

Sounds of Korea

STUDY GUIDE

The Sounds of Korea Music and Dance Ensemble elevates traditional music and dance from their homeland to a higher level. Their striking instruments and colorful costumes are part of the unfolding of the traditional performing arts of Korea – from Buddhist drumming and shamanistic dance to folk dance and music of many regions. Several of the ensemble’s members have earned the distinction of “Intangible National Asset” – the highest national honor for a performing artist in Korea. They have performed at various venues throughout the Northeast, including New York’s Lincoln Center, World Financial Center, 92nd St. Y, Wave Hill, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



EXAMPLES OF SONGS & DANCES

DRUMS AND GONGS (*Samdo Suhl-janggo garak* and *Samulnori*)

- Drum ensemble piece
- *Suhl-janggo* composition
 - ◆ Played on *janggo* (hourglass drum) and *buk* (barrel drum)
 - ◆ Rhythms incorporate prolific rhythmic patterns passed on from legendary percussionists of *samdo* (“the three do,” referring to *Gyonggi/Choong-choung*, *Honam*, and *Youngnam* regions of Korea)
- *Samulnori*
 - ◆ Literally means “four objects’ play”
 - ◆ Consists of *janggo*, *buk*, *qengkari* (small gong) and *jing* (large gong)
 - ◆ Originated during rural celebrations in farmer’s music
- Tradition of group drumming dates back to ancient times when rural villages gathered together to pray for blessings and good will

DANCE OF JOY (*Heung Chum*)

- Well-known improvisational folk dance based on characteristically Korean dance gestures and movements
- “Heung” denotes joy, which is traditionally thought of as a feeling expressed in music and dance
- Sensual quality of joy is evoked through internal and metaphysical terms rather than through external acrobatic motion
- The way dancers hold and use fans are also evocative of an image of idealized flowers or birds inhabiting a pure and unfettered landscape

FOLK SONGS (*Suhdo Minyo*)

- Countless number of folk songs of various regional styles orally passed down through the generations grow out of Korean people’s love for singing
- Vocal style from *Suhdo* (western and northern regions of Korean peninsula)
 - ◆ Style comparable to lamentations, sometimes tearfully emotional in its nasal resonance and sonorous vibrato
- *Minyo* refers to songs with no recognized composer
 - ◆ Lyrics are timeless histories evoking life’s joys and sorrows through seasonal changes of time

SWORD DANCE (*Gum Moo*)

- Military dance handed down from age of Silla Dynasty almost two thousand years ago
- Origins of dance purported to have come from Shilla people who danced to commemorate the memory of a young boy, Hwang Chang Rang, who heroically gave his life for his kingdom in a suicidal attack on the opposing Beak-Jae Dynasty’s king. The dancer wears a mask in order to bear a resemblance to the young soldier
- During Choson Dynasty, when this dance began to be performed in the king’s palace, the militaristic function of the dance was changed to the more elegant and artful dance that is seen today

JANGGO DANCE (*Suhl Janggo*)

- Very energetic and rhythmic dance where performers dance while beating drums that are strapped to their bodies
- Drums are called *janggo*
 - ◆ Double-headed and hourglass-shaped
 - ◆ Played by striking skin with palm on left side and bamboo drumstick on right
 - ◆ In an artful fusion of music and choreography, the dancers dance and spin around playing vibrant yet graceful rhythms

EXORCISM DANCE (*Salpuri Chum*)

- Traditional folk dance that originated from the shaman’s dance to exorcise evil spirits and bad luck

- Solo dancer dressed in white dances with long white handkerchief to distinctive *salpuri* rhythm from southwestern regions of Korea
- Distinctive up-and-down movement from dancer's heel firmly grounded with the toes up carries through the body to the shoulders and rises and falls with the breath
- One of the most powerful artistic expressions of the Korean sense of *han*, a mixture of grief and longing

FAN DANCE (*Buchae Chum*)

- Group dance that is one of the most popular traditional folk dances of Korea
- Relatively modern dance that developed in the 18th century using the fan,
 - ◆ A prop used in shaman rituals
 - ◆ An object that was believed to expel evil and bring prosperity beyond its decorative and everyday functions
- Grace of music combined with colorful costumes and shifting geometrical designs lead audience to believe that they are surrounded by a flower garden

