

# KHAC CHI

WOMAD USA

July 2000

By *Bill Wolford*

“**Khac Chi Ensemble** From Viet Nam currently residing in Vancouver. Being an overnight fan of traditional Vietnamese music since hearing the CD *Stilling Time* on the Innova label, I made it a point to check out this group which was basically a husband and wife duo performing original compositions on traditional Vietnamese instruments. It's one thing to have a bunch of fascinating looking instruments you won't see everyday, but to see them played with such precise virtuosity is another thing. Khac Chi Ho and Ngoc Bich Hoang have hugely entertaining personalities in addition to their mastery of the instruments. Chi loved to play the dan bau (a one-string zither with a whammy-like stem) as much as we loved listening to its intense and quirky sound. The only way to describe it is like a therein played at double speed with all its glissandos and warts and the way Chi played sensitive. And then Ngoc Bich pulls out her ko ni (a two-string violin with a resonator attached to silk thread placed in the player's mouth). This instrument would have made **Jimi Hendrix** throw away his wah-wah and **Peter Frampton** trash his voice box. She had them both beat on this afternoon. What got to me with them was the humor that played a big part in the music. Even though they are virtuosos they weren't too serious at all. They were simply astounding.”



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## KHAC CHI GOES WOMAD

It's never easy for artists to re-establish themselves after moving to a new city, and it's particularly tough when they're moving to a new country and culture. But nine years after emigrating to Canada from Vietnam, the Khac Chi Ensemble has received one of the ultimate rewards for a world-music band: an invitation to play at the WOMAD festivals in Seattle and Reading, England.

"It was a complete surprise," said Ngoc Bich, who lives in East Vancouver with her husband, and the group's founder, Khac Chi. "Our agent had sent materials to the WOMAD organization (founded by pop star Peter Gabriel in 1980) several years ago, but we didn't hear anything from them until now. We're thrilled. It opens up all sorts of new possibilities for us for touring and recording."

Though billed, naturally, as coming from Vietnam, the Khac Chi Ensemble will be the only Canadian-based artist appearing at the prestigious festivals.

The lineup for WOMAD USA, which takes place July 28 to 30 outside of Seattle in Marymoor Park, Redmond, includes such notables as Malian guitarist Ali Farka Toure, Columbian singer Toto La Momposina, South African legend Miriam Makeba, and American artists Alejandro Escovedo, Bonnie Raitt, Los Lobos, the Mickey Hart Band, and Me'Shell Ndegeocello.

For more information, visit the Web site at [www.womadusa.org/](http://www.womadusa.org/).

**John Lucas, Shawn Conner, and Tony Montague**