

KUYAS. Roxolana Roslak, soprano; William Aide, piano; Suzanne Shulman, flute (Somers; Coulthard); Alan Beard, percussion (Somers); Coenraad Bloemendal, cello (Coulthard). CEN-TREDISCS CMC 1183 (digital), produced by Robert Cooper, \$12.00 [available from: Canadian Music Centre, 1263 Bay Street, Toronto, Ont., Canada M5R 2C1; add \$1.50 postage and handling].

SOMERS: *Kuyas*, for Soprano, Flute, and Percussion. **ARCHER:** *Caleidoscopio*, for Soprano and Piano. **KLEIN:** *Three Melancholy Songs*, for Soprano and Piano. **COULTHARD:** *Four Prophetic Songs*, for Soprano, Piano, Flute, and Cello.

This disc of Canadian art songs promotes Roxolana Roslak, a 44-year-old, Ukraine-born soprano who graduated from the University of Toronto in 1964. According to the jacket notes, her career was launched in 1967 when she appeared in the role of Riel's wife, Marguerite, in the world premiere of Harry Somers' opera *Louis Riel*.

That explains why "Kuyas" is the title of this disc. *Kuyas*, a song composed independently by Somers in 1967, was incorporated into his opera *Louis Riel*, forming, in the third act, the high point of that stage work. So Roslak begins this recital dramatically with the music she is most identified with. The word *kuyas* is Cree for "long ago," and the song has Riel's wife lamenting over the passing of a people; the text is in phonetics, using a Cree grammar. The percussion, a subtly used assortment of sleigh-bells and drums, is a definite atmospheric plus in this emotional setting. This is a very strong work.

Violet Archer's *Caleidoscopio* (1981) is an impressionistic cycle of four songs based on poems by Archer's sister, the Italian poet Gisella Azzi. The songs, sung in Italian, depict, consecutively, the setting sun, the waltzlike movements of the sun's rays sliding across objects, a fleeting vision of a smiling face, and the whirl of ballet dancers. The cycle has an appealing grace, charm, and variety.

Lothar Klein's *Three Melancholy Songs* (1966) is his second set of songs based on the Gondol poetry of the Brontë sisters—*Laments from Gondol*, also from 1966, being the first set. The songs are dusky, ranging from serene to severe, and are generally of the melancholy pose indicated by the title.

Jean Coulthard's *Four Prophetic Songs* (1975) are chamber songs for alto, flute, cello, and piano, to texts by the Canadian poet Elizabeth Gourlay. Basically the four songs can be described as a drama, a meditation, a lament, and an exultation.

Roslak's voice is a grand instrument, with a wide, sure range capable of coloristic variety. Her various accompanists here are thoroughly professional and contribute in no little way to the complete enjoyment of this disc. Technically the digital sound is fine, though the auditorium these works were recorded in gives Roslak's voice a distant sound. The surfaces are quiet, but my review copy was deeply pitted on one side by a piece of grit in the sleeve. So much for the supposed anti-scratch advantage of loose shrink-wrap. Full texts are provided.

Lovers of the art song and vocal music should have this disc in their collections.

S.W.E.