

Mimi Johnson makes lovely music.

GREG WATERMANN

## SOUND BUSINESS MIMI JOHNSON

Like everyone else who grew up in the Sixties, Mimi Johnson was weaned on the Beatles. Now, as the head of her own record company, Lovely Music, she produces a different kind of music, what she calls "contemporary classics"—the works of noted experimental composers like John Cage and her husband, Robert Ashley.

For Johnson, avant-garde composers are interesting people with unusual ideas about music. "It's fascinating to me that they can create music out of ideas about the movement of the planets, or some philosophical idea about how the mind works," she says.

At 41, Johnson wears a blue-jean miniskirt around her SoHo office. She came to New York City in 1971, starting a management organization, Performing Artservices, which helped bring performers like dancer Trisha Brown and composer Philip Glass into the limelight. Then, 10 years ago, she founded the record company, and has since released over 50 records and CDs of experimental composers. Cage is certainly her most famous client, and the first composer she ever met. That was in Paris, after college, when she was staying with her uncle, the painter Max Ernst.

Johnson, a one-woman minicorporation, does it all for the Lovely musicians, from album covers to arranging concerts. She traveled to Germany last fall for the premiere of Cage's first fully staged opera, *Europas 1 & 2*, a work that she helped book for him in Frankfurt. That kind of effort, she hopes, will open minds to her "lovely music."

ALICE WEIL

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