



Morten (l) and Hans Peter.

Lindberg Lyd

Continuing the theme of reporting on innovative facilities that serve niche markets, ZENON SCHOEPF visits Oslo and discovers a classical specialist that is big in surround.

STUDIO FACILITIES GROW from the enthusiasm of those involved, the identification of a market sector that they can compete in and an ability to bring something different to the experience. It's also handy if you can have a lucky break and be sharp enough to spot the opportunity. In the case of Oslo's Lindberg Lyd studio, the break was a commission to capture Grieg's piano and chamber music works for release through a Book Club with a new recording every 14 days. Recording to DAT through two B&K 130V 4003s in a museum at night and editing up the results on Sonic Solutions during the day it was a baptism of fire.

Founder Morten Lindberg was at a recording academy at the time and he got the commission because he was one of the few students who understood classical music and could read a score — most of his classmates were more interested in getting into pop studios. Within a year of leaving he had made 45 recordings and achieved a 'sharp start' but gained a lot of experience very quickly, met a lot of musicians and got a lot of good references. The series of 24 Grieg records won an award at Midem. They were on their way.

Lindberg Lyd is Morten as the business manager of the company, main editor and producer of classical and folk music Jørn Simenstad, and head of engineering Hans Peter L'Orange. All are actively involved in the

company's activities of venue recording, editing, mixing and mastering. They have a studio at their offices and a full-blown self-contained remote recording rig that they take out on a regular basis. There's also a successful record label — 2L — associated with the output.

That initial commission paid for the equipment they needed and allowed them to move on which they did with more 130V 4003 mics and a Genex GX8000.

'We always tried to think terms of stereo pairs from the onset and all our balancing was done with the understanding that if you hadn't placed your mic right you couldn't fix that in the balancing later. In about 1998 we started to also think in terms of individual tracks,' says Morten adding that this gave them the opportunity to fine balance in the studio rather than on site. More tracks meant a different editor in a Sadie Artemis and it was around this time that they first started experimenting with surround. They moved up to two Genex GX8500s but in March last year they took a computer to a venue to record for the first time. They now employ Merging's Pyramix on site and in their studio.

'We wanted the flexibility of having a multitrack system as we're not always just doing classical recordings and there were times where it would be convenient to add tracks at a later stage,' says Hans Peter. 'At the same time we wanted to get into the DSD market and work with DXD.'

'The Pyramix was the first system we thought was reliable enough to dare to bring out for a location recording,' adds Morten. 'It doesn't crash and when you put it into Record it stays in Record.'

They remain exclusive 'power' users of DPA microphones and advocates of the performance benefits of its 130V system, which they run with Millennia Media preamps. 'For the record, we pay full price for our DPA mics; we are not sponsored,' states Morten. 'The reason we've ended up just with DPAs is that along the way we have tested and tried other brands and I don't like them. There is something about the colour of a DPA mic that I find very open and warm. One reason that might be is that 49 out of 50 productions we use omnis as the main mics. That's quite different especially to the British tradition, for example, where they are very fond of cardioids. I find omnis a daring kind of mic to use but very rewarding if you take your chance.'

And when they don't use an omni they use a DPA wide cardioid, some of which were specially made for them in 1998 as prototypes following Morten's request for something a little more focused for organ recording.

'We have a very close connection with the musicians at a very early stage so it is seldom for someone to call us and tell us we need to be at such a venue next week and do this type of recording,' explains Morten. 'That sort of work might bring up productions with more cardioids but we're in the position where we can talk to the musicians and say "right, this is the repertoire you want to do, let's try and find the perfect venue for it and the instrumentation." Choice of the venue is 60% of the quality of the sound.'

'We are blessed with a lot of really nice churches in Norway particularly in the countryside where it is



very quiet. The core quality of our audio productions is done by choosing the venue for the repertoire and through mixing by where we place the microphones; so our microphones are our most important tools,' he says. They travel all over Norway for the right cathedral or chapel and there are six good churches within 30 minutes drive of the centre of Oslo.

However, it is the team's attitude to surround, which they started working seriously in in 2000, that puts them in a completely different league to most multichannel classical recordists. They're not scared to experiment and to put the listener in the thick of the music rather than in a seat at one end of the hall. They've made recordings with the orchestra in front and the choir behind and the results are remarkable. Morten will tell you that planning and discussion with the musicians can create trust and a sense of occasion and excitement that translates onto the recordings.

'The tools we have even with a good surround set up is not a perfect way to bring an audience to the concert hall; we still have to work the illusions,'

says Morten. 'This is one of the ways to do that — to bring the listener into the music and in among the musicians and be a part of it.'

That's not to say that they won't record in a more traditional surround format but they allow the venue, repertoire and the musicians to suggest a configuration to them. It's a healthy attitude towards multichannel that doesn't hide behind the usual excuses of worrying about the integrity of the listener's loudspeaker layout. They're recording surround for those who want to listen in surround and the stereo version is there for those who don't.

'We really love surround and the way it communicates back to the listener,' says Hans Peter. 'We tend not to think of the rear channels in the traditional way of being an ambient room pair. There is a very strong relationship between the phase and the distance between the five microphones in the main set up. We use five dedicated mics and when there are big setups with an orchestra you'll need some additional support mics, but the basic set up is



always the five main mics.

'With the Pyramix we can finalise things for any format we like but the reason we like SACD is that we have a better idea of what people will be listening back to at home — there are not as many parameters to mess around with as there are on a DVD,' he says.

The 2L label has released 42 classical and folk titles since 2001 and is best described as a premium brand with very high production and packaging values. 'We are in a very fortunate position in Norway because we have cultural grants from the government to help preserve our Norwegian heritage and that means Norwegian repertoire in a historic or contemporary perspective,' explains Morten. 'The other is to motivate and enable Norwegian musicians and production companies to develop this further. So, if we come with Norwegian musicians as a Norwegian label and production company and we say we want to do Strauss violin sonatas, then we might get funding for that kind of project because they want a living record industry in Norway. These grants aren't, however, fully financing so we still have to find other sources of financing and some sales figures to make everything run.'

Morten adds that getting repeat grant support means you have to continually prove that you are producing quality productions of worth. So it is by no means an easy touch. He also praises the standard of musicianship in Norway and while he concedes that it might not eclipse that of other better known classical centres, he suspects the work ethic would be refreshingly productive to outsiders.

Ten years ago 100% of Lindberg Lyd's work was for other labels, four years ago it was 50%, now 70% of their work is for their own label but these figures reflect the fact that they have now cornered the market in Norway in their genre. 'We are into music production; not into being a label,' states Morten, 'but if getting to that situation and the productions running means that we have to run a label also, then so be it.'

'Our strength is in where we live, where we have grown up and where we have our local knowledge,' he says. 'We also have a choice of venues that other countries do not have. We want to invite international record companies to come to us and make their recordings in Norway and take that result and publish it worldwide.' ■

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