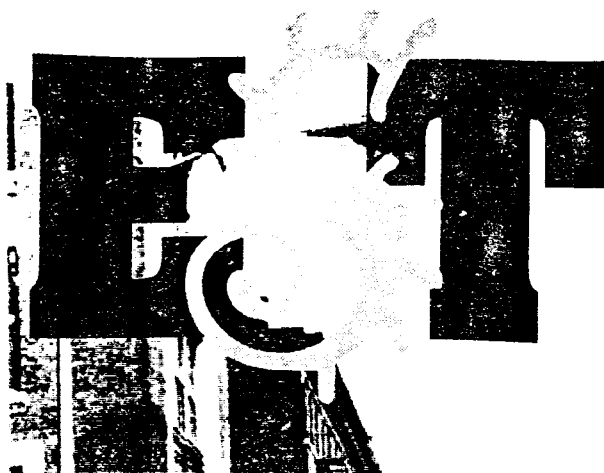


CMJ NEW MUSIC REPORT

MARCH 13, 1995

Once you've heard the music of Mr. Hwang you are ready to move into even more adventurous terrain. **JIN HI KIM** has been a part of the American new music scene for a long time, and her own peculiar sense of music is wide ranging and wild. On the 1993 album *KomunGuitar* (iWhat Next?, c/o Nonsequitur, P.O. 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103) she joins forces with some of the music scene's most singular guitarists for a festival of clever, cruel and witty duets. A list of the cast will be better than a description of the music: Elliot Sharp's monster overtones, Derek Bailey's caustic minimalist, Henry Kaiser's brooding electric and David First's whining, whiny slide (matched by her electric komungo) are just a few of the contributors. Perhaps best is the wit and wisdom of Eugene Chadbourne's bluegrass-for-moderns banjo/komungo improv "Howdy Partner." There are also two inspired solo improvs for solo komungo that exhibit Jin Hi Kim's amazing depth and range. □



Jin Hi Kim *Komunguitar* (Nonsequitur/What Next? WN0012) CD 49 minutes

Kim plays acoustic and electric versions of the komungo, a Korean heavy-strung koto-type instrument plucked with bamboo rod. It has a nice, resonant sound that seems to work well in improvisational terms with just about any other instrument. This disc features Kim in duo setting with various 'guitarists', plus a couple of solo pieces. The guitarists (Sharp, Bailey, Kaiser, Chadbourne [on banjo!], Reichel & David First) are all so wildly stylistically disparate that it's difficult, if not pointless, trying to compare the pieces. The pairing with Chadbourne is (for me) the most enjoyable surprise; other highlights are duos with Reichel and Bailey, the latter as uncompromising as ever. Really, there isn't a lame piece present, and the overall effect is perhaps more interesting and satisfying than hearing the various guitarists mucking about together. **SJ**

Komungos (CD)**Jin Hi Kim- komungo****Derek Bailey, Eugene Chadbourne,****David First, Henry Kaiser,****Elliott Sharp, Hans Reichel- guitars**

The music on this CD is an hybrid collection of duets with Jin Hi Kim improvising on komungo with different guitarists well-known in the Western improvised music community. The first piece, with the long, saturated tone of Elliott Sharp in a separate plane from Kim's forward punctuations, contrasts greatly to the more rhythmic interaction of Bailey's dry acoustic guitar rattling with Kim's rounder, ropey tone responding. Henry Kaiser resonates his strings under Kim's sense of intoning; his part is highly supportive and subtle, as though his feeling is right behind her music, allowing the space to explore. Jin Hi Kim's komungo solo is incredibly elegant and beautiful. The instrument, although interestingly coupled with electric guitars, tends to sound more completely enhanced alone, on its own territory. The richness of its tone and its rhythmic complexities are not confused or obliterated by the addition of the denser textures and layers imposed by guitars and their harmonic and rhythmic terrains. Chadbourne superimposes a rather bluesy country banjo collage which Kim accompanies adeptly, giving the impression of listening to a different world out of each ear, and indeed that is the case, groovy as it is. Hans Reichel plays a subtle and supportive part rather akin to the komungo itself as Kim takes off in a flight that could easily support itself. Similar patterns of forced Asian compatibility- although more successfully construed- occur as David First imitates the woozy quality of the komungo and artfully grabs your ear with his own inventions. An interesting and compatible mixing of the sounds of east and west intermingling with the cultural playground of improvised music, coming wider and closer simultaneously, this CD nevertheless comes off a little like a smorgasbord of guitarists who barely scratch the surface of the collaboration potential. -LS

