

# Recordings Reports: Pre-recorded Tapes

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Debussy: "Clair de Lune," others by Mompou, Ponce, Ravel. John Ranck, piano. Zodiac ZST-1005. \$11.95.	Stereo's ability to define spatial relationships is not so spectacular when only a single instrument is involved, but it still lends a concert hall ambience to the piano, as illustrated by Ranck's imaginatively contoured performance of six impressionist pieces. This evocative music suffers no loss of tonal bloom, thanks to a well-processed tape.
Grieg: "Symphonic Dances." Edouard van Remoortel conducting the Pro Musica Symphony (Vienna). Phonotapes-Sonore S-706. \$11.95.	Some of Grieg's most engaging writing is contained in these four dances based on Norwegian folk tunes, and Van Remoortel's approach confirms an affinity for his music suggested in previous ventures by this young Belgian conductor. The orchestra performs with natively Viennese warmth, but with no emotional over-weighting of the music. A clean, live tape delivers all the charm intact.
Haydn: Trumpet Concerto in E-flat; Italian Overture No. 4 in D. Hans Swarowsky conducting the Vienna Philharmonica Symphony; Adolph Holler, trumpet. Urania UST-1203. \$11.95.	That Urania's stereo output is consistently finer than its previous disc pressings is further indicated by the present tape, in which Swarowsky's well-paced, smartly detailed interpretations are irreproachably conveyed. Holler's dexterous trumpet is sharply pinpointed, and the accord between soloist and orchestra is admirable.
Haydn: Symphony No. 100 ("Military"). Mogens Woeldike conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra (Volksoper). Vanguard VRT-3002. \$11.95.	Vanguard's release on stereo of the second "London" series presents this Danish conductor's well-considered readings with new freshness and clarity. The present tape is without the disc's companion symphony ("Clock") but as with the rest of the series, Woeldike's undidactic approach loses none of the music's ordered gentility and strength.
Kreisler: "Liebesleid." Poldini: "Poupee Valsante." Variations for Vocestra conducted by Andrew B. White. Stereophony, Inc. C-151. \$8.95.	Pleasant enough arrangements using a choral vocalise to lend additional texture and tone color to the small string ensemble. Ten pieces of "dinner music" calibre are contained in the album, which is among the first released by this new, exclusively stereo company distributing through EMC. Processing is smooth, although in this particular sampling the instrumental work is occasionally a bit rough.
Liszt: Concerto No. 1 in E flat. Alfred Brendel, piano, with Michael Gielen conducting the Pro Musica Symphony (Vienna). Phonotapes-Sonore S-701. \$11.95.	This indestructible tour de force demands a formidable breadth and brilliance for its fullest effect, and there is plenty of both in Brendel's rousing performance, which is vigorously backed by Gielen's potent orchestral forces. The pace is slower than some (for instance, Rubinstein on RCA stereo BCS-31), but the music's outsize dramatic effects are all the more impressive for being unhurried. Engineering hews to the accustomed high Vox standard.
Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 ("Italian"). Edouard van Remoortel conducting the Pro Musica Symphony (Vienna). Phonotapes-Sonore S-705. \$11.95.	A vigorous performance captures the color of this youthfully exuberant music. Van Remoortel sets a fine, spanking tempo and sustains tension throughout, with negligible loss of detail. The ensemble tone is bright and the orchestral choirs stand out in fine relief or are subtly blended on a tape expertly engineered. As in most Phonotapes, a prefacing 250-cycle note for output balance is included.
Prokofiev: "Peter and the Wolf." Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia JMB-4. \$13.95.	The cleanliness and élan of the Philadelphia Orchestra bring out the bouncing humor of this musical fable, and a fine-grained processing faithfully preserves the sly or breezy qualities assumed by the instrumental characters. Ormandy conducts with full appreciation of the music's satirical fun, and Cyril Ritchard provides the narration.
