

**1) KATHARINE CARTWRIGHT/  
RICHARD OPPENHEIM,  
A MUMBAI OF THE MIND,  
HARRITON CARVED WAX 032.**

*Johnny Nolan / Poet Like an Acrobat / Peacocks Walked / The Dog / Kafka's Castle / Waiting / Still She Dances. 50:16.*  
**Cartwright, vcl; Oppenheim, as; Bhooshan Munj, tabla;  
Rajesh Sreenivasan, mridangam, kanjeera; R.  
Venkatesh, morsing, ghatham. 7/27/00, Mumbai,  
Bombay, & 7/17/01, NYC, NY.**

**2) KATHARINE CARTWRIGHT/  
RICHARD OPPENHEIM,  
LA FAUTE DE LA MUSIQUE:  
Songs of John Cage,  
HARRITON CARVED WAX 031.**

*Aria / Solo for Voice 43 / Apartment House / Solo for Voice 17 /  
Solo for Voice 72 / Solo for Voice 12 / Solo for Voice 27. 44:37.*  
**Cartwright, vcl; Oppenheim, as; Cameron Brown, b; Bill  
Goodwin, d; James Weidman, p. 12/00, Saylorsburg, PA.**

These two discs take a fresh approach to two of the 20th century's most prominent renegade thinkers.

Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti gets the treatment on (1), which, by virtue of its traditional Indian instrumentation, is the more overtly exotic affair. Opening with Katharine Cartwright's sprightly, multi-tracked vocals on "Johnny Nolan," sections of Ferlinghetti's 1958 poem, "A Coney Island Of The Mind," are arranged, and re-imagined, for colorful instrumentation. Bhooshan Munj's terrific tabla playing creates genuine excitement, and the sparkling bell tones scattered throughout accentuate the airy charm of the arrangement. Oppenheim and Cartwright phrase together, criss-crossing lines with second, third, and fourth vocal tracks, conjuring thoughts of Steve Lacy arranging for Manhattan Transfer.

"Poet Like An Acrobat" turns the vivacious intervallic leaps of the previous track inward, with Oppenheim soloing pensively over Munj's clipped tablas, plus drone, while the quickly unfolding colors of "The Dog" take one's breath away (and dig those multi-tracked tablas! Percussionists with a fondness for this particular instrument should really check out Munj). The most stunning track may be "Waiting," which nearly overwhelms with its density of information, as swirling vocal and saxophone lines magnify the surreal nature of Ferlinghetti's poem to a degree that, perhaps, was only originally heard in the author's head. Overall, this is a conception far different from Ferlinghetti's own 1999, more familiarly Beat, recording, but makes a strong case for such radical reinterpretation, when carried out in the right hands. Cartwright and Oppenheim, on (1), show that they have both the literary and the musical chops to deliver the goods.

Composer John Cage certainly dabbled in exotic musics, but his work tended more toward an asceticism which, coupled with his expressed dislike of Jazz-based improvisation, could make a project like (2) a risky proposition. But it is immediately apparent, from Cartwright's expert handling of the opening "Aria," that the composer is in good hands. Her light, supple instrument hits the difficult phrases and notes of these pieces—especially the five solos for voice (none of which are performed

unaccompanied)—with an assured ease that makes one wonder why her name isn't spoken of more often in the company of such masters as La Barbara, Galas, or Clayton.

Somewhat surprisingly, in addition to Oppenheim, Cartwright is accompanied by three of the most solid mainstream Jazz players around. Bassist Cameron Brown's level of invention in this context brings to mind Gary Peacock's dialogues with Albert Ayler on *Spiritual Unity*, while pianist James Weidman plays straight man on "Apartment House," which explicitly references Jazz standards, and Bill Goodwin, long known as Phil Woods' drummer, both produced and plays drums on the session. The solos for voice venture into territory that will be well familiar to Free Jazz fans, and hearing this group of players, with its rich cross-section of experience, handle such wide-ranging music is a rare treat, and one it pulls off admirably.

The Cartwright/Oppenheim duo seems, on the basis of these two discs, to have invisible parameters in which to operate. Let's hope there's more of these stimulating projects in the works.

*Larry Nai*

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