*What Next Recordings c/o Non Sequitor
P.O. Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103.*

intake

Issue # 5 Absolutely Free

MANIFOLD

Jin Hi Kim - KomunGuitar
cd - Nonsequitur

The Komungo is a traditional Korean six-string zither that is similar to the Japanese koto. Jin Hi Kim was trained in its use in Korea then moved to the US where she has worked with the likes of the Kronos Quartet and the collaborators on this record.

KomunGuitar is a record of some of Kims free improvisation pieces with Eugene Chadbourne, Elliot Sharp, Derek Bailey, Hans Reichel, David First and Henry Kaiser. The archaic sounding Komungo is pitted against the western guitar, and the result is either for the adventurous or those into world music and/or improv guitar.

"Yongary Meets Bigfoot", the Henry Kaiser duet, works extremely well here, with Kaiser matching the Komungos mysterious sound with dark, flanged out chords that create a soundscape that Kim exploits with sorrowful plucking. The Chadbourne duet, "Howdy Partner", smacks of a mock country-western-bluegrass campiness that works by virtue of its sheer impossibility. VH

Jin Hi Kim

KomunGuitar
(WhatNext cd, 1993)

Il *komungo* è uno strumento con qualche somiglianza al *koto* giapponese, una cassa armonica su cui sono tese sei corde, su tre delle quali si attua una diteggiatura non dissimile da quella di una chitarra, mentre altre tre sono libere e presumibilmente a nota fissa, con un effetto di bordone. Le corde vengono stimulate con un bastoncino di legno arrotondato, che percuote, sfrega o pizzica a seconda dell'effetto che si vuole raggiungere.

Nella musica coreana il *komungo* è usato per accompagnare una forma di canto lirico detta *kagok*, ma soprattutto in una forma di musica popolare a base improvvisativa detta *sanjo*. Da un'intervista della Kim a *Ear*: «Prima che la Corea adottasse la musica cinese di corte, con la sua qualità meditativa basata sulle filosofie di confucianesimo e buddismo, noi coreani avevamo la nostra musica popolare, che era del tutto improvvisativa, basata sullo sciamanismo, sull'animismo, e sull'estasi. Lo sciamanismo era la base di tutta la vita, e lo sciamano era sempre un donna. Ed essa era un'artista: poteva danzare e suonare, e usava un numeroso gruppo di percussionisti. L'energia fondamentale e la spiritualità del mio lavoro è coreana.(...) Lavoro essenzialmente con cinque note, ma in realtà lavoro tra le note. È molto minimale, ma incredibilmente libero. La musica non è basata su tono, armonia e ritmo: è più forma, tessitura, o gesto. In Corea si colpiscono le corde con un bastoncino di bambù, ma bisogna essere molto abili. Mi sono resa conto che questo strumento ha un suono molto rude - si può speziare con un bel po' d'aglio!».

Nata a Inchon, Jin Hi Kim ha studiato il pianoforte da bambina, e ha poi intrapreso lo studio della musica tradizionale coreana alla Scuola Superiore di Musica Tradizionale di Seul. Tra il 1985 e il 1988 ha scritto numerosi articoli che introducevano in Corea musicisti contemporanei, particolarmente americani, da John Cage

sferita negli Usa, anche se continua a tenere corsi di perfezionamento per studenti coreani di musica tradizionale. Dal 1990 ha intrapreso una intensa attività di elaborazione e composizione fondendo gli elementi della sua formazione tradizionale, che considera irrinunciabili, con tecniche espressive contemporanee e di altri Paesi: il Kronos Quartet le ha commissionato un brano per *komungo* e quartetto d'archi; ha recentemente composto un quartetto per tre *piri* (strumento tradizionale coreano a doppia ancia) e oboe; la sua ultima intrapresa è la creazione di *No World Improvisations*, un gruppo di improvvisazione multiculturale permanente, con Joseph Celli all'oboe, Adam Plack al didgeridoo (tronco cavo usato nella musica degli aborigeni australiani) e il percussionista africano Mor Thiam, che ha inciso un cd per la O.O. Discs con ospiti come Alvin Curran e Malcom Goldstein.

