

Allmusic.com

By James Manheim

California-based composer Mark Abel has developed a unique musical language that incorporates strong influences from rock music without losing the basic shape of classical song. He is less a crossover composer than one who has managed to absorb rock rhythms into a largely tonal classical style. The shapes of his long melodies owe little to rock, which comes in mostly on the rhythmic side. William Bolcom, or a less flamboyant Leonard Bernstein, would be the closest comparisons. ... It's a testament to the distinctiveness of Abel's music that *Five Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* fits with ("Terrain of the Heart"'s) other two cycles, whose language has a much plainer idiom. Indeed, the directness of Abel's texts (for *The Dark-Eyed Chameleon* and *Rainbow Songs*) is one of the strong points of his songs in itself. ... Abel is developing a characteristic body of work.