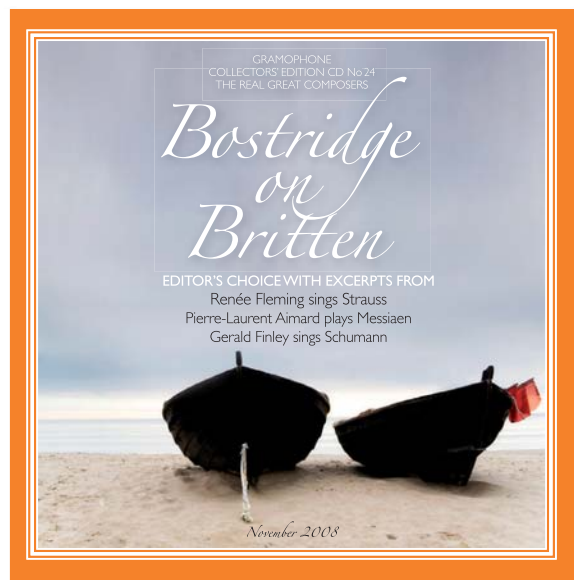


# Editor's Choice



James Inverne's pick of this month's most outstanding new discs – you can hear excerpts on this month's free CD



## THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL CD FEATURE

TRACK

### 1 THE REAL BRITTEN

James Jolly talks to leading Britten tenor Ian Bostridge about a composer who was venerated yet dogged by controversy



TRACK

### 2 'DIVERTIMENTI' Trondheim Soloists / Øyvind Gimse Lindberg Lyd

This is in some ways historic, as the first audio classical Blu-ray disc. The sound is spectacular in whatever format you choose (a hybrid version is also included) but the jump to Blu-ray is, as in vision, a leap forward. None of which would matter were the performances not uniformly excellent. Will this be a one-off or the trickle before the flood?

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 71**

## REISSUE OF THE MONTH



With his public performances now less frequent than in the past, thanks to injury problems with his hand, it is good to be reminded of Murray Perahia's brilliance in Bach. That composer has, of course, been one of the planks on which his formidable career has been built. These marvellous recordings, of the English Suites, were the first time his Bach was caught in the studios. A must for any self-respecting piano, Bach or Perahia fan.

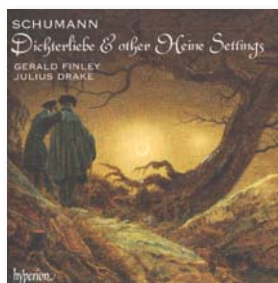
► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 84**



### TRACK 3 'GERMAN BAROQUE CANTATAS' Soloists; Gli Angeli Genève / Stephan MacLeod Sony Classical

It might not have the snappiest title in the world, nor for that matter is it populated with trendy star soloists, but this "does what it says on the box" set is terrific. Stephan MacLeod's Gli Angeli Genève are wonderfully refined, his choice of soloists spot-on. Tenor Jan Kobow in particular gives a superb account of Bruhns's *Jauchzet dem Herren*.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 100**



### TRACK 4 SCHUMANN Dichterliebe, etc Gerald Finley bar Julius Drake pf Hyperion

I admit that I hesitated before making this *Dichterliebe* an Editor's Choice, for the simple reason that Gerald Finley is rarely out of these pages. But here again he sings with such mellifluous tone, allied to such perceptiveness and intensity of expression that one simply cannot leave him out. Regret and bitterness infuse this recital, even mockery, as Finley balances consuming rage and choking sorrow.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 97**



### TRACK 5 BUSONI Fantasia contrappuntistica Hamish Milne pf Hyperion

This is one of those addictive discs, best listened to when you know you haven't anything else vying for attention (because you won't get around to it). I listened to this three times before taking it out of the player. "A mighty mountain range glimpsed behind clouds" is how reviewer Bryce Morrison describes Busoni's terrifying Fantasia. So Milne eagerly scales these peaks, taking time to observe vistas of surpassing loveliness.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 85**



### TRACK 6 R STRAUSS Four Last Songs. Arias Renée Fleming sop Munich Philharmonic Orchestra / Christian Thielemann Decca

Is it me, or has Renée Fleming's tone acquired some intriguing new colours? There's an earthy depth to her voice now, a coppery beauty. Of course the top is still as rapt as ever and she delivers some gorgeous singing in the *Four Last Songs* (though she can't match the emotional complexity of recent rivals). The opera scenes are, however, knockouts.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 99**

sonoristic layers of his fellow-countrymen, above all Lutoslawski. That did not stop him continuing to indulge in his trademark polychords, or from including, in the Toccata finale, an outrageous rip-off of Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*. All good clean fun, but probably just as well Stravinsky's lawyers didn't get to hear of it.

Performances and recording are admirable, making this an attractive disc – undemanding, maybe, but by no means trivial. **David Fanning**

## Vivaldi

Violin Concertos, 'The Four Seasons', Op 8 Nos 1-4. Violin Concertos – RV372; RV390. Concerto for Two Violins and Cello, RV578a

Gli Incogniti / Amandine Beyer *vn*

Zig Zag Territoires © ZYT080803 (71' • DDD)

**The Seasons here make pleasant listening – at least on the first occasion**



*The Four Seasons* are in rare company here – three violin concertos, two of which (we are told) have not been recorded before. One, RV578a, was discovered (or

reconstructed, or something) shortly before the recording, and is an early version of the second concerto from the Op 3 *L'estro armonico* set, simpler and with a different finale; the other, RV372 "per Signora Chiara", is a perky number written for one of Vivaldi's female pupils. These precede the *Seasons* on the disc, while after them comes RV390, an example of Vivaldi's graceful and relaxed late style, and with a beguiling *pizzicato* accompaniment in the slow movement.

