

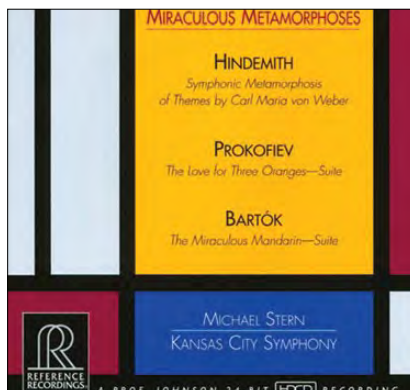
Classical Music Reviews



Symphonies of Wind Instruments. Royal Norwegian Navy Band, Bergby. 2L (Blu-ray and SACD).

The Oslo-based 2L label, the outfit that last year gave us the sensational *La Voie Triomphale*, is back with another program of symphonic wind ensemble music. The results, musically and sonically, are just as remarkable. This time, the program includes four gems of the 20th century concert band repertoire—Hindemith's Concert Music for Wind Orchestra and his Symphony in B flat, Schoenberg's Theme and Variations, and Stravinsky's succinct and pungent Symphonies of Wind Instruments. The disc closes with a more harmonically adventuresome but equally idiomatic piece by Norwegian Rolf Wallin titled *Changes*. Ingar Bergby's conducting is alert, rhythmically pointed, and texturally clarifying; the playing of the Royal Norwegian Navy Band matches the level of the Eastman Wind Ensemble of yore. The jewel box holds audio-only Blu-Ray and SACD versions of the original 24-bit, 352.8kHz "DXD" recording and, with both formats, dynamic range and timbral detail are exceptional. 2L's multichannel is characteristically immersive but all the microphones were positioned in front of the conductor. The rear channels don't output direct sound, just more room ambience than usual. The result: sonic heaven. **Andrew Quint**

Further Listening: *La Voie Triomphale* (2L); *Circus Maximus* (Naxos)



Hindemith: Symphonic Metamorphoses. Prokofiev: Love for Three Oranges. Bartók: Miraculous Mandarin. Kansas City Symphony, Stern. Reference.

Michael Stern's first two RR releases programmed English repertoire—music by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Britten—and can be counted as highly successful on both musical and sonic terms. Stern has a lesser affinity for the orchestral showpieces here. All require an extroverted dynamism that gets overtly aggressive with the Prokofiev Suite, and even dangerous-sounding with the Bartók. So *Symphonic Metamorphoses* fails to make the impression of a powerful but well-oiled machine, as did performances from Ormandy or Blomstedt, and listeners wanting to fully experience the nutty flamboyance of *The Love for Three Oranges* or the erotic charge of *The Miraculous Mandarin* need look no further than Antal Dorati's classic performances of the 1950s and 60s. The recording has a mid-hall sonic perspective that provides natural scaling of instruments and realistic front-to-back layering—but doesn't offer the last word in impact and detail, aural aspects so important to these vivid scores. SACD and high-resolution download options are promised shortly and it'll be interesting to hear if those versions are more aurally compelling. **AQ**

Further Listening: Prokofiev: *Scythian Suite* (Dorati); Hindemith: *Mathis Der Maler* (Karajan)



Leclair: Complete Sonatas for Two Violins. Ewer and LaMotte. Sono Luminus (Blu-ray and CD).

This is among the best sounding solo violin recordings I've ever encountered. Make that *two* solo violins, as this disc holds the 12 works for a pair of unaccompanied fiddles by Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764), the founding father of the French school of violin playing. Leclair was influenced by Corelli, but these sonatas, all in three or four brief movements, sound more like Bach in his more effervescent moods, strongly influenced by dance forms of the day. Leclair was in fact a professional dancer before emerging as an important performer and court composer. The 41 pieces, while employing some familiar Baroque tropes, are endlessly varied and use the full resources of the two performers; at times, playing double stops, the duo sounds like a full string quartet. Greg Ewer and Adam LaMotte display impeccable technique in addition to stylistic mastery. Their combined effort adds up to something more than the sum of its considerable parts. A photo in the liner notes shows the two violinists standing about six feet apart, about that same distance from a microphone array. That's exactly what you hear, especially with the 24/192 multichannel music-only Blu-ray. **AQ**

Further Listening: Paganini: *Caprices* (Ehnes); Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas* (Fischer)