

**“LAMENT FOR APRIL 15”**

**and OTHER MODERN AMERICAN MADRIGALS**

**Composed for THE RANDOLPH SINGERS  
DAVID RANDOLPH, Conductor**

**CRI-102**

It may well be that the appearance of this record marks the first time in history that a performing group has been so honored as to be able to issue a long-playing disc consisting entirely of works written especially for them (**not** on commission) by numerous composers.

This record contains the first fruits of a plan that had its inception in the mind of David Randolph as long ago as 1944. It was in that year that he organized The Randolph Singers, a group of five musicians devoted to the performance of Madrigals. Throughout the intervening years, during which they brought to the attention of the public — through their numerous concert tours and recordings — literally hundreds of early English, French and Italian Madrigals, it was their hope to create a rebirth of interest in this intimate form of music, but in the idiom of our own day. How well that hope has been realized is indicated by the fact that up to January, 1956, no fewer than twenty-seven modern Madrigals were composed especially for The Randolph Singers, of which thirteen are presented on this disc.

**CLAFLIN: LAMENT FOR APRIL 15**

This humorous work has already achieved world-wide fame. The composition of a retired New York bank president, it is a verbatim setting of the Income Tax Instructions! (By a reverse kind of logic, therefore, it might be claimed that never in history has the text of a Madrigal been so familiar to so many people.)

The humor of the work derives, of course, from the tongue-in-cheek juxtaposition of this completely prosaic text and the mock-serious music. Even the parentheses have been set to music! The humor is further heightened by the completely “dead-pan” interpretation given by The Randolph Singers.

**MILLS: THE TRUE BEAUTY**

Since he has chosen a text by a Seventeenth Century poet, Charles Mills has given to this madrigal a suggestion of an early English flavor. The opening soprano solo, in fact, may bring to mind the English folk melody “Greensleeves.” The same lilting rhythm is present throughout the entire work, either by implication, or in actuality. As the piece reaches its climax, the growing intensity of the harmonies assures us that this is music of the Twentieth Century. The madrigal ends with a gentle recollection of the opening soprano solo. This time, however, it is harmonized.

## **CLAFLIN: THE QUANGLE WANGLE'S HAT**

This is a light-hearted setting of nonsense words by Edward Lear. At the climax of the work, when the “Quangle Wangle” says to himself “What a wonderful noise there'll be,” Avery Clafin has written a truly horrendous discord on the final word, as if to suggest, as graphically as possible, the quality of the noise.

Then, as the words refer to the “flute of the Blue Baboon,” there is an amusing reference to Mozart's opera, “The Magic Flute,” as the first soprano quotes the coloratura portion of the “Queen of the Night” aria.

## **STEVENS: LIKE AS THE CULVER ON THE BARED BOUGH**

Halsey Stevens has given an atmospheric and very expressive setting to a poem by the early English writer, Edmund Spenser. The opening melody returns twice during the course of the work: (at the words “No joy of aught . . .” and again, at “Dark is my day . . .”). With each reappearance, however, the melody is given a slightly more somber setting.

## **PINKHAM: “MADRIGAL”**

Only four voices are used in this brief work (which, incidentally, takes only forty-four seconds!) One subtle, but meaningful, touch is the momentary dissonance given to the harmonies as the tenor sings the words; “Always out of tune they were.”

## **KAY: HOW STANDS THE GLASS AROUND?**

Major-General James Wolfe is said to have written these words on Sept. 12, 1759, just before the attack on Quebec. Ulysses Kay has written in an extremely contrapuntal style, thus imparting to this work some of the complexity of texture often found in the early madrigals. The idiom, however, will be found to be entirely contemporary.

## **LIST: REMEMBER**

In this setting of a poem by Christina Rossetti, Kurt List uses the opening four-note figure, — (to which he sets the words “Remember me,”) — as a “motto.” Those four notes will be found to pervade the entire work. At times, as at the very opening, they are intoned by the soprano voice, as an ostinato figure. At other times, the figure is given to different voices. Toward the middle of the work, as the first soprano sings that figure repeatedly, the melody is divided among the four lower voices, with each one singing only one syllable!

## **DVORKIN: MAURICE**

Judith Dvorkin has sub-titled this work “A Shaggy Tale.” It is a jocose setting of a pun on a French word.

### **PINKHAM: FOLK SONG: ELEGY**

As in the case of his other madrigal on this disc, Daniel Pinkham uses only four voices in this work. This one, however, employs a philosophical text, whose mood is enhanced by the subtle and sparing use of dissonance.

### **CANBY: THE INTERMINABLE FAREWELL**

For the text of this bit of musical spoofing, Edward Tatnall Canby has gathered every cliché used by departing guests and by their hosts. The music is in the form of a canon, over a repeated bass figure. However, with a sense of humor suggestive of Charles Addams, the composer prescribes that as each of the singers enters successively with the same melody, he or she does so in a different key! The resulting polytonality is an example of real musical wit. It might be mentioned in passing that The Randolph Singers have often used this delightful work as the final encore in their concerts. It has never failed to send their audiences home laughing.

### **CLAFLIN: DESIGN FOR THE ATOMIC AGE**

Avery Claflin achieves the humor in this work by giving an extremely serious musical setting to what are essentially ludicrous words. It is rather surprising, however, to realize how appropriate the text is to our own day, despite the fact that it was written many years ago, by Edward Lear. Again, the performance is completely “dead-pan.”

When Mr. Claflin composed this madrigal for The Randolph Singers, he had no idea that they were scheduled to give a concert in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Thus, the place of the first performance of this work was singularly appropriate!

### **KAY: WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

Before the battle of Lexington, William Dawes and Paul Revere were both dispatched to rouse the county, Dawes starting first. The text, written in the first person, conveys Dawes' bitterness at the fact that Paul Revere became famous, while he remained unknown.

### **HARMAN: A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN**

This is essentially a duet for Soprano and Tenor, sung in old English, while the other three voices intone a Latin hymn in the background. The score prescribes that the lower three voices are to “intone without vibrato”.

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*

