



**a** **GRIEG Piano Concerto.**<sup>1,3</sup> **Lyric Pieces.**<sup>2</sup> *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen; Eroticon; To Spring.* **Album Leafs.**<sup>2</sup> op. 28/1, 2. **Violin Sonata No. 3.**<sup>4</sup> • Percy Grainger (pn);<sup>1</sup> Edvard Grieg (pn);<sup>2</sup> Rolf Gupta, cond;<sup>3</sup> Øyvind Bjorå (vn);<sup>4</sup> Rex Lawson (pianola);<sup>4</sup> Kristiansand SO<sup>3</sup> • 2L 60 (Audio-only Blu-ray Disc & Hybrid multichannel SACD: 66: 20)

I refer readers to Andrew Quint's concise and understandable discussion of the technical aspects of Blu-ray audio only discs in his review of 2L's "Divertimenti" featuring the Trondheim Soloists playing a collection of chamber music (*Fanfare* 32:2). Like "Divertimenti," this album contains an audio only Blu-ray disc and a hybrid multichannel SACD. It therefore has the appearance of a feast for audiophiles and techies. The Blu-ray disc offers the program in three options: 5.1 DTS HD (24 bit/192 kHz), 7.1 DTS HD (24 bit/92kHz), and 2.0 LPCM stereo (24 bit/192 kHz). The SACD is a typical hybrid multichannel disc containing multichannel, stereo, and standard CD options. I had some difficulty initially getting the SACD to track (on two separate high-end machines), but it eventually played the program. That program is an example of more amazing technical razzle-dazzle. The folks at 2L have utilized artistically valuable music rolls of Percy Grainger playing the Grieg Piano Concerto in 1921 and Grieg playing some of his solo piano pieces in 1906.



According to the explanatory program notes, the music rolls on a Duo-Art reproducing piano and a foot-pedaled pianola were fitted in front of a Steinway concert grand piano and "reperformed" with the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra. Now, you might wonder how or whether they were able to seamlessly integrate Grainger with a newly recorded version of the orchestral accompaniment in an ultra high-resolution recording that would surely reveal the inconsistencies born out of this technical hocus-pocus. Well, for the most part they succeed (assuming you have no aesthetic or artistic problem with the process). There is, to be sure, a palpable presence to the orchestra that is missing in the solo instrument, but the difference is not at all disconcerting and certainly does not detract from the value of hearing Grainger's very emotional interpretation in its proper context with a full orchestra. His tempos are generally faster than you usually hear today and much more subjectively variable. The second movement may be especially difficult for some listeners (myself included), in that it is more restless and impulsive than elegiac. The performance was undoubtedly controversial, but it holds together well, aided by Grainger's nimble fingerwork. The most amazing thing about this recording is how Gupta and his orchestra stay together and effectively complement Grainger's highly personal interpretation. It is also very worthwhile to hear Grieg play his own piano music with this kind of sound.

As with their previous disc, the engineers place the listener in the center of the ensemble in a way that is totally involving, but far from what you would hear in a concert hall. That should hardly matter here, even to the purist with such things, given the other technical aspects of this recording. The Blu-ray disc has substantially more high frequency presence and spatial information than the SACD in both stereo and multichannel. Neither the Blu-ray disc nor the SACD have sound on the level of 2L's "Divertimenti" recording. This may be a blessing, in that it probably lessens the sonic differences between the piano restorations and the newly recorded orchestral part. This, then, is a valuable document of Grainger's artistry, especially since it is well documented that Grainger's interpretive ideas pleased Grieg immensely. We are indebted to the engineers and technical people who made it possible to hear Grainger play Grieg's Concerto with a modern symphony orchestra in addition to the composer playing his own piano music in credible sound. The Violin Sonata played by a solo violinist and renowned pianist is an interesting bonus. **Arthur Lintgen**