar works by Riley, but the Del Sol's accounts feel more focused and defined as a result.

*Mas lugares*, a quartet work based on Monteverdi madrigals by bassist and composer Stefano Scodanibbio, makes a likeable bedfellow: there's a harder edge to its repetitions and it's a good deal more dissonant, but it shares Riley's easy-going rhythmic

playfulness and witty interplay between the parts. And as with the two Riley works, the Del Sol approaches it with all due seriousness, care and commitment. Recorded sound is close, warm and generous.

DAVID KETTLE