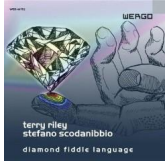


Terry Riley & Stefano Scodanibbio □ – Diamond Fiddle Language (2005)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 15 February 2018 15:07 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 April 2019 13:54

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1 *Diamond Fiddle Language I* 14:50 2 *Tritono* 12:36 3 *Diamond Fiddle Language II* 27:01 Terry Riley - Electronics [Synthesizer], Voice Stefano Scodanibbio - Double Bass
Live Recordings: 1. Huddersfield, 28 Nov. 1998 2. San Sebastian, 26 Apr. 2000 3. Lanzarote, 8 Oct. 1999

Minimalist composer Terry Riley and avant-garde bassist Stefano Scodanibbio collaborated on *Diamond Fiddle Language* over a period of a year and a half and recorded this disc's two versions in separate locations: a concert hall in Huddersfield, England, and the lava caves of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands. A side-by-side comparison of the renditions reveals more differences in mood and attitude than changes of pitch content or dramatically altered shapes of the whole work. *Diamond Fiddle Language I* seems rather tight, expository, and focused, while *Diamond Fiddle Language II* has a looser improvisational feeling and suggests a more relaxed playing around the edges of the material. Though Riley uses scales based on the pentatonic raga malkauns, and adjusts them to Scodanibbio's varied tunings, the effect of their playing together is much more harmonically complex and free in execution, hovering somewhere between jazz and aleatoric experimentation. At its later stage of development, DFL II is less inhibited than DFL I, and its resonant venue is more conducive to taking liberties. *Tritono*, a duet based on the diminished fifth (D sharp/A), provides an interlude between the two DFL performances; this tour de force serves to focus concentration and clears the air between the two larger, spacier improvisations. These live recordings are quite clear and full of presence, and the few audience noises are tolerable. --- Blair Sanderson, AllMusic Review

Perhaps to some listeners this reprise of Terry Riley and Stefano Scodanibbio's initial 1997 encounter, entitled *Lazy Afternoon Among the Crocodiles*, does live up to its billing in the

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booklet-notes as 'European avant-garde meets American minimalism'. More to the point, though, is that it continues to chart a sonic common ground between two artists who defy any conventional labels within their respective musical cultures.

Indeed, to call this music 'works for keyboard and double bass' does little justice to the range of playing techniques, applied technology and musical sensibilities that can fuse composition with improvisation, or traditional raga with modern electronics. Scodanibbio's scordatura tuning in the bass is matched to perfection on Riley's keyboards (and nearly so on his Indian-inflected vocals), the bassists' technique of bowing with one hand while plucking with another smoothly mated to the keyboardist's manual multi-tasking. Such a wealth of colour and stylistic brushstrokes fill the canvas that it's nearly impossible to believe that only two people are involved.

The range of what Riley and Scodanibbio accomplish is best grasped by comparing the two performances of Diamond Fiddle Language, a piece containing specific modalities and an overall form but also considerable room for the performers to manoeuvre. It may be a stretch to hear the 'Victorian architecture' of the first performances (recorded at the 1998 Huddersfield Festival) with 'volcanic galleries' of the second (recorded a year later in the Canary Islands) but no doubt Riley and Scodanibbio return to a completely different place. ---K Smith, gramophone.co.uk

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