

Journal of Singing

By Gregory Berg

Abel's music has a richly blended texture and flavor all its own ... , the influence of contemporary music theater and rock music ... mingling with more classical elements to create a truly distinctive voice. There is much to admire here, especially the clean, forthright way in which he sets these texts. ... There is every reason to believe he will become an even more able art song composer.

The centerpiece of "Terrain of the Heart" is a cycle titled *The Dark-Eyed Chameleon*, which was inspired by what the liner notes describe as "a disintegrating love relationship" In the realm of art song and orchestral song, (such emotional pain) has inspired some of history's greatest masterpieces, including Schubert's *Die schone Mullerin* and *Winterreise*, Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. In such a crowded and intimidating field, Abel's cycle actually manages to hold its own Both the words and music are by Abel, and by the time we reach the end of the last song, we have experienced something truly wrenching. ... *The Dark-Eyed Chameleon* is a captivating and important work.

The other two works in this release are compelling in their own right *Rainbow Songs* also features Abel's own lyrics ... ; one has a sense of the composer turning the page and entering a healthier and more hopeful place, and we are glad to travel with him there. The music has an arresting beauty In *Five Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*, one must laud the composer ... for trying to remain true to the stark and mysterious words of the poet and for succeeding to such an extent.

Abel is fortunate to have his songs performed by such enthusiastic musicians. Soprano Jamie Chamberlin's sound is lovely, the sense of style ingratiating, and the delivery of text remarkably clear. Ariel Pisturino contends admirably with the relentless challenges posed by the Rilke songs. ... Pianist Victoria Kirsch is superlative at every turn.