Jin-Hi Kim negli ultimi tre anni è stata inoltre presente a diversi festival di musica improvvisata in Europa e negli Usa, e ha apportato modifiche allo strumento creando il *komungo* elettrico. In questo disco sono registrati alcuni degli incontri avvenuti dal vivo con improvvisatori occidentali che suonano chitarre, chitarre modificate o strumenti della stessa famiglia. Il rischio è ovviamente quello della monotonia timbrica e dell'effetto finito-zen. Il disco richiede quindi un approccio articolato. Il consiglio migliore è quello di familiarizzare con lo strumento ascoltando per bene i brani 4 e 6, in cui si apprezzano il timbro scuro, le qualità risonanti della percussione, il contrasto tra la tastiera e le corde libere; caratteristica della musica coreana è l'incisiva qualità ritmica. Su questa base è più facile poi immergersi nell'ascolto dei duetti, identificando i vari contributi. L'incontro con Elliott Sharp al basso elettrico a due manici prevede l'uso del *komungo* elettrico, e i due strumenti srotolano strati paralleli di suono fino a che Sharp passa al sassofono soprano, ma la giustapposizione di materiali fatica a svilupparsi in un dialogo, e

stessa. Il brano con Derek Bailey, registrato dal vivo alla Company Week del '92, è molto più intenso: lo stile percussivo del chitarrista inglese ben si adatta alla movimentata esposizione della musicista orientale, e gli armonici dei due strumenti fanno sprizzare scintille. Henry Kaiser supporta il suono del *komungo* con tessiture basse, sopra cui si sviluppano le melodie di ispirazione tradizionale; all'opposto Eugene Chadbourne si esibisce in rapidissimi fraseggi in stile bluegrass, del tutto incongrui sullo sfondo creato dallo strumento proveniente da tutt'altra civiltà. Al chitarrista newyorkese David First è affidata la chiusura con fraseggi lunghi a note piegate e deformate che lasciano ben poco spazio alla Kim; come era da prevedersi tuttavia è Hans Reichel, nel penultimo brano, a trovare la chiave per l'incontro più ravvicinato, in cui la propensione di Reichel per la ricerca di nuove e originali combinazioni dei tradizionali elementi dello strumento a corda gli permette di suonare come dall'interno del *komungo*, istantaneamente assunto nel suo personale ambito espressivo.

Un disco non unitario, con esperimenti riusciti ed altri meno, e tuttavia prezioso, non solo per il suo valore di introduzione a un aspetto poco noto di una civiltà musicale così importante e lontana, ma anche per i contributi di Bailey, Kaiser e Reichel: presenze certo sufficienti perché gli estimatori della chitarra contemporanea si mettano a cercare questo disco.

