

# Weekend

The New York Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 1997

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Hand in Glove: Sounds That Lie Up a Sleeve

By JON PARELES

Laetitia Sonami plays a unique instrument: the lady's glove. It's a sheer, elbow-length, left-handed glove with 16 pressure and motion sensors controlling electronic sounds. Alone onstage at the Kitchen on Wednesday night, she sometimes looked like a human antenna searching the air for sounds, or like a dancer focused on her hands, or like a deity summoning earth-shaking rumbles with a brusque gesture.

Her pieces are sparse but allusive, conjuring half-remembered dreams; they shimmer into earshot, glide and gradually evaporate.

Two pieces mixed pure electronic tones with sampled sounds. In "She Came Again," a text recited on tape by its author, Melody Sumner Carnahan, described a surreal contraption: "She contrives a sense of pleasure at the edges of her boundaries."

Ms. Sonami, dwarfed by her own spotlighted shadow, summoned electronic tweets, a sustained minor chord, notes that buzzed and faded away. Gradually, industrial sounds replaced pristine tones: ticking,

steam-engine huffing and a Geiger counter crackle, as if the mechanical were taking over.

"Has/Had" was improvised with an entirely different set of sounds: syncopated bass lines fit for a dance record, melodic runs that expanded or contracted with the sweep of an arm, admonitions to "Wake up!" whirs, metallic rattles, skidding cars. But once again, there was no narrative, only drifting, tapering off and a final glimmer of the opening sounds.

Technical difficulties prevented Ms. Sonami from using the glove to shape "Ngai Pha Yul," built on a Tibetan song ("My Land") sung by Tsering Wangmo. Instead, David Wessel sat at a Buchla controller, dovetailing Ms. Wangmo's voice with its own echoes and pitch-shifted variations.

As the melody floated among its own ghosts, the song itself, an exile's lament, grew more reverent and more lonely.