

## **KZSU-FM, Stanford University**

By Larry Koran

Mark Abel has forged an original style that blends elements of classical, rock and jazz. This disc's art songs feature the gorgeous voices of sopranos Jamie Chamberlin and Ariel Pisturino, accompanied by pianist Victoria Kirsch, transporting the listener with lovely melodies and engaging, albeit sometimes mildly dissonant harmonies.

*The Dark-Eyed Chameleon* (artful lyrics by Abel) is a searing story of a disintegrating love relationship. The first song generates an unsettled mood and has a melancholy close. The second recounts the heady intoxication of first attraction, while the third introduces darkness, the fourth a poignant recollection of the ex-lover's young daughter, and the last the grief of breakup.

*Five Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* captures the mystery and angularity of Rilke's refined language. The first song is mysterious, reflective; the second optimistic, celebrating beauty; the third sounds the disquietude of human vulnerability, the fourth a secure here-and-now, and the fifth warmth, wonder, even ecstasy.

*Rainbow Songs* (again, artful lyrics by Abel) conveys optimistic sentiment, idealized love, moments of loneliness, lyrical states and joyous energy, with tone paintings whose pleasures invite repeated listening.