

you like it or you don't. If I were forced to take a stand, I would be among the anti-Mahlerites, a fact which I think it is only fair to state before writing this review. To me, most of his music is banal, overblown and much too long.

Fortunately, though, there are exceptions to this rule. One of these is the magnificent and surprisingly well-integrated symphonic song cycle, *Das Lied von der Erde* (*The Song of the Earth*), for contralto, tenor and orchestra. At long last we have the definitive reading of this score by the composer's friend and disciple, Bruno Walter, who gave it its first performance in 1911. He is aided by two superb soloists. Rich, deep-voiced Kathleen Ferrier, whose unforgettable collaboration with Walter in Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* made disk history, gives an equally notable account of herself here and in the rather lugubrious *Ruckert Songs*. Julius Patzak, a Viennese veteran tenor, still has freshness in his voice and sensitivity in his performance. Altogether, this is tender, introspective Mahler



A pair of mighty Mahlerites: Bruno Walter and Kathleen Ferrier.

— which is Mahler at his best — tenderly interpreted with loving care. Aside from some distortion on Side 3 of my sample set, the recording is entirely satisfactory.

The Fifth Symphony, justly famous for its lovely *Adagietto*, has other attractive features, though it often suffers from long- and loud-windedness. Both readings here are very good, and both have been well recorded. I prefer Walter's because of the fuller orchestral sound — particularly in the strings — and for the greater freedom of movement in the *Scherzo*. Scherchen, on the other hand, provides more welcome dramatic contrast in the two opening movements. The listener must also choose between the miniature Mahler song recital by Desi Halban, finely accompanied by Walter, and the often intensely beautiful *Adagio* from the unfinished Tenth Symphony, played with great dignity by Scherchen. P. A.

MENDELSSOHN *Organ Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, Op. 65*
— See Bach

MENOTTI *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

Chet Allen (boy soprano), Rosemary Kuhlmann (ms), Andrew McKinley (t), David Aiken (bne.), Francis Monachino (bs), Leon Lishner (bs). Orchestra and chorus; Thomas Schippers, cond.

RCA VICTOR LM 1701. 12-in. \$5.72.

Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the first opera commissioned especially for television production, had its premiere over the facilities of NBC-TV on Christmas Eve, 1951. Since then it has been repeated, and seems well on its way to becoming an annual Yuletide feature. It also shows signs of catching on as a staple of various opera groups around the country — at least of opera groups that have a steady supply of boy sopranos, a vocal classification notorious for sudden retirements because of old age.

The number of people who have seen *Amahl* must be immense; certainly its story of the little lame boy and the three Kings (or Wise Men) needs no retelling. The music is charmingly simple and sentimental, and this performance, supervised by the composer, may be taken as definitive. Perhaps it is better seen than merely listened to, as Mr. Menotti suggests in his program note; but of what opera is that not true? The only general objection I can think of is that if children listen to the recording too much, and imagine as inventively as children can, they may find the TV treat at Christmas less appetizing. If you don't have TV, why worry about that? I myself have a block about this opera that I probably never will get over. When I was a little boy, the old Negro man

who worked in our yard used to complain about "night visitors." He meant bed-bugs.
J. H., Jr.

MONTEVERDI *Seven Madrigals* — See Gesualdo

PROKOFIEFF *Classical Symphony*
†Gershwin: *An American in Paris*

NBC Symphony Orchestra; Arturo Toscanini, cond.
RCA VICTOR LM 9020. 12-in. 17, 15 min. \$5.72.

The maestro seldom deals with modern music unless with sure-fire sellers like these. He takes the *Classical Symphony* rather more romantically than most; in his interpretation it seems to have been inspired by Schubert rather than Mozart. He gives the Gershwin its full, slight due. The road is now open for Kostelanetz to retaliate with a recording of the Ninth Symphony.
A. F.

PUCCINI *Tosca*

Renata Tebaldi (s), Gianfranco Volante (alto), Giuseppe Campora (t), Piero di Palma (t), Enzo Mascherini (bne.), Dario Caselli (bs), Fernando Corena (bs), Antonio Sacchetti (bs). Chorus and Orchestra of L'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome; Alberto Erede, cond.

LONDON LL 660-661. Two 12-in. \$11.90.

There are five LP versions of *Tosca* in all. I tried but was unable to listen to all of them under anything like ideal conditions; however, I listened to enough of each to know that — as performances — they vary from excellent to why bother. Only one, the RCA Victor reissue, merits comparison with the new London set, and its engineering is not nearly modern enough to make a hi-fi enthusiast think twice. Still, there is honor enough for both.

The older set holds two performances that have elements of real greatness. Singing actresses of the power and emotional projection of Maria Caniglia just don't happen very often, and although she is not here in unsullied voice (people who heard her "back when" say that her singing has always tended to be flawed), the total effect of her impersonation is crushing. Beniamino Gigli's Cavaradossi has quite different values. He is stylistically less teary than he sometimes is, but he does sound too complacent for maximum dramatic effectiveness. Be that as it may, he had every reason to sound complacent, because never, at least to my knowledge, has a singer with so undeniably great a voice and such consummate skill in using it been caught by the microphones in such fine fettle all the way through an opera performance. High fidelity or low, listening to him is a jaw-dropping experience. Armando Borgioli, the Scarpia, has a nasty way of rolling words around in his mouth before singing them, but his big, dark voice and vigorous, positive declamation put him well on the credit side. Oliviero de Fabritiis controls the big-scale, pungently dramatic performance.

The new London issue, though, has the advantage of wonderfully live and clearly defined reproduction — and of Renata Tebaldi, who in the title role gives a performance that is in the same great line as Miss Caniglia's, dramatically almost as affecting, more cleanly vocalized, and perceptibly higher in average beauty (if not in climactic weight) of tone. All things considered, more can be heard of a better Tosca in this set than in any other.

Giuseppe Campora, the Cavaradossi, does not have the plush-covered tone of Mr. Gigli; but nobody, not even Mr. Gigli, does now, and Mr. Campora uses his strong, easily produced, adequately resonant voice in manly and musically intelligent fashion.

Mr. Mascherini's Scarpia proved to be so much more to my taste than anything I have heard from him in the flesh that it at least partially short-circuited my faculties of judgement. Reconsidered, it all seems to add up to this: his voice here seems lighter in volume and color than I remember it being, while he seems a much defter and more interesting artist. Certainly the voice, as it lies in the grooves, is not what would ordinarily be considered a proper Scarpia voice, and when Mr. Mascherini tries to make it sound as if it were he gets in trouble — not much, but enough to be mentioned. However, most of the time he solves his problems by being inventive and singing words well. His characterization is not definitive, to say the least, but it stands up well enough, particularly in its glints of cruel humor. As an aside, it seems a pity that two really good Scarpias heard in this country within the last few years have been bypassed in recording circles. George Chapliski and Robert Weede are Scarpias of very superior quality, especially deserving of preservation in a period that has seen so many second-rate, half-baked, or