

# Trondheim Soloists: DIVERTIMENTI on 2L

Classical Reviews - Orchestral

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DIVERTIMENTI • [Trondheim Soloists](#) • 2L 50 (Audio-only Blu-ray disc and Hybrid multichannel SACD: 68:57)

[BARTÓK](#) Divertimento for Strings. [BRITTEN](#) *Simple Symphony*. [BACEWICZ](#) Concerto for String Orchestra. [BJØRKLUND](#) *Carmina*

Why, you may rightfully ask, is a review of a Blu-ray disc—the hot new high-definition *video* medium—not in the DVD (or video) section of this magazine? The answer is that this release is something new, a *music-only* Blu-ray disc. BDs are proliferating on the shelves of Blockbuster and Best Buy because the sensational picture quality shows off what high definition television is capable of. But the audio specifications of the technology represent a giant improvement over the compressed



surround-sound options carried on regular DVDs, Dolby Digital, and DTS; in fact, the sonics leapfrog over CD into SACD territory. Opus Arte has already released a number of Blu-ray programs of opera, ballet, and concert material. But why not use BD as a music carrier and forget about video altogether? That's what we have here, with this program entitled "Divertimenti."

Divertimenti [Hybrid SACD  
Blu-ray; Classical  
2-L  
Buy now from Amazon

Place "Divertimenti" in a Blu-ray player, turn on the video display, and you'll see a menu to choose among audio options and to select the music you'll hear. Then, you may as well turn off the TV. Founded by recording engineer Morten Lindberg, 2L (for Lindberg Lyd AS) is a Norwegian company that has been releasing CDs and SACDs since 1996. The intrepid listener is provided with no fewer than five audio options on the BD, plus another three on the hybrid multichannel SACD that's also included in the set. These are derived from an ultra-high-resolution DXD master—if you must know, that's Digital eXtreme Definition, with the music originally encoded at 32-bit/352.8 kHz. "Divertimenti" offers the program at 24-bit/192 kHz quality as DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1, Dolby Digital TrueHD 5.1, Linear PCM 5.1, and PCM Stereo. There's also, for some reason, regular old-fashioned Dolby Digital 5.1. The sound of the high-resolution versions is sensational—extended, super-clean without any digital astringency, richly textured, and dimensional. Additionally, 2L provides a multichannel perspective that puts the listener in the middle of the action. It's highly involving and takes one deeply into the performance without seeming at all gimmicky.

The Trondheim Soloists were first organized two decades ago to serve as a professional training ensemble for string-players at the Conservatory in that central Norwegian city. They may be best known to general listeners as the group Anne-Sophie Mutter picked in 1999 to accompany her for her second DG recording of *The Four Seasons*. The orchestra continues to collaborate with Mutter and with other artists of international stature, including Leif Ove Andsnes and Joshua Bell. The group's sound is robust, balanced, and remarkably unified in tone production and dynamic contouring, considering there's no conductor. (Cellist Øyvind Gimse is artistic director.)

The program is very satisfying, anchored by familiar works of Benjamin Britten and Béla Bartók. Britten's youthful *Simple Symphony*, four fancifully named movements ("Boisterous Bourree," "Playful Pizzicato," etc.) based on melodies recalled from the composer's childhood, is executed with flair and good humor. Bartók's more serious piece gets an invigorating, emotionally committed reading. Between these two staples of the chamber-orchestra repertoire is an addition to Grazyna Bacewicz's steadily expanding discography, a convincing performance of her Concerto for String Orchestra (1948). The opening movement features churning neo-Baroque counterpoint, followed by a spooky-solemn Andante, then a nimble, optimistic Vivo finale. Bacewicz was an accomplished violinist, once concertmaster of the Polish Radio Orchestra, and much of her compositional output is for strings—the writing is highly idiomatic. Also on the disc is Norwegian composer Terje Bjørklund's lovely 13-minute *Carmina*. Bjørklund, born in 1945, has created a calming work in the mode of Barber's famous *Adagio* that's interrupted briefly by agitated, quasi-minimalist passages.

It should be noted that the magnificent sonics heard on the Blu-ray disc are matched—but not surpassed—by those on the hybrid multichannel SACD included in 2L's package. For those of us who count ourselves as classical music fans who value good sound, SACD has been a bountiful harvest, with a couple of thousand titles now available, and the list growing weekly. But SACD doesn't do nearly as well with popular music consumers and, as such, must be considered a "niche product"—like, let's face it, classical music in general. That's not to say that SACD won't continue to thrive for a long time on the support of sound-conscious classical enthusiasts. But Blu-ray looks like it's going to be a mass-market phenomenon. And music-only specimens like this one could be the audiophile medium of the future. Andrew Quint

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