

# Classical Music Reviews



## **Tchaikovsky: Serenade. Nielsen: Suite. Trondheim Soloists. (downloads, LP, and Blu-ray) 2L.**

Perhaps Morten Lindberg was out to make a point about progress in audio technology when he decided that his label's new program, *Souvenir Part I* from the Trondheim Soloists, would be released as 24/96 stereo, 24/192 stereo, 24/352 stereo, and 24/96 multichannel downloads ([www.2l.no/hires/index.html](http://www.2l.no/hires/index.html)), 180-gram vinyl, and Blu-ray. I requested both downloads and vinyl and, within 24 hours, was familiar with the considerable sonic and musical strengths of the former. The LP arrived from Norway about a week later, via snail mail. So 2002.

*Souvenir* is a terrific program with which to demonstrate the virtues of multichannel, especially multichannel of the more "immersive"—some would say "aggressive"—variety. There's plenty of direct sound in the rear channels, yet one still gets the impression of experiencing a performance in a real space, in this case a small, stone parish church with a capacity of 400. The listener is located in a very different place than usual, namely onstage with the players. This is especially involving if you have any history, however distant, of playing in an orchestra yourself: there's a sense of *participation* that connects one viscerally to the music. You'll want to listen *loud*. Additionally, 2L's DXD encoding (32-bit "floating point" at 352kHz) shows us how far digital recording has come, taking on what may be classical music's toughest sonic nut to crack, the sound of massed

strings. There's the same resinous texture heard with the best analog recordings, plus we can appreciate that the violin sections are made up of many non-identical instruments.

Typical for 2L, two weeks were allotted to record 90 minutes of music (a second *Souvenir* release will be forthcoming). Further deconstructing the usual paradigm for recording an orchestra is that the players are not sitting in standard "sections"—first violins, second violins, violas, etc.—but instead are mixed together. Yet the coherence of the performances is in no way compromised, a tribute to the players who truly function as chamber musicians. The reading of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* captures both the sunny lyricism of that piece—listen to the soaring cello line beginning at 2:03 in the last movement—as well as its contrapuntal exuberance. The opening of the first movement is significantly less turgid than is often the case: We feel the triple meter clearly even at a slow tempo. The less familiar Nielsen work—the composer's *Opus 1*—employs a similar harmonic language to the Tchaikovsky, but it's a bit more serious in tone, more "Northern" in outlook. Still, the conclusion is upbeat and we leave refreshed.

Interestingly, to produce the vinyl version, 2L utilizes the main center microphone as the primary source, with right and left front adding width. (This also facilitates the "monofication" required below 300Hz to cut a vinyl groove, Lindberg explained to me.) The stereo download programs derive mostly from the right and left main mikes, with the center providing "stability and substance." The effect of going from the download stereo to vinyl stereo is of moving back ten rows in the church. Not in the sense of there being more of the room, but in that the ensemble's image is more compact, with less specific placement of instruments. It's not better or worse—just different. **Andrew Quint**

**Further Listening:** *Divertimenti* (Trondheim Soloists/2L Blu-ray);