SUITE FOR "ARIRANG" (*Gayagum Trio*)

- *Arirang* is one of the most well-known traditional folks songs of Korea
- Sung by common people
- Passed on orally
- Song's origin is unknown
- The five provinces of Korea all have their own regional version of the song, which differ in rhythmic patterns and melodic modes
- Accompanied by *kayagum*:
 - ◆ 12-stringed zither supported by 12 movable bridges
 - ◆ Has range of two and a half octaves
 - ◆ Tone quality is soft and delicate

BONGSAN MASK DANCE (*Bongsan Tal Chum*)

- Humorous mask dance
- Originates from shamanic rites and ritual dances from the Bongsan region of northern Korea
- Deals with religious and social problems and is frequently associated with social commentary
- Provided common people a space to assert their power and identity over traditional elite
 - ◆ Expresses healthy vitality of common people through sexual allusions and criticisms of ruling class corruption
- Begins with female monks' salute to four gods of north, south, east, and west
- Followed by eight masked men's vigorous dance competition

DRUMS OF ECSTASY (*Poongmulnori* and *Samgo Moo*)

- *Buk* (drum) is traditionally believed to be an earthly symbol of Heaven
- Origin myth of Korea tells that the *buk* was brought to earth by gods of wind, cloud, and rain
- Program showcases a thunderous percussion dance accompanied by a wind and percussion farmers' ensemble
- Followed by elegant yet powerful drum dance originating from Buddhist temples of Korea
- Dancers' beating of drum is meant to instruct the evil-minded on the ways of Heaven and to save creatures from suffering in hell

INTERVIEW

Gloria Lee Pak is the Director of Programming of Sounds of Korea and an ethnomusicologist.

When you speak of traditional Korean music, are you referring to the music and dance from north or south Korea, or Korea as a whole?

Well, first you have to remember that the split did not occur until the middle of the 20th century, and our traditional music and dance goes back many centuries before that. South Korea in the last twenty to thirty years has begun to reinterpret that which had been lost for so many years.

What makes Korean music different or special?

First of all, Korean rhythms are broken into patterns of three. It is all in triple meters to express the desire to undo the deep sorrow into great joy. Also, the percussion parts are not written down. They have been passed down orally from generation to generation. What's known as "court music," which consists of strings and flutes does have written notation.

How does the music affect the movement of the dancers?

There is a real sense of tension and release in the body. First there is a heavy downbeat and then two lighter upbeats. The third beat leads us into the downbeat of the next measure. The head and body go down on beat one and lift lightly on beats two and three. Also as the music gets louder or faster, our movements become larger, and then smaller as the music becomes slower or softer.

What do you want people to understand or experience about your art form?

I want people to experience the transformation of the music from slow to fast, from the *Han* or deep sorrow to the *Heung* or great joy. Traditional Korean music is not to be observed. It is to be experienced.

What do you hope people will take away from attending your performance?

I want them to know that Korea is a part of Asia. I want to break down the stereotypes that exist, and I want them to know that we are not Chinese or Japanese, but that we have our own country and our own culture. I want them to realize that Koreans are a part of the people that make up New York City. I want them to know who we are and where we come from.

What is the role that music and dance plays in your culture?

Traditional music was originally an intrinsic part of everyday life in Korea. Some of the dances were created for the *geishas*, who were professional dancers that performed for the upper class. The folk songs and dances were a part of the agrarian life that counted for most of the population. There were songs and rituals for seasonal celebrations like harvest time, and also work songs that were sung as they labored in the rice fields. These were often sung in "call and response" fashion. There was also a shamanistic influence, as they had a deity for everything in nature, such as a tree, mountain, plus deities for their village, homes, and important people. Through music and dance, they would pray for good fortune for all these things. Starting in the late 70s, early 80s, Koreans began looking for their roots, which led them to revitalize the art forms of long ago. Today, there are many musicians pursuing traditional music while creating new forms of dance, music and inventing new instruments.

What would you say were the biggest musical influences in your life and describe your own artistic journey?

