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great violinists, is considerable, but Testament have gone some way to mitigate this through the release of several notable recordings by her. The latest is outstanding, with pride of place going to an unparalleled account of the Sibelius Concerto, with Rattle and his CBSO on top form accompanying her at the BBC Proms in 1993. Haendel's playing has to be heard to be believed: the intensity which she achieves is phenomenal. The considerable challenges of this work fall by the wayside in the face of her total technical command and deep musical insight. Rattle and his players follow her every step, and his conducting in its own way is equally as good as Haendel's playing – here is evidence, if any were required, as to why he is where he is now. In Mike Ashman's insert note Haendel is quoted as saying that this was one of those rare occasions "when everything worked" – how right she was.

Nine years earlier the same team had performed the Elgar Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall. After the magnificence of the Sibelius, this is not quite its equal: the acoustic is more unforgiving and the performance, good as it is, does not possess the Olympian grandeur and perspective that was to be present in 1993. Rattle's command of the orchestra is also not quite as complete as it would be later. Nonetheless, to have two such fine performances available back-to-back is riches indeed. Surely one of this year's prizewinners. David Patmore

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**Grieg** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16<sup>a</sup>. Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor, Op. 45<sup>b</sup>. Album Leaves, Op. 28 – No. 1 in A flat<sup>c</sup>; No. 2 in F<sup>c</sup>. Lyric Pieces – Erotik, Op. 43 No 5<sup>c</sup>; To the Spring, Op. 43 No. 6<sup>c</sup>; Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op. 65 No. 6<sup>d</sup>.  
<sup>a</sup>**Percy Grainger** (piano rolls);  
<sup>a</sup>**Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra / Rolf Gupta**; <sup>b</sup>**Øyvind Bjorå** (violin); <sup>b</sup>**Rex Lawton** (pianolist); <sup>c</sup>**Edvard Grieg** (piano rolls).

Two disc set containing the same programme on one SACD and one Audio Blu-Ray Disc – 2L F 60 (each disc 66mins; DDD); rec. Kristiansand Cathedral, Norway, 2/2009. ([www.2L.no](http://www.2L.no))

In 1921 Percy Grainger made a Duo-Art piano roll recording of the solo part of Grieg's Piano Concerto, which also included "orchestral accompaniment adapted and added" by Grainger himself. In 1979 an LP recording of Grainger's performance was issued with the accompaniment physically blocked out of original rolls and played instead by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under John Hopkins (RCA Ⓢ RL10168). That was a pretty good production, but it is now superseded by the new version, which conveys far and away the most convincing reproduction of a piano roll recording that I have ever heard. Three live recordings of the concerto played by Grainger exist. They are all fascinating sound documents (Grieg heard and admired Grainger's performances of his music), but all were made past the pianist's prime, and are compromised by slips of the fingers, dated recording, or in one instance poor orchestral support. The new version is a valuable addition to these, for it shows the younger pianist in good form technically, and his freely expressive playing is full of interest. The excellent Kristiansand orchestra and its conductor provide watchful, sensitive support, and the recording (I have only heard it as a CD) is excellent.

It's always good to hear Grieg's delightful C minor Violin Sonata, and if Øyvind Bjorå is not quite in the top flight as a violinist the music is obviously second nature to him. The piano part is played by Rex Lawson from a piano roll: the 1920s original was not made by a pianist, but constructed by engineers with reference to the printed score. This original can be subjected to tempo and dynamic fluctuations by the pianola player, which permits the kind of interplay between two performers that would exist if a conventional piano were being played.

The disc is completed by a Duo-Art performance by Grainger of "To Spring", and four solo Phonola rolls made by Grieg in 1906. Here doubts arise, since the Phonola rolls don't sound anything like Grieg's playing as reproduced three years earlier by admittedly primitive disc recordings. In general, however, this is a most desirable issue. Alan Sanders