

VARESE: a. Ionisation; b. Octandre; c. Integrales. Juilliard Percussion Orchestra and New York Wind Ensemble conducted by Frederic Waldman; d. Density 21.5. Rene Le Roy, flutist. Deserts--Interpolations.* (a. recorded 21 May 1950, Greenwich House Music School; b. and c. recorded 21 June 1950, Mannes College of Music; d. recorded 11 May 1950, Rachmaninoff Society, New York City)* Electronic music. Finnadar mono & *stereo SR 9018.

The first four pieces on this record are reissued from EMS 401, which had the dual distinction of being the first published recording of Edgard Varèse's music, and the only recording of his music that he supervised. Not surprisingly, the four pieces are given ideal performances that have not been surpassed. The drawback is the somewhat limited range of sound that was possible in 1950 (even though the original release received the best recording of the year award at the 1951 Audio Fair). The percussion piece, Ionisation, and the flute solo, Density 21.5, suffer most from the lofi, whereas the octet, Octandre, and the piece for winds and percussion, Integrales, are just about acceptable. If nothing else, these performances can be used as a benchmark to rate all the subsequent hifi recordings of these four outstanding pieces.

The original Interpolations from Deserts are an additional reason to acquire this record since they have not been on any other record. Deserts was written in 1954 as an orchestral piece which included three sections of electronic music (organized sound compositions on two magnetic tape tracks to be pedantic). Varèse recomposed the electronic sections in 1961, and the revised version has been used in all the recordings of Deserts. These revised interpolations must surely be the best electronic music ever composed - and now earlier versions are available, not quite so good but still very fine.

Martin Davidson