Francesco Martinelli

LIRE 8.000

N. 16 AUTUNNO / INVERNO 1994

OPTION

MUSIC ALTERNATIVES

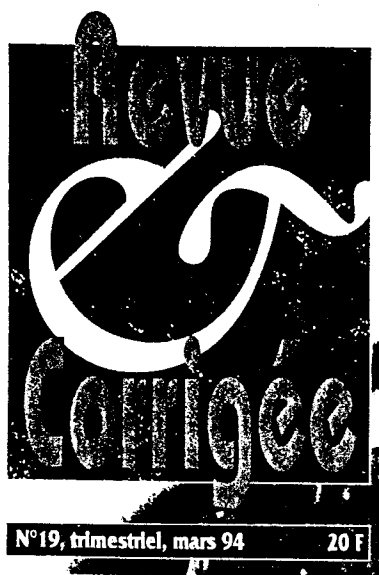


● **JIN HI KIM: Komunguitar** Kim plays the komungo, a traditional Korean stringed instrument with a woody, percussive sound somewhat similar to the Japanese koto. Two of her pieces on this CD are solos, but the rest are duets with new music types Elliott Sharp, Derek Bailey, Eugene Chadbourne, Hans Reichel and David First. Commenting on this music, it's easy (and somewhat appropriate) to invoke standard dualities such as East/West, yin/yang, male/female, etc., but the music is successful largely because the participants transcend stereotypes and meet each other more than half way. Kim is no stranger to the avant-garde, having enjoyed previous musical associations with Sharp, Malcolm Goldstein, Joseph Celli, Alvin Curran and other radical improvising artists. The two solo improvisations reveal her tough-minded, almost aggressive sensibility with only a small measure of lyricism and not even a distant whiff of new age prettiness. However, even with amplification on several pieces, she is never overpowering sonically — her artistry relies primarily on nuances of pitch and rhythm. So it is left to the other collaborators to restrain themselves more than may be their normal custom, and this they do almost uniformly, reacting sensitively to the silence and well as the sound of Kim's playing. The result is not exactly easy listening, but it certainly qualifies as an artistically successful meeting of spirits and minds. (Nonsequitur, Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103) — Bill Tilland

JIN HI KIM: Komunguitar (CD)

This disc is an incredible documentation of Jin Hi Kim's improvisations with various guitarists. Jin Hi plays a traditional Korean instrument called the komungo, which has six strings and is similar to the Japanese koto. It is evident that komungo stands well on its own from the two solo improvisations included on Komunguitar. The six guitarists Kim improvises with are: Elliott Sharp, Derek Bailey, Henry Kaiser, Eugene Chadbourne, Hans Reichel, and David First. Chadbourne plays the banjo on "Howdy Partner", which strangely enough sounds very much at home next to the komungo. On "Point", Sharp plays both his saxophone and double-neck guitar bass, which yields noises and textures that are accompanied by the komungo. For the most part, the komungo is placed more in the background, which is why the two solos stand out as being the most engaging to those unfamiliar with this exotic instrument. Each guitarist, though, brings a unique style that is well coupled with Kim's sensitive playing.

(NONSEQUITUR/WHAT NEXT?, PO BOX 344, ALBUQUEQUE, NM 87103)



JIN HI KIM "Komunguitar" (What Next? WN 0012; Non Sequitur/What Next? P.O.Box 344 Albuquerque NM 87 103 U.S.A); dist. Metamkine.

Quand on parle du loup...

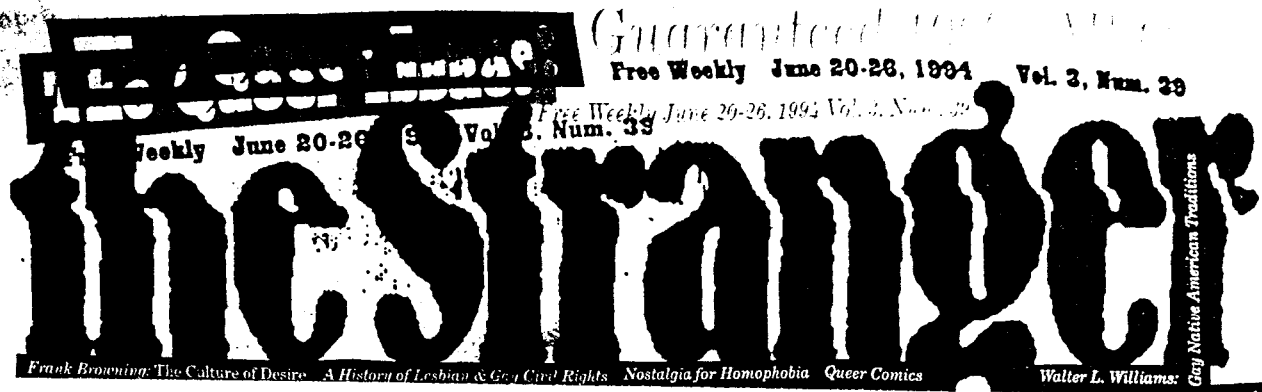
Résumé du chapitre précédent: la fille est belle, d'origine asiatique, et l'instrument, bien que débutant par la même syllabe et en provenance d'une région voisine, possède nettement moins de cordes que le koto mais reste tout aussi encombrant: d'une résonnance toute différente, d'une autre amplitude, peut être plus percussif, il est parfois branché sur le secteur par la jeune coréenne qui, du coup, le nomme "l'electric komungo"! Elle fait ça surtout, concurrence sonore déloyale oblige, quand elle joue avec Elliott Sharp, ce qui tombe plutôt bien, puisqu'adepte, lui aussi, du "loup-y-es-tu-que-fais-tu", il occupe pas moins que le premier rang de ce disque ci, et, un bonheur ne venant jamais seul, il est rejoint, dans le désordre le plus grand, par un renfort de garçons déjà connus par ailleurs: Derek Bailey, Henry Kaiser, Hans Reichel, David First qui, pas chiens, ont amené leur guitare, exception faite d'Eugene Chadbourne qui, malin, a glissé un banjo sous son bras: à les voir là, se dandinant avec leurs jambons de torture (cf. Revue & Comigée n°18, page 7, in la rubrique lexicographique et néanmoins musicale tenue par le Zigue à la Coule) à l'épaule, on devine que l'idée du feu de camp ne leur est pas passée bien loin mais que, finalement, ils ont tous poussé dans le sens des duos enchaînés. Ce qui fut fait, le disque en témoigne.

