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Mimi Johnson Makes Lovely Music



By
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Mimi Johnson could never be termed the "typical" American. She personifies the pattern-setter, innovator and the type of person among us who makes things happen.

When Mimi graduated from the University of Colorado as a liberal arts major, she faced an eventual future of teaching Chaucer at some university, or getting involved in the outside world. Without hesitation she chose the latter. She went to Paris to study at the art galleries and stayed with an aunt and uncle, both American artists working there.

While there she met artists who were to have strong in-

fluences on her life—John Cage, Merce Cunningham, members of the Sonic Arts group (Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Gordon Mumma and Alvin Lucier) as well as Jane Yockel and Margaret Wood—all American artists living and working in and out of Europe.

After Paris the next obvious step would be to go to New York, and returning there in 1971, the artistic associations that had been initiated in Paris continued and evolved into an enterprise called Artservices. (See *WomensWeek*, May 16, 1977.)

Some six years later, still a co-director at Artservices, Mimi has now turned to a new, and equally exciting, venture. In the winter of 1977, *Lovely Music* produced its first six compos-

ers, Robert Ashley's "Private Parts", David Behrman's "Figure in a Clearing", Peter Gordon's "Star Jaws", Jon Hassel's "Vernal Equinox", Meredith Monk's "Key", and "Blue", Gene Tryanny's "Out of the Blue".

The company's name, *Lovely Music*, was coined by Bob Ashley, appropriately expressing Mimi's feelings about music. For her, it is "new" music; easy to touch and which enters the whole being. The styles vary from rock to jazz to synthesizers, but they all maintain a "human aspect."

"The composers," Mimi explains, "have a universal appeal in their music that makes their pieces totally understandable to anyone who turns it on. Each piece represents something that

they love, understand, and respect. They are completely honest in their music and this comes through."

The goal of *Lovely Music* is *not* to make a personal fortune for any one artist, but a means of furthering the goals of artists who wish to be heard. For many artists who are ignored by bigger companies, this is one of the only ways of having their music made permanent and mass produced. Although many composers today are turning to producing their own records, the idea of a group enterprise with one company cuts down on red tape and leaves them more time to make music.

With *Lovely Music* composers make an initial investment which will be shared in subsequent royalties. Profits, if there are any, really start *after* the first thousand records have been made and distributed. *Lovely Music* has two distributing sources at the moment, JEM and JCOA.

The success of *Lovely Music* is shared with Mimi by Robert Ashley and David Behrman, who as co-directors of Mills College in Berkeley, California, provide public access to the recording studio there. Composers can record at ridiculously low rates there with the use of the best equipment. Many of the first six albums were recorded there.

Kermit Smith, also at Artservices, is Mimi's partner at *Lovely Music* and the whiz end of its public relations.

Mimi enjoys the marketing and other business aspects of her latest creation, and as a creative person, it is a venture that keeps her in touch with the world she loves the most... the people in the performing arts.