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GRETCHEN PARLATO IN A DREAM [OBLIQSOUND]

A known quantity on the New York improviser's scene through appearances with a coterie of progressive players such as the Beninois Lionel Loueke, Parlato is a singer whose creativity lies somewhere in between the scat and non-scat models of jazz singing. She has an almost insidious subtlety, personalizing a theme by way of improvisations that are often just a few delicately



curled phrases that sometimes mirror the hypnotically grainy chords of Loueke's nylon string guitar. Parlato respects melody above all else. Her negotiation of each

song is as sensitive as that of the rest of the band - keys, bass, drums - and the lean, spare nature of the arrangements, at times stripped right down to just voice and crisp finger picking, brings a spacious, airborne quality to the work. Tonally, Parlato has moments where she recalls a cultured folk-rock singer such as Suzanne Vega but for the most part the hazy finesse of a long line of great Brazilian singers, notably Flora Purim, is also discernible. Indeed a Latin sensibility is very strong rhythmically as well as vocally, above all on a quite sumptuous reprise of Herbie Hancock's *Butterfly*, a tune that is tailor made for Parlato for its gliding, slow burn lyricism. Originals like *Weak* and the title track also impress by the focused economy of their verse-chorus structure but for the most part *In A Dream* unveils a singer with her own sound, something that takes years for young pretenders to achieve. Then again, there's not a whole lot of faking going on here.

KEVIN LE GENDRE ★★★