I was born in Philadelphia and grew up in Korea. I rarely heard traditional music and that was only occasionally in restaurants. There was nothing on TV. I took piano lessons as a child and I sang, but it was always western music. When I went to college in Boston, I began to seek my own personal identity. I felt a lack of connection to my own cultural heritage. I ended up at New York University studying vocal jazz, but I found as an Asian woman I was not given the same chances as a Black or Caucasian woman. So I took a class in ethnomusicology. As a part of my coursework, I had to choose a group and do a documentary project. That's where I met the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Association. I knew nothing about any of this when I started. I have been with Hanguk for three years now as their Administrative Director, PR person, translator, MC and various other roles. As a result of being involved with Hanguk, I began to study traditional folk singing and ethnomusicology at New York University, where I am presently finishing my doctorate.

ARTISTS' BIOS

- Ki-Young Lee** A *minyo* (folk song) singer in the *Kyonggi* regional style. He was trained under the late Master Chang-bae Lee, who was an Intangible Cultural Asset for *kyonggi minyo*. Mr. Lee has and continues to perform in the New York area through his affiliation with the KTPAA and also served as the KTPAA President in 1998.
- Sue Yeon Park** A traditional folk dancer with a specialization in *seung moo* (Buddhist ritual dance) and *salpuri ch'um* (shaman ceremonial dance). She was trained under the Master Dancer, Mae Bang Lee, who is an Intangible Cultural Asset of South Korea. Sue Yeon Park performs extensively in the U.S. and Canada, and continues to hold recitals and performances in South Korea. She is also trained in the *Kyonggi* regional style of folk *minyo* singing, and is a master of *changgo* drumming. She teaches dance and percussion drumming in weekly sessions at the association. In her long-time affiliation with the KTPAA, she has been an instrumental leader and is presently serving as the President of the KTPAA.
- Ye Sook Kim** A traditional Korean dance performer whose training began at Sun-Hwa Art School in South Korea. She has performed extensively in South Korea as well as internationally in Japan, Canada and the U.S. Since 2001, she has been a dancer and arts coordinator at KTPAA.
- Gee Sook Baek** A *kayagum* player trained in the lineage of Yoo, Dae Bong. She is one of the few preservers of this esoteric style inherited through her father, the master *kayagum* artist, In Young Baek. She studied the *kayagum* at the Chu-Gye Traditional Music Conservatory in Seoul, Korea and since her immigration to the U.S. has been actively performing in the New York area with the KTPAA. Miss Baek teaches the *kayagum* at the KTPAA in weekly sessions and serves as the Treasurer of the association.
- Jae-Sook Park** A *komungo* player who studied in Seoul, Korea and graduated from Dan-kook University's Department of Korean Traditional Music. A recent immigrant to the United States, she is currently a *komungo* instructor at the KTPAA and plans to perform more actively in the New York area.
- Ji-Young Kim** A *daegum* (transverse bamboo flute) player trained in classical court styles as well as the folk *sanjo* (solo instrumental improvised form). She was trained under the master Eung-Suh Kim, who is an Intangible Cultural Asset in the classical *daegum* category, and the *daegum sanjo* master, Yong-Suk Suh. Upon graduating from the Traditional Music Department of Ewha Women's University, Miss Kim entered the Jung-Ang Traditional Music Orchestra and the Seoul Traditional Winds-and-Strings Orchestra in 1998 and has performed extensively since. Since her recent move to the U.S., Miss Kim has been performing in various venues with the KTPAA while also teaching as a *daegum* instructor.
- Hyung-Joon Kim** Began his studies in traditional Korean percussion during his years at the University of Michigan. Since graduating from college, he has participated in numerous workshops and has been studying traditional percussion at the KTPAA. He is one of the leaders of the *samulnori* (percussion ensemble) group of the KTPAA and is a staple performer in the association's numerous venues. Full of youthful vigor, he is a maturing student as well as instructor at the KTPAA.

Other KTPAA Performers:

Ji-Young Park, Young-Sil Kim, Katarina Soh, Marguerite Soh, Jennifer Yim, So-Jung Kim, Min-Jung Kim, Elizabeth Koo

CULTURAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT

KOREA:

Following World War II, Korea was split into a northern Communist half and a southern Western-oriented half. North Korea is located in East Asia in the northern half of the Korean peninsula bordering the Korean Bay and the Sea of Japan, with China and Russia to its north and South Korea at its southern border. Comparatively, its area is slightly smaller than Mississippi's with a population of 22 million.

