

In setting this libretto, Donizetti wrote some of his most graceful music, and along the way realized a masterpiece of simple-minded situation comedy. Everyone knows *Una furtiva lagrima*: it needs no explication. But the whole opera is fare for anyone who has ever heard a quack medical spiel — whether on radio or television, off Broadway, or in a dusty courthouse square; anyone who has a sense of melody and rhythm; anyone who has ever known a girl who played hard-to-get and then found out she cared; anyone whose sense of humor is fresh, or at least not too jaded.

The spirit of this recorded performance is as right as could be. Aldo Noni, the Adina, has a bright, somewhat brittle-sounding voice, but she uses it with real style. Cesare Valletti, the Nemorino, has a light, flexible voice without much suggestion of velvet, but he makes up this lack by singing with intelligence and superior musicality.

Sesto Bruscantini, the Dulcamara, does a masterful job of buffo characterization in a voice of no special beauty. Afro Poli, the Belcore, is wonderfully self-satisfied as the professionally romantic military man, and Gianandrea Gavazzeni obtains a supple, clean-cut orchestral and choral performance. Someone could search diligently and round up *the* ideal existing cast for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, leaving this one second best. Since nobody is likely to make the move, why wait? J. H., Jr.

GERSHWIN, GEORGE *An American in Paris*—See Prokofieff

GESUALDO *Six Madrigals*
†Monteverdi: *Seven Madrigals*

Randolph Singers; David Randolph, cond.
WESTMINSTER WL 5171. 12-in. 19, 18 min. \$5.95.

By Gesualdo: Io pur respiro; Felice Primavera — Danzan le ninfe; Moro lasso; Meraviglia d'amore — Et ardo e vivo; Io tacerò; Mercè! grido piangendo. By Monteverdi: Io mi son giovinetta; Non piu guerra pietate; O rossignuol; Sì, ch'io vorrei morire; Sovra tenere herbetto; A un giro sol; Ohimè!

As Mr. Randolph points out in his accompanying notes, Gesualdo's madrigals have had meager representation on records and the more audacious of Monteverdi's madrigals have been similarly ignored. He has remedied matters to some extent with this fascinating and extremely welcome disk.

These madrigals, written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, seem as contemporary in spirit as Strauss's *Elektra* or Berg's *Lulu* and just as much music for our times — the emotional expression is that bold, extravagant, and vivid. Gesualdo was an experimenter and Monteverdi an innovator, and in their settings of the passionate lyrics of their contemporaries, they composed music that is strikingly dissonant and harmonically powerful even today. What Mr. Randolph calls "tortured chromaticism," strange harmonic tensions and ambiguities, clashing dissonances, and imaginative coloristic devices are used to mirror the highly-charged sentiments in the poetry, and the results are infinitely poignant and affecting.

Mr. Randolph and his group have tried to re-create this music as faithfully as possible, using one voice for each of the solo lines, singing the original Italian, and providing acoustics of a large room "of the sort in which this music was originally performed."

The recording is first rate, and there is an almost complete absence of surface noise. On high-fidelity equipment the treble should be attenuated to escape the excessive breathiness of the singers. R. E.

HANSON, HOWARD *Songs from "Drum Taps"* — See Randall Thompson

HAYDN *Symphony No. 88* — See Schubert

LISZT *Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Flat Major*
Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major

Edith Farnadi, piano. Vienna State Opera Orchestra; Hermann Scherchen, cond.
WESTMINSTER WL 5168. 12-in. 16, 18 min. \$5.95.

Miss Farnadi displays an adequate technique and a good deal of tasteful temperament: the lyrical moments are highly poetic;

there are occasionally unorthodox dynamics, and the cadenzas are interestingly individual in treatment. For those wanting this particular coupling of concertos — the only such available — her performances can be recommended. The recording of the piano is superb, its tone positively glitters. In fact, the whole sound of the



The Randolph Singers: Gesualdo sounded as modern as Berg's Lulu.

disk, per se, is spectacular. However, the balance between the solo instrument and orchestra is surprisingly poor; the former is favored even when the latter is more important. The fault is more noticeable in the A Major than in the E flat Major Concerto. Otherwise the orchestral playing is good enough. R. E.

LISZT *Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major*
†Weber: *Concertstück in F Minor, Op. 79*

Robert Casadesus, piano. Cleveland Orchestra; George Szell, cond.
COLUMBIA ML 4588. 12-in. 18, 15 min. \$5.45.

Mr. Casadesus' performance of the Liszt concerto misses some of the appropriate sentiment supplied by Miss Farnadi, but it could be argued that his relatively cool style makes this feverish work more acceptable. On all other musical counts his is undeniably the better version. The orchestra and piano are heard equally clearly here, pointing up the perfect rapport between the pianist and Mr. Szell. The work as a whole is better organized in terms of tempos, so that the excitement at the end is sharper, and the orchestra sounds excellent. The chiseled perfection of Mr. Casadesus' rhythms and the exquisitely matched tones in the cadenzas will never cease to seem remarkable.

The pianist's chaste style, with its even application of color, is probably better suited to the early romanticism of Weber's *Concertstück*, which has had something of a revival in concert halls recently. Its ingenuousness is often delightful and refreshing; and Mr. Casadesus, Mr. Szell, and the orchestra perform it with a brilliance and gusto that are quite captivating. The recording is first rate. R. E.

MAHLER *Das Lied von der Erde*
Three Ruckert Songs

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra; Bruno Walter, cond. Kathleen Ferrier, contralto, and Julius Patzak, tenor, in *Das Lied*. Kathleen Ferrier, contralto, in the *Songs*.
LONDON LL 625-6. Two 12-in. \$11.90.

Symphony No. 5 in C sharp Minor
Eight Songs

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York; Bruno Walter, cond. in the *Symphony*. Desi Halban, soprano; Bruno Walter, piano, in the *Songs*.
COLUMBIA SL 171. Two 12-in. \$10.90.

Symphony No. 5 in C sharp Minor
Symphony No. 10 in F sharp Major

Vienna State Opera Orchestra; Hermann Scherchen, cond.
WESTMINSTER WAL 207. Two 12-in. \$11.90.

With the music of Mahler there is usually no halfway mark; either