Saint-Saëns: Symphony No. 3, with Franz Eibner, organ, and Hans Swarowsky conducting the Vienna Philharmonica Symphony Orchestra. Urania UST-1201. \$11.95.	Saint-Saëns's tonally resplendent "organ" symphony, in Swarowsky's spacious and eloquent statement, provides an auspicious stereo debut for the recently revived Urania label. The Viennese strings are more wiry than those of the New York Philharmonic in Columbia's earlier discing with Munch (ML 4120), and the scherzo lacks the daemonic drive of Toscanini with the NBC Orchestra (RCA LM 1874), but the music's sumptuous sonorities, expansively detailed by the two-channel medium, do not short-change the piano dynamics as do both discs. Eibner's organ work is first rate.
Torroba: "Preludio." Albeniz: "Leyenda," and others. Richard Pick, guitar. Concertapes 24-1. \$11.95.	The tonal discreteness and presence of the Spanish guitar would seem to make it a likely instrument for illustrating stereo's clean separation of contrapuntal voices. In the present instance, however, too close miking has lent Pick's performance a disturbing over-brilliance, the sound focus is dissipated in a plexus of overtones.
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 1 ("Winter Dreams"). Hans Swarowsky conducting the Vienna Philharmonica Symphony Orchestra. Urania UST-1801. \$17.90.	Urania's recent discing of the "Winter Dreams" symphony, now on stereotape as well, offers a persuasive reading of this youthful work, in which the idiosyncratic stamp is already evident. Swarowsky conducts with sympathy and skill, and the full-bodied ensemble tone is superbly recreated in a fine stereo processing, but the work's length has imposed a cost factor that seems unfeasibly steep for immature Tchaikovsky.
Varese: "Ionization." Harrison: Canticale No. 3, and others. Paul Price conducting the American Percussion Society ensemble. Urania UST-1204. \$11.95.	In this first volume of a series titled "Breaking the Sound Barrier" the impact of an all-percussion orchestra emerges with shattering effect from examples by five modern experimentalists. In addition to the designated works, similarly arresting pieces by Harry Bartlett, Jack McKenzie, and Michael Colgrass are set forth in imperative terms that invoke such percussive auxiliaries as iron pipes, sirens, pistols, and water-buffalo bells. The sound is accurately defined, the dynamic balance well maintained.
Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso in D minor, Opus 3, No. 11. Mozart: "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik." Bach: Prelude in E major. Leonard Sorkin conducting the Sorkin Symphonette. Concertapes 23-3A. \$11.95.	The Vivaldi is one of twelve concerti grossi which make up the "L'Estro armonico" set, and which Vox some years ago recorded in their entirety (PL 7423). Stereo, however, invests the music with the substance and drama of live performance, and the group plays with fine thrust and resiliency. Nice tempo and phrasing also characterize its playing of the "Kleine Nachtmusik," although it is a trifle robust for my taste. —M. N.

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FORTY-FIVE YEARS ago a fifteen-year-old California youngster shocked an assembled group of music lovers by

giving a piano recital of his own music, in which he variously pounded the keys, plucked strings, and pressed down whole blocks of keys with his forearms, all in an unheard-of fashion. The boy was Henry Cowell, now regarded by some critics as among the masters of contemporary music. Audiences during the Twenties were equally shocked and horrified by his music. New Yorkers greeted his first Carnegie Hall piano recital (1925) as if it were a sporting event and it was reviewed as such with Battling Cowell and Kid Knabe contending in opposite corners. London critics were no better: some congratulated the piano manufacturers for the sturdiness of their instruments.

But behind Cowell there ranged a phalanx of defenders that included Bartók, Schoenberg, Schnabel, and the painter Kandinsky. Tone clusters, as the massed seconds which he introduced on the piano were called, entered the techniques of orchestration not only in the works of Cowell but in those of many of his colleagues. Wallingford Riegger, a close friend of Cowell, has concocted a monumental tone cluster in his music for brass choir, in which some twenty-six consecutive notes are sounded simultaneously by as many different instruments. Charles Ives, with whom Cowell was closely associated for many years, and about whom he has written an authoritative biography,