

Songs and Sonnets. Jane Leibel, soprano; Kristina Szutor, piano; other instrumentalists. St John's, NL: [Private Recording], 2005. 1 compact disc (78:34). Contents: Songs, op. 38 / Sergei Rachmaninoff — *Fiançailles pour rire* / Francis Poulenc — *Sonnets from the Portuguese* / Oskar Morawetz — *Brettli-Lieder* / Arnold Schoenberg — *Grey Island* / Clifford Crawley. To purchase this CD, e-mail Jane Leibel at: jleibel@mun.ca.

Soprano Jane Leibel presented her debut recording, *Songs and Sonnets*, in December 2005. Her extensive performing experience includes a vocal recital tour of Canada as winner of the Eckhardt-Grammaté National Competition for the Performance of Twentieth-Century Music. Pianist Kristina Szutor is also an accomplished performer and researcher. Both artists teach at Memorial University of Newfoundland's School of Music.

Rachmaninoff's Songs, op. 38, is the introductory work and departure point for this musical journey. In 1916, Rachmaninoff selected and set to music six poems by authors associated with the Russian symbolist movement. The settings emphasize colour rather than melodic line, and capture the sounds and rhythms of the texts. Leibel's performance of the songs reveals her versatility, as a variety of moods and scenes are depicted. Szutor's lively playing and convincing delicate attack provide a well-balanced support throughout.

Leibel's inspired interpretation of Poulenc's *Fiançailles pour rire* (1939) effectively imparts a sense of loss to the listener. Her elegant elocution befits Louise de Vilmorin's mournful meditations on the ephemeral nature of life and love. These saturnine pieces are well-placed as the second group of songs on the album. The sombre atmosphere

they create continues in the sonnets that follow.

The first Canadian work on the album, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, was written by Oskar Morawetz in 1955, fifteen years after leaving his native Czechoslovakia. The text by Elizabeth Barrett Browning provides the poetic climax of the recital, depicting the decisive moment that led to her departure from her country and family. The sonnets challenge our conception of place, which is presented not as a realm, but as a union with a loved one. Leibel's interpretation captures the lamenting quality of this widely performed piece.

Departing from the contemplative mood, Leibel infuses Schoenberg's *Brettli-Lieder* with personality and humour. Written in 1901, the songs precede Schoenberg's "emancipation of dissonance" and were intended as cabaret entertainments. Leibel transitions effortlessly between the masculine characters and the narrative voice. She is superbly supported by three fellow faculty members at Memorial: Michelle Cheramy on piccolo, Rob Power on snare drum and Katie Sullivan on trumpet.

The highlight of the album is the soprano's sublime performance of *Grey Island*, a new piece by composer Clifford Crawley. Leibel commissioned the piece for herself, pianist Tom Gordon and clarinetist Paul Bendzsa, who also join her in this performance.

This extraordinary work portrays the spiritual journey of reconciliation between place and self. The text is taken from *The Grey Islands*, John Steffler's 1985 sequence of prose and lyric verses. Steffler depicts a summer of self-discovery on a remote island off the coast of Newfoundland. The concluding "I am This Island Now. Strong. Solid." transcends and internalizes the concept of place. Leibel's voice—calm, steady, and devoid of vibrato—appropriately conveys the poet's message of the inner journey.

Songs and Sonnets is a highly recommended addition to Canadian music collections. The recording is well-captured and consistently balances the soprano and piano. The piano could be

more detailed as there is a little too much reverberation in its sound. The voice is perhaps a bit bright, but sounds well-placed in the room. Recorded at Memorial's D.F. Cook Recital Hall, the album was produced by Francesca Swan, engineered by Terry Winsor and mastered by Clive Allen. The accompanying liner notes provide biographical information on Leibel and Szutor, with the song texts in English or in their original language with translations. Sheilagh O'Leary deserves special mention for the striking cover photo. Sarah Hansen's graceful design is reflective of the album as a whole.

Nancy Anne Brydges
Ottawa, Ontario

Announcement / Annonce

Following its successful launch last year, the Rencontre des bibliothèques de Québec / Quebec Music Libraries Meeting will meet at the Université de Québec B Montréal (UQAM) on Friday, Oct. 20, 2006. All who work with music in libraries and/or are interested in music librarianship in Quebec are invited to attend. This year's programme will focus on Electronic Music Resources in Quebec and Canada. For more details, visit the meeting's web site at <http://www.mcgill.ca/rbmq-qmlm/>.

La deuxième Rencontre des bibliothèques de musique du Québec aura lieu B l'Université du Québec B Montréal (UQAM) le 20 octobre 2006. Toute personne qui travaille avec la documentation musicale dans le milieu des bibliothèques ou qui s'intéresse B la bibliothéconomie musicale au Québec est la bienvenue. La programmation se concentra sur des ressources électroniques de la musique aux Québec et Canada. Pour de plus amples renseignements, visitez le site web <http://français.mcgill.ca/rbmq-qmlm/>.