

STEREO

X-912

MAURICE RAVEL

plays

RAVEL



PATRIMONIO UC



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**Side A**

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| 1. Pavane pour une Infante Defunte
(Pavane for a Dead Princess) | 5:50 |
| 2. La Vallee des Cloches (Valley of the Bells),
No. 5 from Miroirs—Suite for Piano | 5:50 |

Side B

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| 1. Toccata from "Le Tombeau de Couperin" | 4:45 |
| 2. Gaspard de La Nuit. No. 2. The Gibbet (Le Gibet) | 5:15 |
| 3. Oiseaux Tristes (San Birds) No. 2 | 4:15 |

Maurice Ravel was one of the great French composers of the early 20th century, ranking first along with Debussy. Born in 1875, his early musical studies were devoted exclusively to the piano. But this changed when, at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1889, he heard the music of Rimsky-Korsokov for the first time, and at that same Exhibition, heard a Japanese "gamelan" orchestra. New musical worlds opened up for the boy—he began to compose. However, he still continued to pursue his piano studies, working arduously for the annual competitions at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1891, at the age of 16, he won the Premier Medaille. But his interests were increasingly drawn to composition; his teacher at the Conservatoire, Gabriel Fauré, was most encouraging. In addition, Ravel made the acquaintance of Erik Satie during his years of study. Although Satie's eccentricity did not influence Ravel, their frequent contact made him decide in favor of creative work, rather than a career as a piano virtuoso.

Ravel's success as a composer began in 1904, with the first performance of his *String Quartet in G*. His composing career was interrupted by the First World War. Being too small to serve in the army, he finally succeeded in joining the war effort by becoming an ambulance driver. After the war, his success became international, and he toured as often as his frail health would permit.

After much persuasion, Ravel finally visited America in 1928. His success was instantaneous and overwhelming. His music, which he conducted and performed at the piano, captured the hearts of the American public. In 1931, Oxford University conferred an honorary Doctor of Music Degree upon him.

Yet an illness which was to eventually prove fatal was becoming constantly more burdensome. In the summer of 1937, he suffered an attack while returning home from a gala performance of his ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*. He never recovered, dying in December of that same year of a brain tumor.

Although Ravel is generally regarded as one of the most skilled orchestrators in the history of music, it should be noted that most of his orchestral compositions, such as *Ma Mere l'Oye*, *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, and *La Valse*, were originally written for piano. Also, given his early training as a pianist, and the fact that he did prepare for a virtuoso's career, it should not be at all surprising that Ravel wrote such great masterworks for the piano!

From 1916 to 1925, almost every prominent concert pianist made piano rolls. This series of recordings is designed to bring those treasures to contemporary audiences by transferring the piano rolls to record discs.

During the first few decades of the 20th century, the player piano was an important part of the world's musical life, especially in the private home. There was a great demand for these instruments, and as the market grew, new devices were added to the reproducing mechanism, creating ever greater authenticity. This series, the EVEREST ARCHIVE OF PIANO MUSIC, is devoted to music recorded on the Duo-Art and Ampico player pianos.

In 1904, the German made "Welte-Mignon" was exhibited and many famous composers recorded for them. This instrument was capable of reproducing the full virtuosity of the artist—the nuances, the phrasing and the full shadowings. However, this instrument was of the cabinet type, and cabinet players soon became obsolete as the piano manufacturers began to build the mechanism into the piano itself. In 1913, the Aeolian Company came out with their "DUO-ART" reproducing piano and persuaded Steinway to install their mechanism into a number of their pianos and the Steinway-Duo-Art instruments were born. The Duo-Art system was the culmination of all the best of the player pianos plus the ability to reproduce, without assistance, the actual performances of the artist who had played upon it; and the ability to reproduce all of the fine nuances, shadings, phrasing, all mechanically, yet with all the finesse of human individualism. From 1916 through 1925, almost every concert pianist of any prominence made record rolls for Duo-Art.

The principal feature of the Duo-Art is its reproducing action, which it possesses in addition to the actions of both the regular and player pianos. In other words, it is a three-fold instrument playable in three distinct ways: by hand on its keys in the conventional manner; with a Pianola music roll, which plays the notes of the piece but leaves the "expression" to the taste of the performer; with a Duo-Art music roll which, without assistance, reproduces the actual performances of artists who have played upon it.

It must be emphasized that the Duo-Art not only reproduced the notes as the great virtuosi played them, but, by incorporating all of the previous advances in player-piano technology, was able to accurately reproduce dynamics, pedal effects, methods of attack, and many other subtleties of expression.

As part of the tremendous promotion campaign devised by the Aeolian Co., the Duo-Art appeared as unmanned soloist with many of the leading orchestras of the day, including the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski, the New York Symphony under Damrosch, and the San Francisco Symphony under Hertz. In addition, the Duo-Art received enthusiastic endorsements from large portions of the world's nobility and musical elite.

The piano used for the Duo-Art series was a Steinway built in 1929 from the collection of Harold L. Powell, North Hollywood, California. The original master tape recordings were made in three track stereo with three AKG calibrated omnidirectional microphones. To obtain the widest possible dynamic range, recording equipment was newly designed using the "focus gap" recording system developed by Gauss Electrophysics, Inc. and Fairchild Recording Corporation. Additional technical information may be obtained by reading "The Journal of The Society of Motion Pictures and Television Engineers," August, 1965, Vol. 74.