Buddhism and Confucianism are the chief religions. Buddhism was founded in India by Gautama Buddha in the mid 6th century B.C. and is known for its universal charity and compassion towards all people. Buddhist doctrine consists of the "four noble truths," which state that people suffer because they try to hold on to things and concepts that are believed to be permanent, but are not. Confucianism is the philosophy founded on the teaching of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), which dominated the sociopolitical life of China throughout its history and also influenced Korea. Confucian doctrines support political authority to maintain order, preserve tradition, and maintain a standard of living for the peasants.

North Korea relies heavily on international food aid to feed its population, while continuing to expend resources to maintain an army of over one million. Kim Chongril has ruled North Korea since his father's death in 1994.

Between 1950-1953, the U.S. and other UN nations intervened to defend South Korea from the North Korea attacks supported by the Chinese. An armistice was signed in 1953, after which South Korea achieved amazing economic growth.

South Korea is located in eastern Asia on the southern half of the Korea peninsula bordering the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea. South Korea is slightly larger than the state of Indiana and has a population of around 45 million people. The religious orientation of South Korea is split between Christianity and Buddhism. Korean is the official language, but English is taught in junior high and high school.

In 1997, South Korea suffered a severe financial crisis from which it continues to make a recovery. South Korea remains committed to maintaining democracy as its political philosophy and in its government.

GLOSSARY

A cappella	Vocal music that is performed without any instrumental accompaniment.
Arrangement	An adaptation and orchestration of a musical composition to a different medium than what it was originally intended for.
Band	A group of musicians performing together.
Bass	A musical instrument that produces tones in a low register (e.g. – electric bass, double bass, tuba).
Buk	Barrel drum
Call and response	Exchange between the lead singer's improvisations and a group's recurring response.
Choreographer	One who plans and oversees the movement in a dance program.
Choreography	The arrangement of movement in a dance.
Ching	Large gong played with a soft-tipped mallet.
Chorus	The section of a song that a group of singers or musicians repeats at certain intervals.
Composer	One who writes music.
Daegum	Bamboo flute.
Harmony	The relationship between chords, their progression and structure that result in a sound that is pleasing to the ear.
Improvisation	The unplanned and spontaneous creation of music during a performance.
Interpretation	A performer's expression of a particular conception of a musical composition.
Janggo	Double-headed hourglass-shaped drum that is played while strapped to the body.
Jing	Large gong.
Kayagum	12-stringed zither supported by 12 movable bridges with range of two and a half octaves.
Komungo	Zither with six strings.
Lyrics	The words in a song.
Melody	A succession of notes that forms a distinctive sequence; a tune.
Musical Director	One who oversees all aspects of an ensemble's musical production and often serves as the conductor.

Percussion	The sound produced by beating or striking a musical instrument, such as a drum.
Qengkari	Small gong.
Repertoire	The list of songs and dances that an artist or ensemble is prepared to perform.
Rhythm	The pattern of sounds at a particular speed or tempo.
Samul-Buk	Drum (aka barrel drum) for <i>Samulnori</i> beat
Samul-Jango	Hour-glass shaped drum (jango) for <i>Samulnori</i> beat.
Samulnori	Literally “four objects’ play”. Ensemble with <i>janggo</i> , <i>buk</i> , <i>qengkari</i> , and <i>jing</i> .
Shamanism	Series of practices that are designed to maximize the human abilities of mind and spirit for healing and problem solving.
Solo	A composition or passage performed by one voice or instrument, with or without accompaniment.
String instruments	Musical instruments whose tone is produced by vibrating strings (eg. – guitar, violin).
Syncopation	The act of stressing unaccented beats.
Tempo	The speed at which music is played.

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VIDEO:

- **Tune in Korea**. 1999-2001. Available through Asia Society, Education Dept., 725 Park Ave, NY, NY 10021. Tel: 1-888-ASK-ASIA. http://www.askasia.org/for_educators/fe_frame.htm.
- **Sopyonje**.
 - ◆ One of the first internationally recognized Korean films
 - ◆ Set in 1950s and '60s Korea
 - ◆ Tells the story of an orphaned brother and sister adopted by a vagabond musician who go on to master the art of the Korean drum and *p'ansori* (traditional folk singing)
 - ◆ Available through Korean Cultural Service 460 Park Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10022. Tel: 212-759-9550. http://www.koreanculture.org/c_lending.htm.





Chaango



Jing



Kayagum



Deagum



Qengkari



Samulbuk