Leroy Jenkins – Themes Improvisations on the Blues (1992)

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1. Themes & Improvisations on The Blues - Soldier String Quartet 18:31
2. Panorama I - Leroy Jenkins 13:33
3. Off Duty Dryad -   Soldier String Quartet 13:04   play
4. Monkey on The Dragon -   Leroy Jenkins Ensemble 15:31

Performers:
Thurman Barker, traps;
Vincent Chancey, French horn;
Mary Wooten, cello;
Ron Lawrence, viola;
Laura Seaton, violin;
Frank Gordon, trumpet;
David Soldier, violin;
Don Byron, clarinet;
Myra Melford, piano;
Lindsey Horner, bass;
Henry Threadgill, flute;
Marty Ehrlich, bass;
Leroy Jenkins, violin;
Jane Henry, violin;
Jeff Hoyer, trombone;
Janet Grice, bassoon;
Soldier String Quartet;
Tania León, Conductor

For a long time, Leroy Jenkins had only been known for his free jazz performances, with little to no attention to his composed work, when in 1992 the Soldier String Quartet and other musicians committed themselves to putting on a performance of Jenkins' compositions. The results are

astounding. The four pieces captured on this release are from that concert of April 9, 1992, at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. The title track would indicate that the piece would sound bluesy, but rather than following the typical 1-4-5 blues chord progression, or even following the blues scale, its connection to blues is more structural than tonal. Sets of instruments lay down a base over which one or two others improvise for a selected amount of time. Most of Jenkins' compositional work can be described as a frame around which the musicians can improvise with simple thematic instructions (like "make it kinky" in the score of "Monkey on the Dragon"). This is an exciting listen with much to stimulate the mind and ear; one can only hope that there are more releases of Jenkins' compositional work planned for the future. ---Mark W.B. Allender, Rovi

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