The *Seasons* themselves are pleasantly atmospheric, their interpretative points gently made. "Spring" opens with some clever near-and-far birdsong effects, "Summer" brews a bracing storm, "Autumn" trips nicely when not tickling its drunken sleeper with florid but surprisingly unobtrusive harpsichord arpeggios, and "Winter" conjures a keen nip in the air and generates some fierce (if not particularly weighty) velocity at the end. In other words, these are sweet-tempered and musically sensitive *Seasons* which never hector the listener as some do. The one-to-a-part Gli Incogniti offer a pliant, transparent texture, and soloist Amandine Beyer's tone has an attractive brogue to it. Yet for all their restful appeal, these performances would benefit from more controlled direction; there are times when ensemble and tuning are a little scruffy, and there are many refinements of detail that could be tidied. There are even what sound like minor mistakes (for instance, a mistimed harmony change in the last movement of RV372).

These are nice performances, the sort that would charm you to pieces if you came across them one afternoon in some fine Baroque church, but for repeated listening they need a bit of tightening up. **Lindsay Kemp**

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

Music in the round:  
the Trondheim Soloists



Surround yourself with sumptuous string-playing – but is Blu-ray gold standard?

## 'Divertimenti'

Bacewicz Concerto for Strings **Bartók** Divertimento, Sz113  
**Bjørklund** Carmina **Britten** Simple Symphony  
Trondheim Soloists / Øyvind Gimse  
Lindberg Lyd © 2 ( + ) 2L50SABD  
(69' • DDD/DXD)



Blu-ray, the latest advance in technology, can be sampled in this audio issue by the Trondheim Soloists, directed with much warmth and sensitivity by Øyvind Gimse. The alternative discs are both recorded in so-called "digital eXtreme definition", one needing special reproducing equipment, the other mastered as a hybrid CD. Played using front and back speakers the result is very impressive indeed and offers some of the most realistic string sound I have heard on SACD.

The Trondheim Soloists, an ensemble of up to 20 or so musicians, play in a circular group, so that one can enjoy these performances in concert-hall fashion (when the warm yet clear acoustic resonance could not be bettered) or, by bringing up the volume of the back speakers, one can rather engagingly sit in the middle of the performers. The dynamic range is realistically and often excitingly wide (without being overwhelming), detail is remarkable in its glowing clarity, and the string sound itself is faithful, from the clear, *tutti* violins to the sumptuous cellos, underpinned by bold double bass sonorities.

As for the playing, it is of the highest calibre, effectively capturing the rather endearing scalic simplicity of Bjørklund's *Carmina*, the incisive Bartók *allegros*, the hauntingly restless, *pianissimo* opening of the unpredictable Bacewicz *Andante* and the *piano-pianissimo* murmur of the opening of the *Adagio* of the Bartók Divertimento. The latter is also particularly strong in the outer movements, lucid, full of character with much variety of dynamic and passionate feeling in its vital folk-derived influences.

But my demonstration recording is the superbly alive performance of the Britten *Simple Symphony*, making it sound a much more ambitious work than usual. The contrapuntal interplay of the "Boisterous Bourrée" is freshly elegant and the "Playful Pizzicato", if perhaps not quite as light-hearted as Britten's own recording, nevertheless strums the "Boys and girls come out to play" theme with bold bouncing vigour. The following "Sentimental Sarabande" renounces sentimentality for a delicately warm romanticism with the most beautiful *pianissimo* sustained in the "Sweet Genevieve" theme and a rapturously gentle coda. The "Frolicsome Finale" has all the dash you could want. With the orchestra splendidly balanced, this is first-class in every way – even the light-blue packaging is stylishly inviting. **Ivan March**

## AUDIO VERDICT

**Gramophone's audio editor's verdict on the first Blu-ray audio disc**

The music on this disc comes in a comprehensive – even bewildering – range of formats.

You get – deep breath – 5.1-channel sound in DTS HD Master Audio, Dolby True HD and Linear PCM, all at 192kHz/24-bit, 5.1-channel Dolby Digital at 48kHz, and stereo LPCM 192kHz/24-bit. A second hybrid SACD/CD disc, containing stereo CD quality, and stereo and 5.1-channel DSD, is in the package.

So how does it sound? Well, I have to say the Britten *Simple Symphony* is a beautiful performance, especially striking in the plucked strings of the "Playful Pizzicato" and the flow of the "Sentimental Sarabande" – and each step up the quality chain brought out more of the music and the superb recording.

Switching from CD to SACD stereo was eye-opening, as was the jump to multichannel SACD, but there was even more to come when switching to the formats on the Blu-ray disc. Instrumental textures were thrown into even sharper focus, and the contribution of each musician became clearer.

My favourite of the three Blu-ray formats? The DTS HD MA and Dolby Digital versions sounded just a shade edgy and brittle, while at the same time delivering less detail than the Linear PCM, even though the bit-rates are exactly the same at 24-bit/192kHz.

So on this showing I'd go for 5.1-channel SACD and 5.1-channel Linear PCM as the top choices, and suggest you get hold of the disc.

This may only be one future for music on disc, rather than *the* future. But if you have suitable equipment and any interest in classical music, it's a great way of showing off your system.

**Andrew Everard**





**Editor's Choice** and cover disc  
in this edition of GRAMOPHONE:

# DIVERTIMENTI

## The Trondheim Soloists

**DIVERTIMENTI (2L50SABD)** - SACD / Normal CD included

MARIANNE THORSEN

# MOZART

TRONDHEIMSOLISTENE

## VIOLIN CONCERTOS

**MOZART (2L38SACD)**

Classic FM '*...mellifluous performances, topped off by perfect cadenzas*' 5 stars  
Stereophile '*...a record to die for*'

# 2L

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