Constantly risking absurdity
and death
whenever he performs
above the heads
of his audience
the poet like an acrobat
climbs on rime
to a high wire of his own making…

from A Coney Island of the Mind (Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 1955)

Katharine (Katchie) Cartwright and I have, in the past, distilled melodies from the tonal arc of poetry, then nestled the skeletal tunes in compositions whose structures were not necessarily cyclical. The challenge this time is to borrow poetry, maintaining its prosody, in order to create songs that could have been convincingly delivered by Ella Fitzgerald or Billie Holiday.

Although we've concentrated on original material in collaborations over the course of thirty years, sometimes we've re-contextualized works of a single composer, poet or improvising musician. The common thread is an identifiable style resilient enough to repeatedly sustain and inspire us. These collaborations are the best and truest expression of my hopes and imaginings, and for that reason it is my desire to apply for this grant with the express intent of pursuing just such a joint effort with Katchie.