

LINER NOTES

Album Title: The Sound of Korea (21st Century Korean Choral Music)

Featuring Artists: Seoul Vocal Artists (Music Director: Dong-Kyu Lee)

Recording Company: Audio Guy, Seoul, South Korea

The history of Korean choral music began with the introduction of Christianity to Korea in the 1880s. Before the 1970s, choral music in Korea was mostly composed for church services and school choirs. In 1973, Mr. Young-Soo Na founded the National Chorus of Korea, which was the first professional choir in the country. Inspired by the National Chorus, many cities and district governments started their own professional choirs. In 2020 South Korea was home to 70 professional choirs. Signifying the leading role that the South Korean choral community began to play on the world stage, the International Federation of Choral Music selected Seoul, South Korea to host the Tenth World Symposium on Choral Music in 2014. In the first two decades of the 21st century, many choirs and conductors from South Korea were invited to important choral festivals and conferences.

Although Korean choral music has a short history, Korean composers have penned choral works in a wide variety of styles. This album will feature eleven popular contemporary Korean composers and their music. The pieces will be discussed in the order in which they appear on the album, which is organized according to the following themes: poetry settings, church anthems, elements of jazz, and elements of traditional Korean folk songs.

POETRY SETTINGS

Hye Young Cho (*Cho-Hon*, 2010), [5 minutes]

Hye-Young Cho wrote this piece for the National Chorus of Korea in 2010. So-Wol Kim, one of Korea's most famous poets, wrote the words in 1925. "Cho-Hon" means the invocation of the dead. The poetry describes the pain of losing a loved one. This pain is experienced initially at the individual level and gradually expands to the group level. The Composer uses the key of f minor to depict the pain of loss. The opening chant-like melodies of the tenor and bass parts express painful emotions well.

Hyun Chul Lee (*Oh Music*, 2018), [5 minutes 30 seconds]

Lee composed *Oh! Music!* for the 30th anniversary of the Wonju Civic Chorus. For this piece, Lee adopted texts from Arthur O'Shaughnessy's *Ode*. He structures the piece in ternary form with a coda (A B A' Coda). This form corresponds to the first and second stanzas of the poem with the first stanza returning for the A' section. In this piece, Lee employs a simple piano accompaniment with mostly homophonic textures.

Yong-Ju Lee (*Seo-Si*, 2002), [4 minutes and 40 seconds]

In 2012, Lee composed *Soe-Si* based on a DongJu Yun poem written in 1941 while Korea was annexed by Japan. In this poem, Yun tried to describe the desperate and gloomy colonial period. Yong-Ju Lee built this piece with three main sections. Evoking the dark mood, he opens with nine measures of slow half notes and whole notes in the piano. This piano prelude starts with only one note, and gradually emerges with added dissonances as additional pitches join each restatement of the building chord.

Min Hyeong Lee (*Till the Day*, 2019), [5 minutes 30 seconds]

The Cardinal Singers of the University of Louisville (Kent Hatteberg, conductor) commissioned Lee's *Till the Day* in 2019. Lee set this music on the same poem as Yong-Ju Lee's *Soe-Si*, and Lee illustrates Korean people's sadness with an a cappella setting in eight voice parts. The composer made his own English translation of the poetry. Min-Hyeong Lee organizes the piece in three sections plus a coda (A B C coda) and uses the tenor part importantly for both the opening and the ending to unify the whole piece. The A, B, C and Coda sections correspond to each of the four main stanzas of the poem.

CHURCH ANTHEMS

Shin-Woong Kim (*The Eight Beatitudes*, 2016), [4 minutes 40 seconds]

Kim composed *The Eight Beatitudes* in 2016 to a text based on Matthew 5:3-12. Kim composed this piece with four main sections and a coda (A B C D Coda) He builds this piece with short repeated sequences. He starts this piece with a short prelude of two measures. In the accompaniment's left hand, Kim uses the pitch C1 as a pedal tone. This extremely low range illustrates the lowly status of the "poor". In contrast, when the text proceeds to "Blessed," he uses upper range to describe the meaning of the word.

Kee-Young Kim (*Now I Understand his Great Love*, 2010), [3 minutes 40 seconds]

Kim wrote this piece and text in 2010. The structure of *Now I Understand His Great Love* is A B A' Coda, and the key is A major. Kim used four-measure phrases throughout the piece. While the first section's melody is generally descending in motion, Kim uses more ascending phrases for the B section.

ELEMENTS OF JAZZ

Bum-Joon Lee (*At the South Village Over the Mountain*, 2013), [5 minutes]

Bum-Joon Lee composed this piece in 2013 after his studies from two American music schools known for their excellence in jazz studies: Berklee College of Music and University of Miami. In this piece, he arranged a famous Korean pop song entitled *At the South Village Over the Mountain* that Dong-Hyeon Kim composed in 1965. Dong-Whan Kim wrote the text in three stanzas. He used only the first stanza and composed this piece with an A B C structure. This piece includes various jazz-inspired harmonies and the use of vocables (nonsense syllables), which are similar to the scat singing style of American jazz.

