

Robert Follis Associates BBC Music - February 2009

EARPHONES

Shure SE102 £53

Shure's top-end earphones cost over £300, a thoroughly outrageous investment unless, of course, you spend your entire life rigged up to a portable digital music player. Luckily, this 80-year-old audio outfit has a range of models to cover most price points, including the new SE102 entry-level model. Listening via an iPod Classic it becomes clear these earphones are a cut above most iPod upgrades. The soft earbuds are a snug fit while its built-in noise-isolating Dynamic Microspeakers expertly drown out 90 per cent of background clamour, delivering a controlled sound with taut low-end frequencies in the process. At £53, the SE102 represent super value. **WEBSITE:** www.shure.com ★★★★★



DIGITAL/FM RADIO

Tangent Trio £160

Starting out in the UK in the 1970s as a specialist loudspeaker manufacturer and now under the tutelage of Danish audio specialist Elate, Tangent has fine audio pedigree. This expertise is clearly reflected in its range of table-top radios and in particular its Trio DAB/FM model. Flaunting retro styling and a solid cabinet construction, this radio is certainly well made with only the plastic volume and tuning dials letting down its quality build. It's also very intuitive to use and consistently maintains a strong DAB signal. Surprisingly, the top loaded single speaker arrangement serves

up a strong audio performance, issuing a bold crystal clear sound, only occasionally compromised by overly booming bass. **WEBSITE:** www.tangent-audio.com

★★★★★



CD player (£270) and PM6002 integrated amp (£270) is a very good bet. Hook these up with the brilliant B&W

DOWNLOADING MADE EASY OPERA ONLINE



It's good news for opera lovers, as New York's Metropolitan Opera now has an online video archive, says NICK

TODAY'S AMBITIOUS orchestral players may be au fait for YouTube (see p9), but it's not just orchestras thriving to the challenges of online video – opera, too, has been embracing the Net. In early October, Covent Garden's Royal Opera House launched its latest production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* online. Starring baritone Siobhán Kieran in the title role alongside bass-baritone Nick Ketelsen as Leporello, the performance was – and is – available to watch for free at www.roh.org.co.uk. Meanwhile, the New York Metropolitan Opera has taken one step further, launching an entire archive featuring some of its most celebrated and historic performances.

For a monthly subscription fee of \$14.99 (£10.17) to the Met Opera's site (www.metoperafamily.org) you can choose from around 50 full-length opera videos and audio recordings, dating from the 1950s to 2008. And the archive's earlier recordings are soprano Renata Scotto's 1956 version of Puccini's *Tosca* (with tenor Richard Tucker) and baritone Leonard Warren under Dimitri Mitropoulos and mezzo Risë Stevens's iconic, 1950s take on Bizet's *Carmen*. Pavarotti's Rodolfo (from Puccini's *La bohème*) and Domingo in Verdi's *Otello* are also included, al