



**Noreum Machi** is a captivating new group from Korea that performs the virtuosic percussion music known as *samulnori*. First introduced to the West in the late 1970s by the legendary ensemble Samul-Nori, this exciting music had a huge effect in galvanizing the student movement in Korea and re-engaging Koreans with their traditions. *Samulnori* is a modernized staged adaptation of *p'ungmul nori*, a ritualistic celebratory event with origins in shamanism and animism performed by rice farmers and professional musicians at harvest festivals. Noreum Machi's colorful program includes spectacular percussion dialogues, shamanic chants, and acrobatic dances.

## Korean Traditional Percussion

# Noreum Machi

*P'ungmul nori* represents the soul of Korea. Whereas court music died out for the most part with the end of dynastic rule in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, *p'ungmul nori*, a folk medium, was maintained in the villages and rural areas. After the 1961 military coup and throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, students throughout Korea employed *p'ungmul nori* as a medium to empower the masses and demonstrate against the authoritarian government.

Until Samul-Nori's first U.S. tour in 1983, Korean music was performed only to diehard aficionados; it was considered far too esoteric for Western ears. Even in Korea, traditional music was fast fading in the wake of the onslaught of Western music – both pop and classical. Samul-Nori, with its emphasis on percussion, dramatically changed the way that Korean music had been perceived both in the West and by young Koreans; here was a music that was easily accessible and seemed to speak a far more universal language.

Noreum Machi essentially continues and expands the journey that Samul Nori began. The group was founded in 1994 by Kim Juhong, a graduate of the Korean Traditional University who studied singing, shaman rhythms, and *pansori* (traditional storytelling/vocal music) with masters of these various genres, including Kim Duk Soo, one of the original members of Samul-Nori. While steeped in the tradition of

*p'ungmul nori* and its derivative *samulnori*, Noreum Machi has reached out to embrace outside elements and improvisation is a key element of their performance.

### The instruments:

The core instruments used are the *janggo*, an hourglass-shaped double headed drum that could be considered the national instrument of Korea since it is used in all forms of Korean music; the *buk*, a double-headed barrel drum; the *kkwaenggwari*, a small gong originally used in the royal ancestral shrine music; and the *jing*, a large gong. Other instruments used selectively are the *piri*, a small eight holed high-pitched oboe; the *taepyeongso*, a conical oboe; and the *bara*, brass cymbals used in Buddhist and shaman ritual music.

