

A SOUND WHISPERER

On his audiophile Swiss label Divox, Wolfram M. Burgert releases
“love declarations to chamber music”



Wolfram Michael Burgert

Foto: Bob Coat

Characterizing the man as active would be understating the case. Wolfram Michael Burgert completed an apprenticeship as a gardener before mutating into a “music-obsessed” medical student, finally graduating with a degree in psychology. He certainly needs a great deal of tact in his role as producer, which he sees mainly as being the “drop of oil” in the cogwheels of recording, facilitating the cooperation between musicians, recording engineers and himself.

In 1984, Divox, the “digital voice”, was launched as a mere distribution label. Burgert had previously sold LPs for the Japanese HiFi label Denon as a part-time job. “Even then, it was clear to me,” the agile 60-year-old says, “that a digital revolution was on its way.” Burgert was right, for he is not only a music fan, but also a sound fetishist and thus – naturally – a technology freak: “I’m always ahead of my time.” Only after Burgert had established his network and licensed other labels’ productions did he attempt to produce his own. Divox is based in the countryside outside Basel, where Burgert does all the essential work together with his partner Isabelle Stump, who is also responsible for the corporate identity of the lovingly designed CD covers.

A first series of productions with the Swiss Amati Quartet pointed the way ahead: ever since, Divox has produced “love declarations to chamber music”. Treasures from the estate of the piano guru Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli gave the young label an additional boost.

An encounter with the Italian period performance expert Andrea Marcon at Basel’s Schola Cantorum led to several joint CD productions – after all, Burgert, who grew up in the Ticino, is half Italian. The recor-

ding of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons with baroque violinist Giuliano Carmignola and Marcon’s Sonatori de la Gioiosa Marca became an evergreen – Burgert is about to reissue the prize-winning cult recording from 1993 as an SACD. Thereafter, it was almost a matter of course that Early Music became one of the main specialties of Divox.

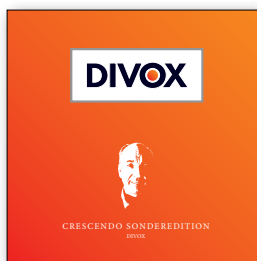
The current Divox catalogue lists 120 hand-picked titles; Naxos is in charge of worldwide distribution.

Among the new releases for this fall are Beethoven piano quartets with Milana Chernavskaya’s Milander Quartet, co-produced by BR Klassik. In addition, the Russian cello and piano duet Emil Rovner and Alla Ivanzhina presents works by Boris Tchaikovsky and Mieczysław Weinberg, whose expressive music is currently experiencing a spectacular renaissance.

Over the years, the Divox productions have garnered an impressive number of international prizes, including ECHO Classic and

Midem Awards. In order to develop an effective network for chamber music, combining idealistic and material benefits, Burgert and his partner Isabelle Stump developed together «Divox Origami», a form of participation based on the shareholder model. However, Burgert’s real passion is the indefatigable search for natural sound. Thus, he sees the future in three-dimensional “Aurophonie”, which he considers “Olympic gold,” after stereophony and surround-sound. This technology, which Burgert has been using since 2001, adds the vertical axis to spatial sound. The pioneer underscores his optimistic view that in the long run, this new technology will prevail via BluRay, with a convincing argument: “Only what is natural is truly good.”

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INFORMATION:

crescendo-Buyers exclusively receive a CD portraying the work of Divox. The CD is attached to the last page of this issue. www.divox.com