Nam Gyu Jung (*Angus Dei* from *Klavier Messe*, 2015), [6 minutes]

The second piece to include elements of jazz is the *Agnus Dei* from *Missa Brevis*, composed by Nam-Gyu Jung in 2015. This mass is composed with the traditional Latin mass text and has another nickname, *Klavier Messe* (Piano Mass). In this work, the choir part features simple melodies with homophonic structures (common in vocal jazz style), while the piano has more rhythmic and harmonic movements. Jung composed this piece with an A B structure.

ELEMENTS OF KOREAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Hyo Won Woo (*Ri* from *Keon-Gon-Gam-Ri*, 2015), [4 minutes]

Woo composed *Oh! Korea* in 2002 and Hakwon Yoon and Incheon City Chorale premiered the piece. This piece includes various traditional elements: pentatonic harmonic

foundations, Chuimsae (a format of exclamation), and rhythms. Also, part of the South Korean flag (the Ri trigram on the lower left) inspired the composer to use dramatic rhythms such as syncopations, and 3-3-2, 2-3-3 rhythm groupings.

Kyung Suk Jeon (*Requiem for the Comfort Women*, 2017), [7 minutes]

Jeon wrote this piece in 2017 to memorialize Comfort Women who were women and girls forced into being sex slaves by the Imperial Japanese Army in occupied countries and territories before and during World War II. Jeon used a traditional Korean requiem tune, *Sanyosori*, from Jindo Province, for the beginning A section and repeated A section at the end. She also used traditional Korean handbell, yoryung, and the way to sing. In an actual funeral procession, when the procession begins, the handbell ringer sings a prologue song in front of the bier while shaking the handbell, followed by everyone singing the same melody together.

Byung Hee Oh (*Aoe-Rang*, 2015), [6 minutes 30 seconds]

Oh used a traditional Aoe-Rang melody, which is an Arirang from Hamkyungdo province, for her work. She employed various Korean traditional elements such as JajinTaryung Jangdan and Menaritori.

COMPOSERS BIOGRAPHIES

1. Hye Young Cho

Hye-Young Cho earned both undergraduate and graduate degrees in composition from Hanyang University. She received various composition awards, including those from the Korean Choral Composition Festival and the Atlanta Choral Symposium. Cho previously worked as the composer-in-residence for the National Chorus of Korea and the Ansan City Choir. She now works as the composer-in-residence for the Incheon Civic Chorus and teaches at her alma mater.

2. Hyun Chul Lee

Hyun-Chul Lee received his undergraduate degree in composition from Georgia State University and completed his graduate degree at Westminster Choir College. Currently, he is the composer-in-residence for the World Vision Choir and the Uijeongbu Civic Choir. Lee also works as an adjunct professor at the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul.

3. Yong-Ju Lee

Yong-Ju Lee graduated from Seoul National University with an undergraduate degree and received a post-graduate degree from Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Freiburg in Germany. Currently, he is working as an adjunct professor at Gacheon University.

4. Min-Hyeong Lee

Min-Hyeong Lee received an undergraduate degree in composition from the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul. He now works as a church musician and the composer-in-residence for the Jubilate Music Alliance.

5. Shin-Woong Kim

Shin-Woong Kim completed his undergraduate degree in composition at the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul and received a master's degree from the Korean National University of Arts. He then moved to Germany to finish his K.A. and Solistenexamen degrees from Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart. Currently, Kim works as an associate professor at his undergraduate alma mater.

6. Kee-Young Kim

The next example of the Korean church anthem style is Kee-Young Kim's *Now I Understand His Great Love*. Kee-Young Kim completed both undergraduate and graduate degrees at Hanyang University. He also studied further at Boston University. Currently, he is serving as the music director at the First Korean Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

7. Bum-Joon Lee

Bum-Joon Lee received his undergraduate degree from Berklee College of Music and a graduate degree from the University of Miami. He is now a professor at Seoul Digital University.

8. Nam-Gyu Jung

Nam Gyu Jung earned his undergraduate degree from Ganwon National University. After graduation, he moved to Vienna, Austria and studied at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien and Musik und Kunst privat Universität der Stadt Wien. Currently, he is teaching composition and conducting in various colleges and serves as the Wonju Civic Chorus's principal conductor.

9. Hyo-Won Woo

Woo did her undergraduate and master's degrees at Sungsin Women's University. She worked many years for the Incheon City Chorale and now is a composer-in-residence with the National Chorus of Korea. Woo also worked at University of Michigan as a visiting scholar.

10. Kyung-Suk Jeon

Jeon completed her undergraduate degree at Hanyang University and got a diploma from Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Mannheim. She also worked as a composer-in-residence at the National Chorus of Korea.

11. Byung-Hee Oh

Byung-Hee Oh received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Hanyang University. She works as a composer-in-residence for the National Chorus of Korea and the YoonHakwon Chorale.