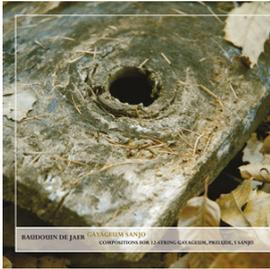


Brainwashed - Baudouin de Jaer, "Gayageum Sanjo"

Written by Duncan Edwards

Sunday, 12 August 2012 17:49 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 August 2012 21:53



Legend has it that more than a thousand years ago King Gasil of Gaya ordered a stringed instrument to be created. Archaeology suggests that same instrument, the gayageum, may have been made even earlier. Either way, de Jaer's compositions have a quality that is both ancient and modern.

[Sub Rosa](#)

In something of a twist to expectation, this album is performed by Kim Hyunchae and Lee Hwayoung, two women young enough to have their high schools included on the sleeve notes. Their dexterous fingerwork and subtle approach to pacing and space allows them to reveal the calmness and combustion in violinist Baudouin de Jaer's compositions. Honoring a long tradition of Korean music, *Gayageum Sanjo* is aesthetically complex, bracing, and challenging, with a prelude and five sanjos linked to cosmological, mythological, and literary themes. The word sanjo means "scattered melodies" and the form is said to have been influenced by shamanistic music and the epic stories of the southwestern region, none of which is lost on de Jaer who spent six years composing this album.

A sense of tranquility is underlined by the 11 part section entitled "Cavitri," after Paul Verlaine's poetic tale of the woman who remained impassive for three days and nights, without moving "legs, bust, or eyelids," in order to save her husband. During this piece de Jaer also introduces percussive elements associated with Indian raga. As with "Cavitri," the titles "Earth Around The Sun," as well as "Elasticity" and "Chess Study" provide clues as to the abstraction, space, and symmetry of the music.

Gayageum may usually be strung with nylon, metal, or silk, and while I think silk strings are used in this recording, certainly Hyunchae and Hwayoung produce metallic and synthetic tones as well as an amazing range of deep, high, organic, hollowed, and thudding notes and sounds. The placid sections are not over pretty and the occasional clusters of explosive, fluttering, fingerplay are unpredictable without feeling self-indulgent. *Gayageum Sanjo* is a good place to

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retreat from the times when life can feel like a random sensory assault.

*"May Oblivion, that dark and gloomy assassin, surround us,
or we be the target of Envy's bitter shafts,
Let us do as Çavitri, remain impassive,
But as she, at heart have a noble intention."*