

# Super Fidelity

By John Sunier

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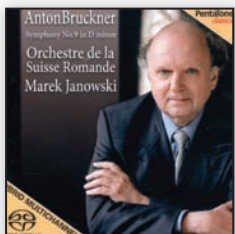


## Claviers Mozartiens|Pierre Goy, vis-à-vis/clavichord/piano carré |Lyrinx SACD LYR 2251

During Mozart's short lifetime there was a transition from the hegemony of the harpsichord and clavichord to the new pianoforte. Christofori developed the gravecembalo col piano e forte, while in Germany Hebestriest created his dulcimer-inspired pianos known as "pantaloons." The vis-à-vis was a unique instrument with a harpsichord action at one end and a piano with bare wooden hammers at the other. The Sonata in B major is heard on the vis-à-vis. An unfretted, double-strung clavichord, based on a 1772 instrument, is heard in three short Mozart selections. Two very different square pianos also feature on this CD, because Mozart especially liked this type of instrument. The enhanced resolution of SACD makes it easier to distinguish the subtle differences between the four keyboard instruments.

## French Romantic Organ Music arranged for Brass Quintet & Organ|Guilmant, Vierne; Lefebure-Wely, Boellmann|Elmar Lehnen, Seifert Organ, Kevelaer/International Brass Quintet|Audite MC SACD 92.556

The organ of the papal Basilica of St. Mary in Kevelaer, Germany, is a monumental instrument with 135 stops. The opening five-movement Sonata by Guilmant (No. 5/Op 80) is over a half-hour length, and is one of the composer's eight such organ sonatas. It blends ancient and modern elements and ends with a grandiose final double fugue. My pick of the disc is Boellmann's Gothic Suite, which also harks back to earlier music but avoids liturgical chant or even counterpoint. After an Introduction and Chorale, a minuet and a prayer to Notre Dame, the work ends with an absolutely spectacular audiophile-ecstatic Toccata finale which closes out the musical experience in stunning fashion.



## Bruckner|Symphony No. 9 in E minor|Suisse Romande Orchestra|PentaTone Classics SACD PTC 5186 030

This incomplete (it lacks a finale) masterpiece was the shy Austrian composer's final symphonic utterance. The most modern of all his works, the second movement Scherzo with its incessant hammering rhythm could fit right into the futurist/mechanized music style which developed in the 1920s. The last movement he actually

completed—the Adagio—is the longest of the three and abounds in many intense orchestral climaxes. It is so monumental sounding that it brings the symphony to such a very logical conclusion that you don't miss the missing finale at all. This recording is superior to the Vienna Philharmonic SACD that was one of my Best of the Year picks last year. The Suisse Romande orchestra sounds richer, gutsier, and less strident, the low bass support is stronger, and the vital over-structure of Bruckner's massive blocks of sound flows more naturally and smoothly.



## Frommerrmann|Music of the Comedian Harmonists|Channel Classics SACD CCS SA 26807

The unique male vocal sextet known as the Comedian Harmonists was founded in Berlin in 1927 by Harry Frommerrmann. That sextet combined crack vocal technique and arrangements—which led the way to many later innovations in jazz and classical vocal ensembles—with a wonderful

sense of humor and a charming presentational style. The Dutch vocal group Frommerrmann named itself after the founder of the Comedian Harmonists.

Established in 2004, Frommerrmann has the same voice blend as well: three tenors, two baritones and a basso, plus their pianist. Several of the 19 songs are in German but complete lyrics in English are in the note booklet. Their version of the music from Rossini's Barber of Seville must be heard to be believed. The sextet is arrayed in front of the listener and sings a variety of classical lieder, folk songs, pop tunes, and originals.

## Art Pepper|The Way It Was!|Contemporary Records/Mobile Fidelity SACD UDSACD 2034

A lavish reissue on SACD from Mobile Fidelity is always a special thing, and when the music attains such heights as it does on these early Art Pepper sides, jazz lovers can't lose, particularly since Pepper himself dictated the liner notes. Some odd spatial placements occur, as happened in the early days of stereo when engineers were feeling their way with it. On the first tracks Pepper is playing cozy alto sax over on the left channel together with Warne Marsh on tenor while the drums and bass are way over on the right-hand channel. . . with absolutely nothing in between. Then on some of the solo Pepper tracks he is heard coming from the phantom center channel. Many tracks run more than six minutes, leaving plenty of time for some great solo work. The sound is clean, the tunes are all classics, and the individual approaches of the four different pianists make for added interest.



## Bamboo|John Kaizan Neptune, shakuhachi/Arakawa Band|First Impression Music K2HD LIM K2HD030

This is one of the many albums from transplanted American shakuhachi master John Kaizan Neptune which have been extremely popular in the Far East. Neptune was enchanted with the sound of the simple Japanese end-blown bamboo flute and studied it formally in both Hawaii and Japan, becoming a master teacher, performer and composer as well as developing improvements on the instrument's design and building new instruments himself. This album was released 26 years ago and won a Japanese Best Recording of the Year award in 1980. The five tracks are a mixture of jazz, funk, and blues combined with Japanese folk music influences. The second and fourth tracks are the longest at over 12 minutes each and feature some exquisite sounds from the various shakuhachi Neptune has built. Fun listening.