

## **PROGRAM NOTES and TRANSLATIONS**

Korea's history, dating back to 2333 BCE, has been deeply shaped by foreign influences and, at times, invasions due to its strategic location, which has fostered both resilience and a distinct cultural identity. Koreans have continually blended foreign cultural elements with their traditions, creating something distinctly Korean. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Western music spread in Korea under Japanese occupation, which sought to suppress traditional culture, language, and identity. Although the Japanese occupiers systematically eradicated anything traditional and of Korean value during this period, early Korean composers remained committed to creating music that reflected the values of traditional Korean music and literature. "Ga-Gok" (Art Song) became a crucial genre for expressing Korean identity through poetry, with vocal music deeply loved and strengthened during times of foreign oppression. Koreans have always had a strong love for singing, and throughout Korea's history, this passion for vocal music has been prominent. It became even stronger when they faced the oppression and hardship of foreign occupation and war.

After Korea's liberation from Japanese occupation in 1945, the country experienced rapid political and social changes that deeply influenced its musicians and composers. Following the Korean War, new cultural influences from the U.S. and Western Europe posed challenges for composers in finding their own voices. Early composers, many trained abroad in the U.S., Japan, and Europe, initially imitated Western styles. However, a growing number sought to blend Western music forms with traditional Korean elements, such as traditional Korean rhythms, scales, and instruments, creating a fusion similar to the Nationalistic music movement in Europe. These composers, writing in this style, also served as teachers, mentors, and role models for younger Korean composers. They taught their protégés Western music and encouraged them to incorporate traditional Korean musical elements and Korean poetry into their Western-style music, challenging them to discover new directions of their own.

In the early 20th century, male composers dominated Korea's Western music scene, with women only emerging as significant contributors by the 1960s. Music education for women began with the Ewha School in 1891, but societal expectations limited their careers. From the 1950s onward, opportunities for women expanded, and today, they dominate Korean Western music composition, though men still hold most academic positions.

For the past 17 years, our research has focused on promoting Korean Art and Folk Songs, which remain relatively unknown outside of Korea. The growing interest in indigenous traditions and diversity within classical music has elevated the importance of Korean women composers, who continue to face challenges in a male-dominated society.

Korean Art Songs, which merge traditional Korean musical and cultural elements with Western structures, are exemplary of this hybrid tradition. These compositions offer valuable insights into modern Korean life and culture, reflecting the experiences of Koreans in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond.

The result is an artistic achievement of high merit, combining two musical traditions and enriching the global classical repertoire. Korean vocal music now contributes significantly to the diversity of vocal music and ethnomusicology, offering unique perspectives and blending Korean and Western elements in a way that reflects Korea's rich cultural heritage.

*(Notes by Kyoung Cho and Won Cho)*

### 새타령 (Byrd Taryung)

Birds are flying in.  
All kinds of birds are coming.

From the South comes the Phoenix  
On Paulownia Tree, Bong Hwang  
Geese for Lover's sickness  
Soul Birds come home  
Love Birds in pairs  
Seagulls from the departing ship.

Eru Hua, It is wonderful. It is spring!  
To tell the whole world a new message has  
arrived,

### 뱃노래 (The Boat Song)

Eh-Ya Deh-Ya, let's row and find my beloved.  
Let our boat drift filled with our youth.  
It is Hwang-Po River here and the sunset is red.  
Eh-Ya Deh-Ya, let's row and find my beloved.  
In this endless sea of waves, I wonder where my  
beloved is.

### 아리랑 (Arirang)

Arirang Ara-riyo. He is crossing the Arirang Hill.  
He who deserts and leaves me will be ill  
before he travels 10 lee (3 miles).

Arirang Ara-riyo. He is crossing the Arirang Hill.  
There are so many stars in the clear sky.

### 명태 (Dried Pollock)

Underneath the dark blue sea,  
Living in groups breathing cold water.  
When the length and head have reached  
its fullness,  
While swaying the tails and dancing  
In the current with my beloved buddies.

Getting caught by the net of  
some good fishermen,  
After checking out the wonderful city of  
Won San.

Their wings flap above the mountains and the sea.

Birds are singing.  
Which birds are singing?

Lark sings Bibi Baebae!  
Owl sings Bu Eung Bu Eung!  
Pigeon sings Gugul Gugul!  
Woodpecker sings Dak Darr!  
Cuckoo sings Buk Kuck Buk Kuck!  
Oriole sings Geu Gol Geu Gol!

Eru Hua, It is wonderful. It is spring!  
To tell the whole world a new message has  
arrived,  
They dance in the forest and on the plains.

A clear moon light is dancing in the water.  
Eh-Ya Deh-Ya, let's row and go back to our home  
village.

With the tailwind in our sail to fight the current.  
The sky is far and seems endless.

Eh-Ya Deh-Ya, let's row and go back to our home  
village.  
In this endless sea of depth, I wonder where my  
homeland is.

And there are a lot hopes in our hearts.  
Arirang Ara-riyo. He is crossing the Arirang Hill.

A bountiful harvest year is coming.  
It is coming to the entire country.  
Arirang Ara-riyo.  
He is crossing Arirang Hill.  
Arirang Ara-riyo.

In the middle of a late night,  
when a lonely poet drinks cheap booze  
While he is writing his poems,  
I will be fine to be his snack! I will be  
fine to be his poem!

Even if it means my body will be torn to  
pieces,  
Even if my entire body will disappear,  
My name will live on! Dried Pollock,  
Ha!  
My name will live on in this world!

### **봄비 (Spring Rain)**

For what the rain comes down so hard?  
As the flower petals wither, my heart also fell.  
My heart, which I tightly held, all crumbled.

Do not cry.

### **닐리리야 (Nil ri ri ya)**

Nil ri ri ya, Nil ri ri ya.  
Ni na no Nansilo I return.  
Nil ri ri, Nil ri ri ya.

Light the \*Cheongsachorong.  
My forgotten beloved is coming back.

### **그대라는 용기 (You, My Courage)**

Even when I feel cold, I can continue to walk  
Because of you, who offers me your warm hands.

Even through a long walk, I do not feel weary  
Because of you, who carries my bag for me.

Even when I get exhausted,  
I can muster up courage again  
And wake myself up from sleep because of you.  
I do not look back at the sad memories

How would you live in this world with such easy  
tears?

For what the rain comes down so hard?  
As the flower petals wither, my heart also fell.  
My heart, which I tightly held, all crumbled.

Nil ri ri, Nil ri ri ya.

Nil ri ri ya, Nil ri ri ya.  
Ni na no Nansilo I return.  
Nil ri ri, Nil ri ri ya.

Ah! My forgotten beloved is coming back.  
Nil ri ri ya, Nil ri ri ya. Ha!

From which I shut my eyes  
Because I found the courage to live, thanks to  
you.

I can smile through my life's journey  
Because you are with me.  
I live courageously because my life is where you  
are.  
You, my courage.