

Classical CAPS

Music Sonics Extraordinary Excellent Good Fair Poor



Music Sonics

Divertimenti. Britten: *Simple Symphony*. Bacewicz: *Concerto for String Orchestra*. Bjørklund: *Carmina*. Bartók: *Divertimento for Strings*. Trondheim Soloists. Morten Lindberg, producer and balance engineer; Hans Peter L'Orange, engineer. 2L 2L50SABD (music-only Blu-ray disc and SACD).

From an obscure Norwegian label comes the first music-only Blu-ray disc. It's a development that could prove monumental to audiophiles. Unlike SACD, Blu-ray isn't a niche product. Best of all, the unchallenged DVD successor boasts specifications that allow it to serve as a high-end music carrier.

The label "2L"—Lindberg Lyd AS, founded by audio engineer Morten Lindberg—is a Norwegian concern operating since 1996. *Divertimenti* was recorded with DXD (Digital eXtreme Definition) at 32-bit/352.8kHz, four times the data density of DSD. Using the DXD master file, 2L produced no fewer than eight versions of the program. On the Blu-ray disc are dts-HD 5.1, Dolby TrueHD 5.1, Linear PCM 5.1, and PCM stereo, all at 24-bit, 192 kHz resolution. There's also regular Dolby Digital surround. And presumably, for comparison purposes,

2L includes a hybrid multichannel SACD that provides that format's standard trio of aural iterations.

The sound with every one of the high-resolution options is stunning—open and utterly grainless, with extraordinarily life-like instrumental signatures. The multichannel mix does, as the liner notes comment, “put the listener in the thick of the music rather than in a seat at one end of the hall.” This may not be a realistic perspective for anyone but an orchestral musician, but the experience is remarkably involving. The dts-HD program sounded *marginally* clearer and more extended than the Dolby TrueHD. SACD was as good—though no better—than either.

The Trondheim Soloists are a versatile Norwegian chamber orchestra. For a conductorless group, they manifest remarkable unanimity of attack, tone production, and dynamic nuance.

The program includes two staples of the string orchestra repertoire, Benjamin Britten's youthful and masterfully crafted *Simple Symphony*, played here with enormous panache, and Béla Bartók's *Divertimento for Strings*, two fast movements brimming with the composer's characteristic nervous energy flanking a quiet, troubled *Molto Adagio*. The three economical movements of the Polish violinist and composer Grazyna Bacewicz's *Concerto for String Orchestra* were written in 1948 with an advanced tonal language. Her immediately engaging music offers rich yet transparent string textures. Last is *Carmina*, a 13-minute composition by the living Norwegian composer Terje Bjørklund. All said, a mandatory acquisition for any high-res multichannel pioneer. **Andrew Quint**
Further Listening: Shostakovich: *Chamber Symphony (Orbelian)* (SACD); Bacewicz: *String Quartet No. 4 (Szymanowski Quartet)*



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Andreas Scholl: *Crystal Tears*. Scholl, countertenor; Julian Behr, lute; *Concerto di Viole*. Markus Heiland, producer and engineer. Harmonia Mundi 901993.

Andreas Scholl's remarkably beautiful voice is used with an interpretive sensibility that places him in the front rank of today's singers. Backed by an excellent viol consort and a fine lutenist, Scholl excels in this program of music by John Dowland and several of the latter's contemporaries.

If it's Dowland, you can expect plenty of lugubrious songs about death and other sorrows. There's something unduly precious in such swooning tomb-hugging, but Scholl makes it a journey into the soul, not a trot into artifice. If you're used to the typically hooty, artificial-sounding countertenors that tackle these songs, you're in for a treat.

Without undue exaggeration, Scholl manages to charge the tune that gives the album its title, *Go, Crystal Tears*, with subtle expressiveness, color, fine diction, and apt phrasing. The nearly 80-minute program is leavened by consort and solo lute selections. Balances are exemplary. **Dan Davis**
Further Listening: Scholl: *Handel Arias*; Dowland: *Pears*