

Yarlung Recording Session

Award-Wining Label Achieves State-of-the-Art Sound

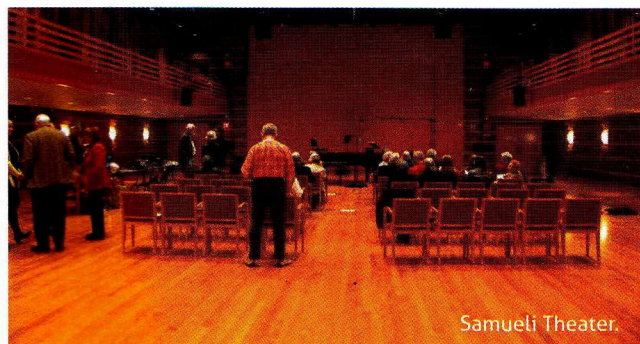
Robert Harley

Though a small label, Yarlung Records has, since releasing its first album in 2005, made itself noticed in the audiophile community and beyond, appearing on TAS' newly updated Super LP List and winning a Grammy award. So I was excited to have an opportunity to attend a recent Yarlung recording session and witness firsthand the extraordinary engineering behind the company's releases. The recording session was more like a concert performance for a small invited group, with movements performed in their entirety rather than stitched together later in the editing room.

The recording venue was the sonically and visually gorgeous Samueli Theater, part of the larger Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, California. Samueli's smaller space is ideal for chamber music.

The team set up three entirely separate recording chains, each with its own microphones, recorders, and engineers. The three chains represented three widely disparate approaches to capturing the music, allowing listeners to choose the perspective they find most appealing (all three versions are available at nativesd.com).

The most traditional of these recording techniques is as purist as it gets: a stereo microphone feeding an analog tape machine. The microphone for the session was an AKG C24, a vintage stereo condenser mike prized for its warmth and rich tone color. Set up and run by Yarlung Records founder Bob Attiyeh, the stereo output from the C24 was recorded on analog tape, DSD256, and 176.4/24 PCM. The PCM and DSD were for backup; the analog tape, recorded on a SonoruS ATR12 built by Arian Jansen, is the



Samueli Theater.

Bob Attiyeh, Producer

Yarlung Artists is an incredible family of musicians, composers, generous executive producers, and underwriters. We commission new music through Yarlung Artists Coretet, and we support musicians at the beginnings of their international concert careers. Violinist Petteri Iivonen, Metropolitan Opera star Sasha Cooke, jazz pianist Misha Bigos, Smoke & Mirrors percussion ensemble, Sophisticated Lady jazz quartet, concert pianists David Fung and Orion Weiss, and many others made their debut recordings with Yarlung. Our mastering engineer, Steve Hoffman, has mentored us since the beginning, and Bernie Grundman cuts our vinyl lacquers. This year Grammy Award-winning engineer Tom Caulfield joined us to record our first 5.0 Surround Sound albums, and Arian Jansen worked with us to create the first original SonoruS Holographic Imaging downloads. "Your combination of ears, savvy, dedication, and love of music blows me away," composer James Matheson wrote after hearing a test pressing of a new Yarlung release. Thank you James Matheson for the kind words; thank you J and Helen Schlichting for underwriting the *James Matheson* CD; and thank you Elliot Midwood, Doug Weaver, and Brad and Sally Austin for underwriting the accompanying vinyl records. This is an A Team. Thanks to all of you!

source for the LP release.

The second recording chain was a stereo recording made with four microphones (the C24 augmented by a pair of Schoeps out in the hall) to create a "Holographic Imaging" recording. The Holographic Imaging technique, designed by Arian Jansen, is a proprietary matrix that reportedly produces a three-dimensional soundfield from two channels.

The third recording path was a five-channel recording made with five DPA 4006A omnidirectional microphones feeding a Merging Technologies analog-to-digital converter, and then recorded in five discrete channels in quad DSD (DSD256).

The stunningly realistic sound quality of Yarlung's releases is a testament to the team's dedication to capturing the musical intent of the

artists. Moreover, Yarlung's unusual technique of recording movements in their entirety produces a much more natural musical flow than the typical method of editing together multiple takes. The musicians, however, must be world-class performers and extremely well-prepared. I got the sense that they regarded the Yarlung session as a special event that brought out their highest level of technical skill and musical expression. The result is an honest document of extraordinary performances preserved with state-of-the-art sound quality.

The performers that afternoon were the Sibelius Piano Trio, and the fruit of their labor is the two-CD set that Mark Lehman reviewed in this issue (the release is also available at nativesd.com and HDtracks.com). **tas**