Kyrgyz Mouth Harps

*Temir o’oz comuz* (temir comuz) – a metallic, plucked idioophone (an instrument producing a simple sound). It is small in size (6-8 centimeters) and shaped like a traditional vessel. A steel reed, which produces a primary sound impulse, is attached by a rivet to a two-sided, bow-shaped metal (steel, copper, brass or bronze) frame. The playing technique is based on plucking the bent end of the steel reed while the frame of the instrument is pressed to the teeth of the player. The timbre of a temir comuz includes two parts: a constant, rhythmic tone and a melody line, which occurs by changing the resonator volume of the mouth, throat, etc. The range of the modern temir comuz is slightly more than one octave, and is based on a scale of natural overtones. The range of the temir comuz depends on its size – there are varieties in several ranges of the diatonic scale. The colorful, saturated tones of this instrument cast a spell over the listener. The temir comuz is used both as a solo instrument and in ensemble. It is one of the most ancient musical instruments known to man. Similar metallic percussion instruments are found not only in the Central Asian region but around the world, totaling hundreds of varieties. However, only the Kyrgyz people have created a wide repertoire for the temir comuz. The traditions of Kyrgyz folk music creativity allow employing the temir comuz to play quite complicated melodies with unique intonation found only in this instrument.

*Jygal ooz comuz* – related to the comuz. It looks like a thin wooden plank 13-20 centimeters wide, converging to 1-2 centimeters. Cut out in the instrument itself is a thin plate that serves as a vibrating reed. To play it, the musician presses the instrument to his or her lips and pulls the lace tied to the reed to produce sound. What comes out is a sharp, rich sound with clear rhythmic definition. The sound of the jygal ooz comuz comes from two levels – the main, constant tone and the overtones formed by the vibrations of the wooden reed. Smooth, melodious playing on the jygal comuz is difficult because of the stiffness of the wooden reed; therefore, the main function of the instrument is to provide a melodious, rhythmic accompaniment. The jygal ooz comuz is louder than the temir comuz, and is sometimes featured in solo parts in folk group compositions.