

# Music Dedicated to a Fault

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Earthquakes and their causes have been on a lot of minds lately, including composers of classical music. If that sounds hard to believe, you should have been in the audience of the Composers, Inc. concert at the Veterans Green Room Tuesday, where the New York composer — and summertime Californian — Ursula Mamlok was represented with a song cycle entitled "Der Andreas Garten" ("The Andreas Garden").

Yes it's *that* Andreas to which Mamlok, and her husband, Gerard Mamlok, who wrote the poetry, are referring to in a series of nine songs, which harken back to the exquisite delicacy, ghostly mystery and dramatic intensity of Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire."

The Mamloks, it seems, spend their summers in a house not far from the San Andreas fault. And it provided inspiration for these songs, which, if they invite comparison to "Pierrot," still stand impressively on their own.

"Dark, mysterious, hidden, the earth's wound. In its crust untamed, in slumber; San Andreas..." the songs begin in translation, and a listener was immediately drawn into their expressionistic enchantment. The cycle was offered in the original German, and the fine mezzo-soprano Miriam Abramowitsch brought the poetry and music into sharp dramatic focus, singing, whispering, declaiming. It was a splendid achievement.

So many little things stood out in the cycle. When Abramowitsch first mentioned "San Andreas," she blurted it out in a mild shriek. The "tremor" that followed was repeated and repeated to good effect, and when, in the next line, the beautiful garden blooming nearby was first mentioned, the picture was one of ghostly reality.

One whole section dealt with hummingbirds, a long series of busy, busy buzzing and flickering sounds. The sun's "red disk" shone starkly in one song, represented by a single note of different timbres.

"Der Andreas Garten" was all the more effective for its instrumentation, with Angela Koregelos performing on several flutes and

Natalie Cox on the harp.

The Mamloks' "Andreas Garten" was in company with another song cycle, Robert Greenberg's "The Passing Years," and Elinor Armer's "Pipe Dreams," both of which were premiered. Frank Campo's Fantasy for Violin and Piano completed the program.

## Songs of Immigrant Life

Greenberg went back to the turn-of-the-century poetry of immigrant Jews, with reflections of historical, cultural and sociological concerns. There were five songs, presented by baritone Allen Shearer and pianist Earle Shenk, and although they formed a unified cycle, they each could have been presented separately, which made them a different kettle of fish than "Andreas Garten."

"God Gave Me" was a proud declamation of one man's strength as well as the inner workings of his heart, and it was superimposed on a rhythmic meter not unlike those of old-fashioned ballads. "East Broadway" and "The Passing Years" were personal memoirs, the former as reflective as a prayer, the latter beginning as vocalized speech and then coming into melodic focus. "Rabbi Elimelech" was a vigorous folk song, a Yiddish variant of "Old King Cole." Finally, Greenberg's gothic treatment of "At My Wedding" put it in the bogey-man camp of the

likes of "Erikoenig" poetry and song.

Although originally written in Yiddish, Greenberg transposed the poems into English for this cycle. One should mention, too, that the piano writing is so highly developed it could well stand on its own. Both performers received an ovation from a packed house.

## 'Pipe Dreams' and Fantasy

Armer's "Pipe Dreams" was also enthusiastically received. This was a piece in three parts, written for the flutist Laurel Zucker, who presented its premiere, along with pianist Lois Brandwynne. Music written to exploit the gamut of virtuosity that can be expected from a single instrument is certainly an old-hat convention by now. "Pipe Dreams" was, however, a fastidious and joyful account of what can be expected from the flute in terms of flamboyant gutsiness, erotic heat and just-plain sweetness.

Campo's Fantasy was performed by violinist David Stenske and pianist Charlotte Zelka. Beginning as a lyric flight of fancy by the violinist with an aggressive counter-attack by the pianist, it moved into a series of permutations that were never really developed. Instead, the Fantasy had a stream-of-conscious spontaneity that touched on introspection and fast action. Thus the martial flourish of the ending came as no surprise.