L'improvisation comme porte de secours, ou nouvelle manière, fort élégante certes, de résoudre la question de l'immersion de toute lutherie dans des formes musicales autres que celles pour lesquelles elle a été conçue. A dire vrai, on ne pourrait que conseiller aux oreilles curieuses de repasser par la case départ occupée par un précédent disque, où elle officialait, dans le même état d'esprit déjà, en compagnie de Sharp et Kaiser, ou bien encore, de se reporter à une discographie sélective de chacun de nos big boys et d'y ajouter, par un artifice quelconque, un peu de komungo.

Bon, mettons que les morceaux avec David First (sympathique ethnicoblues un peu paresseux cependant), Hans Reichel (basé sur le respect mutuel), et Henry Kaiser (distrairement enniomoriconien) valent certainement le détour, encore que l'humour chadboumien, qu'on a connu plus lourd, et le curieux faux vrai duo avec Bailey, aussi, ne restent plus qu'Elliott et deux soli "100% komungi": à ce stade là du disque compact, chacun fait, fait, ce qui lui plaît, plaît-plait!

Jacques DEBOUT

p.s.: imaginons rien qu'un court instant, l'allure de l'entreprise si, enregistrée par de joyeux francophones, ceux ci l'avait intitulée "Komunjambon de torture"...si, si rien qu'un instant!



Vancouver jazz critic and improv guitarist Alex Varty points out in the liner notes to Korean komungo improviser **Jin Hi Kim's** CD of duets with avant-garde guitar greats that "the sound of a guitar in improvisation is often a high nervous one, full of busywork and jitter." Using the blues and its offspring the way Tronzo does avoids jitteriness, and on Kim's *KomunGuitar* (¿What Next?) even single tones on the Korean komungo (traditional guitar/ zither-like instrument), make for a resonance expansive enough to enrich the most leapy guitar antics, placing the komungo in an inter-oceanic/ intercontinental stringed dialogue with the thickened harmonies of, say, Mississippi Delta blues.

With guitarists Elliott Sharp, Derek Bailey, Henry Kaiser, David First, and Hans Reichel, Kim haltingly strums, plucks, and stretches her strings alongside spacy guitar anti-acrobatics (Bailey and Kaiser), bluesy nuances (First), eerie electro-darknesses (Sharp), and strangely komungo-like stringbending (Reichel). With Eugene Chadbourne's banjo, Kim plucks the perimeter as ole Doc Chadbourne rolls his raggy way around some icily terse tunings.

On her two komungo solos Kim demonstrates that these two-instrument conversations simply intensify her explorations, giving the komungo an avant-guitarde feel that makes her solo improv work as riveting as any duet format.

YOU COULD DO WORSE.

ISSUE #4 * SUMMER 1995 * THREE DOLLARS

JIN HI KIM

Komunguitar (CD)

(What Next?)

Jin Hi Kim plays a traditional Korean instrument called the komungo, which has six strings and is similar to the Japanese koto. This disc is an incredible document of Kim's improvisations with various guitarists, including Elliott Sharp, Derek Bailey, Henry Kaiser, Eugene Chadbourne, Hans Reichel, and David First. Chadbourne plays the banjo on "Howdy Partner," which strangely enough sounds very much at home next to the komungo. On "Point," Sharp plays both his saxophone and double-neck guitar bass, which yields noises and textures that are accompanied by the komungo. For the most part, the komungo is placed more in the background, but the two solo improvisations on this album proves that Kim's artistry can stand on its own. Each of the six guitarists, though, brings a unique style that is effectively coupled with Kim's sensitive playing.—*Elliott Smith*