Nowadays, the distribution and reception of music – apart from the mere performance – is hardly possible without its conservation made by sound recordings. Thereby recordings can be considered as an important level of technology, when getting in touch with new and contemporary music. Nevertheless consumers are mostly equipped with traditional stereo playback facilities: Spatial systems like 5.1 surround still have not become prevalent for consumers, and large installations like Wave Field Synthesis find their main purpose in dedicated sound art and electro-acoustic music.

Especially the music of Iannis Xenakis puts high demands on a recording given the fact that many of his works have a spatial or scenic/ritual component. Furthermore, Xenakis’ music is widely characterized by its relation to science or by analogies to scientific methods or topics. Thus it also has a certain link to technology in general.

This paper wants to throw light on special challenges for sound recordings, using the example of “Persephassa” for six percussionists (1969). When this spatial work is mixed down on two channels for the common stereophonic presentation, different approaches can be found. The author is going to compare a recording and mix made by himself with several others on the market focused on the question how spatiality can be transferred into stereo.

Furthermore, many works by Xenakis are considered as hardly playable, at least in certain passages. Music recordings can solve this problem by giving the possibility of re-recording, editing and overdubbing. A rather new recording of “Persephassa” makes use of overdubbing to realize the very difficult final section of the work which consists of many superposed layers. In this paper the pros and cons of this recording method shall be weighed, thereby discussing an important aspect of the aesthetics of sound recording.