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Songs of the Holocaust. Rachel Joselson, soprano; Réne Lecuona, piano; Scott Conklin, violin; Hannah Holman, cello. (Albany TROY1627; 75:15)

Adolf Strauss: "Ich weiss bestimmt, ich werd dich wiederseh'n." Viktor Ullman: *Drei Jiddische Lieder*. "Berjoskele," "Margarithelech," "A Mejdle in die Johren." Carlo Taube: "Ein Jüdisches Kind." Ilse Weber: "Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt," "Kleines Wiegenlied," "Ade, Kamerad!," "Dobr'ý den," "Denn alles wird gut," "Ukolébavka," "Und der Regen rinnt," "Wiegala." Gideon Klein, arr.: "Ukolébavka." James Simon: *Drei Lieder aus der Chinesischen Flöte*. "Die geheimnisvolle Flöte," "In der Fremde," "Die rote Rose." Norbert Glanzberg: *Holocaust Lieder*. "An die Völk der Erde," "Für Ule," "Transport," "Lied zur gute Nacht," "Die letzte Epiphanie," "Nachtgedanken," "Der Ofen von Lublin," "Versprich mir Eins," "Alter Baum," "Allen Vögeln," "Greta," "Abschied."

It has been more than 70 years since the fall of the Third Reich, but there is ample evidence that the fear and

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hatred which spawned it is still very much with us. That sad, disconcerting reality makes it all the more important that we continue to remember the devastation of the Holocaust and its incalculable human toll. It is also important to remember the stories of those brave souls who found themselves engulfed in the horror but who somehow met their brutal fate with grace and courage. Among the most uplifting of such cases are the artists and composers who continued their creative work amidst circumstances that most of us cannot begin to imagine. Such stories teach us vital lessons about the nature of human courage as well as the remarkable capacity for artistic endeavor to illumine even the darkest, most sorrowful corners of the human experience.

One might see a title like *Songs of the Holocaust* and expect to experience a painful journey through one sorrowful song after another, but, in fact, the songs selected and performed by Rachel Joselson and Réne Lecuona include a surprising amount of light and hope. That is certainly true of the enchanting song that opens the disk, Adolf Strauss's "Ich weiss bestimmt, ich werd dich wiederseh'n" (I know for certain that I will see you again). In another context, this might seem like a perfectly lovely if fairly ordinary song one might have heard on stage of a cabaret about two lovers who find themselves separated but hoping to be reunited someday. When one knows that it was composed amidst the deprivation and despair of Terezin by a composer who was eventually executed at Auschwitz, one cannot help but sense the heartache that resides just beneath the optimistic veneer of this anything but ordinary song. It is

an ideal way for this powerful journey to begin.

That journey includes a traversal through eight songs by a gifted Jewish poet and children's book author from Prague, Ilse Weber (1903-1944), who was also an amateur musician. These are her own texts and they convey the full gamut of emotions that a Terezin prisoner might experience, from hope to despair, bitterness to acceptance, and fear to peace. What makes these songs so disarming in their emotional impact is Weber's charming, simple music. Most of these songs are strophic, and the musical language is tuneful and soothing, almost as though they were written with very young listeners in mind. It is that musical clarity and simplicity that allows these texts to speak so forcefully and memorably to us. The set includes two exquisite lullabies that Ilse may have written with her young son Tommy, imprisoned with her at Terezin, in mind. There is also "Und der Regen rinnt" (And the rain pours) in which she finds herself thinking about a child who is far away and perhaps has forgotten her. She was almost certainly thinking of her oldest son, Hanus, who was able to escape to Sweden on a Kindertransport, narrowly escaping the fate that befell his two parents and younger brother. Weber even includes the name "Terezin" in the first of these eight songs. "Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt" (I wander through Terezin) sounds for all the world like a song about someone standing on an ordinary bridge. In this case, however, the bridge is at the edge of the prison camp. "I so want to go further," she sings, "I so want to go home!" Thanks to Weber's touching song, we find ourselves standing on that same bridge,

feeling at least some small measure of her sadness and longing.

