

DVD & BLU-RAY

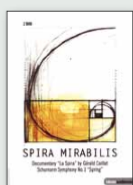
Mariss Jansons conducts Mahler's mighty *Resurrection* Symphony; *Robin Ticciati* conducts Glyndebourne's funky *Figaro*; plus unique insights into Italy's inspirational *Spira Mirabilis* youth chamber orchestra

MUSIC DVD CHOICE

Spira with Spring

Jessica Duchen is inspired by Schumann from Spira Mirabilis

DEEPLY TOUCHING:
Spira Mirabilis
plays Schumann



SPIRA MIRABILIS

Schumann: Symphony No. 1 (Spring); Documentary 'La Spira'

Spira Mirabilis
Ideale Audience

DVD: 3079868 (NTSC system; PCM 2.0; 16:9 picture format)

Blu-ray: 3079864 (1080i full HD; PCM 2.0; 16:9 picture format) 131 mins (2 discs)

BBC Music Direct (DVD) £34.99

BBC Music Direct (Blu-ray) £34.99

Take a group of top-notch young musicians who want to work together, long to study orchestral repertoire in depth, don't fancy having a conductor and don't

mind sleeping in dormitories, and you have the phenomenon that is Spira Mirabilis. Gérald Caillat's excellent documentary follows this exceptional chamber orchestra from their makeshift home-base in Formigine, Emilia-Romagna – one bathroom between 35-odd – as they

Spira Mirabilis embrace a whole spectrum from concert to flash-mob

set about bringing music to all in every way they can.

How often do you hear an orchestra begin a rehearsal with singing? 'O wende, wende deine Lauf/ Im Tale blüht der Frühling auf!' they chorus – Adolf Boettger's words, which the opening of the Schumann *Spring* Symphony matches rhythm for rhythm. With

no conductor to interfere, they discuss things through the rehearsal in as democratic and musically puritanical a way as an orchestra can; when they want direction, they seek out the charismatic Lorenzo Coppola to coach them in Mozart on period instruments.

The whole spectrum is here: a schools performance, outreach work and a visit to the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. And they also give a flash-mob performance in a shopping centre. With superlative picture and sound, many close-ups and quiet observation that lets the young musicians speak for themselves, this film is not only beautifully made, but also deeply touching. The complete Schumann *Spring* Symphony remains the glittering tip of the iceberg.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★



BRUCKNER R STRAUSS • WOLF

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7; Wolf: Lieder; R Strauss: Befreit, Op. 39/4

Renée Fleming (soprano); Staatskapelle Dresden/Christian Thielemann

Opus Arte

DVD: OA 1115 D (NTSC system; LPCM 2.0/ dts 5.1; 16:9 anamorphic) 106 mins

Blu-ray: OA BD7127 D (1080i high definition; LPCM 2.0/dts 5.1; 16:9 picture format) 106 mins

BBC Music Direct £28.99

BBC Music Direct £34.99

On 1 September 2012, Saxony's great and good assembled in Dresden's sumptuous Semperoper for Christian Thielemann's inaugural concert as the orchestra's music director. Thanks to digital technology, we can now join them, seeing sights along the way that may have passed the audience by. Renée Fleming's microscopic glances, checking her conductor's beat; sweat on foreheads; the principal flautist's russet locks, caught in close-ups; every surface trapping is here in pinprick detail, especially if seen on Blu-Ray.

What the home audience cannot do is get swept up in the atmosphere of a great occasion. Thielemann's interpretation of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony is majestic and clean, as expected, though it falls just short of the cumulative power that the audience's warm reception suggests. The camera's close scrutiny underlines how minimal his conducting can be: a modest beat here, a tiny hand movement there, sufficient it seems for the Austro-German repertoire that is in his bones. The Staatskapelle musicians certainly give their best, with heartfelt strings and burnished winds and brass, wonderfully united in attack.

For the opening selection of orchestrated Wolf songs, Fleming adds further colours. There's less cream in her tone than before, and her articulation makes you yearn for subtleties; but as she wafts feelingly through 'Verborgenheit', 'Mignon', 'Elfenlied' and others, always acting with eyes and hands, she remains a potent vocal magician. No extras.

Geoff Brown

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND (DVD) ★★★
(BLU-RAY) ★★★★★