Most of the other songs on the disk were written by professional, thoroughly trained composers, and that is fully evident in their level of musical sophistication. Viktor Ullman (1898–1944), a former student of both Schoenberg and Zemlinsky, is represented by three Yiddish songs that demonstrate his assured craftsmanship. Carlos Taube (1897–1944) was both an orchestral conductor and composer whose only surviving composition is “Ein Judisches Kind,” an exquisite song for voice, violin, and piano that makes us long to hear all of the music that would seem to be irretrievably lost. James Simon (1880–1944) is responsible for most lush and overtly romantic songs in this collection with his *Drei Lieder aus der Chinesischen Flöte*.

The only one of these composers who escaped arrest and death at the hands of the Nazis was Norbert Glanzberg (1910–2001), who lived out much of World War II in the unoccupied region of France, thanks to the assistance of notable musicians like Georges Auric and Edith Piaf. Always mindful of his good fortune and the tragic fate of so many others, Glanzberg wrote a number of pieces in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust. The twelve songs that comprise his *Holocaust Lieder* were composed in 1983 after he read a newly published collection of Holocaust poetry, titled *Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland*. It is here that we experience the most unvarnished ugliness of the Holocaust, from the suffocating ordeal of the transport trains to the sickening stench of the ovens. But there is also considerable beauty in these texts and songs, including “Alter Baum” (Old tree) that

could almost be a latter day sequel to Schubert’s “Der Lindenbaum.” Glanzberg’s soothing melodic lines call up happier days of the past, but the cello’s countermelody keeps the sorrow of the moment close at hand. The sweetest of these twelve songs may also be the most heartbreaking. “Allen Vögeln” (All the birds) has the singer asking for freedom for all imprisoned birds, sunlight for all flowers in the shadows, and that all suffering people may find hope and consolation in a thousand stars above their heads. The author of this extraordinary poem, Johanna Kirchner, was one of the bravest and most relentless workers in the resistance before she was finally arrested and executed. Thanks to this disk, her inspiring story lives on.

It is fortunate indeed that these precious songs have been entrusted into the loving and capable hands of soprano Rachel Joselson and pianist Réne Lecuona. One can tell that they have given their hearts and souls to this undertaking, and they deliver musical perfection at every turn. The liner notes include an essay about the prison camp at Terezin, biographies of the composers and poets, and full texts and translations. Such a project deserves nothing less.

Southerly: Art Songs of the American South. Jos Milton, tenor; Melinda Coffey Armstead, piano. (Albany TROY 1622; 50:33)

James Sclater: *Beyond the Rainbow*: “Anticipation,” “For Bill Chickaway,” “Miss Emma,” “The First Amendment,” “Nancy Hargrove,” “Quiet.” Dan Locklair: *Portraits*: “Ernestine Saunders,” “Unknown,” “Brooksie Malloy.” Price Walden: *Abide with Me—Five Songs of Love*: “That night,” “In the Garden,” “Be

not afraid,” “Interlude: Night,” “Abide with Me,” “If you will have me.” John Musto: *Shadow of the Blues*: “Silhouette,” “Litany,” “Island,” “Could be.”

Nothing quite equals the special pleasures derived from a recording that is truly fresh in its musical offerings or approach. *Southerly* is such a recording. Jos Milton, an assistant professor of music at the University of Mississippi, describes in the liner notes how moving to Oxford in 2011 opened his eyes to the cultural richness of the American South. He was especially fascinated at how the region’s tumultuous history and the resiliency of its people helped galvanize a vibrant literary legacy that thrives to this very day. It should come as no surprise that the American South has a strong legacy of art song as well; the big surprise is that it took this long for someone to think of putting together a recording devoted entirely to such songs. It’s fortunate that the first such recording was in the capable hands of an artist as accomplished as Milton. This was clearly a labor of love, executed with a relentless attention to the smallest detail, and the result is one of the most enthralling art song releases of the last twenty years.

The disk opens with *Beyond the Rainbow*, a set of six songs by Alabama-born composer James Sclater (b. 1943) featuring texts by Ovid Vickers that spring out of his childhood in Georgia. “Anticipation” is a lighthearted description of the sort of ordinary adventures with which two energetic boys might fill a lazy afternoon. “Billy Chickaway” veers into very different emotional ground, as a teacher muses about the uncomfortable prospect of working with a young native American whose sense of identity and truth will