YOON-SEONG CHO's *JAZZ KOREA: A CROSS-CULTURAL MUSICAL EXCURSION*

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This thesis examines Yoon-Seong Cho’s critically acclaimed recording Jazz Korea, in which Cho unites Korean folk music and American jazz into a single form of expression. By reinterpreting Korean folk music through jazz, Cho stimulated interest in the Korean jazz scene and a renewed interest in Korean traditional folk songs.

The goal of the thesis, the first musicological essay about Yoon-Seong Cho, is to understand how Cho’s diasporic experiences affected his music by leading to a process of self-discovery that allowed Cho to interpret his own identity. Through musical analysis, the study proposes a cultural interpretation of two of Cho’s pieces that have achieved popularity not only among Koreans but also internationally: “Arirang” and Han-O-Baek-Nyun.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When Ken Burns’ documentary film *Jazz* appeared in 2001, it had a significant effect on the international jazz community. Sales of jazz recordings were highly increased, and interest was generated in the jazz tradition as it was developing in other countries as well.\(^1\) However, as E. Taylor Atkins has pointed out, even though Burns has discussed jazz in Europe during World War II, music in Cuba and its effect on early jazz, the film was somewhat limited in its scope as he exclusively dealt with conservative jazz music\(^2\) within the borders of the United States.\(^3\)

In the early years of jazz, recordings were preserved on vinyl disks, most radio broadcasts reached only local audiences, and many people listened to music primarily in live performance. However, as communication technologies have improved, our world has become increasingly interconnected. It is no longer possible for a popular tradition to remain fixed in one place, or even in just one country. As jazz has spread across the world, it has come into contact with other musical traditions and styles. These traditions have changed jazz and caused it to develop in ways that are unique to each country while remaining recognizably part of an emerging international jazz tradition. One example of this process can be found in the works of the Korean-Argentine jazz pianist Yoon-Seong Cho. This thesis examines Cho’s critically acclaimed recording entitled *Jazz Korea.*

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\(^1\) E. Taylor Atkins, ed., *Jazz planet* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), xi.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. xi.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. xi.
This two-disk set contains twenty-one jazz arrangements adapted from traditional Korean folk songs and performed by Cho on the piano accompanied by his band. This recording deserves close attention as Cho manages to unite Korean folk music and American jazz into a single form of expression. His skilled arrangements and performances throughout this recording demonstrate his unique imagination, creativity and musical sensibility.\(^4\)

Although born in Korea, Yoon-Seong Cho has spent most of his life in Argentina and the United States. In the course of his education and while performing in Argentina and the United States, Cho developed a mastery of European, American, Latin American and Korean musical traditions. Eventually, he was able to combine these traditions with his own unique ideas, methods, and techniques. This synthesis resulted in the work known as *Jazz Korea*.

When *Jazz Korea* was released in 2000, it caused a sensation among music critics and achieved considerable commercial success. One reason is probably that many of the songs that Cho adapted are familiar to, and deeply loved by, the Korean public. As a result, the public may have found the music more accessible than many other jazz recordings.

Much of the recording’s success seems to have resulted from its unique creative concept. In this recording, Cho was able to combine two entirely different musical traditions, thereby creating an aesthetically richer product. By reinterpreting Korean folk music through jazz, he has stimulated both a greater interest in the Korean jazz scene and

a renewed interest in traditional folk songs.

My thesis, which I believe to be the first musicological essay about Yoon-Seong Cho, presents an analysis of *Jazz Korea*. Cho’s diasporic experiences, which affected his music, led to a process of self-discovery that allowed Cho to interpret his own identity. Examination on how Cho was able to combine two entirely different musical genres from two different cultures into a style will be an important part of this thesis. Through musical analysis, I propose a cultural interpretation of two of Cho’s pieces that have achieved popularity not only among Koreans, but also within the international community: “Arirang” and *Han-O-Baek-Nyun*.

In chapter 2, I offer a brief introduction to Korean folk music in order to provide Western readers who are not familiar with Korean folk music with a point of departure from which to understand Cho’s contribution. In this context I describe the basic genres of Korean folk music in terms of meter, melody, text, and form. Specifically, I offer the readers detailed descriptions of the folk songs “Arirang” and “Han-O-Baek-Nyun”, and I discuss the songs’ origins, histories, and performance styles. More importantly, I discuss the aesthetic and emotional concepts that are often associated with in Korean folk music. One unique characteristic of Korean folk songs is their emotional restraint. This is often considered to be their most important feature, and it is a crucial reason for their popularity both within and outside of Korea. By standing aloof from love, spite, joy and sadness, these songs are better able to express these human emotions unreservedly.

In chapter 3, I provide a general overview of the socio-cultural status of jazz music in Korea. Many Korean music critics argued that the public was mesmerized by the
image and culture associated with jazz rather than by a love for the music itself. As quickly as the jazz phenomena arose, its popularity began to decline, and the release of licensed jazz albums and recordings decreased from the middle of the 1990s until the release of Jazz Korea in 2000. The latter, however, resulted in resurgences in the popularity of jazz in Korea. In order to understand the recording’s popularity, it is necessary to consider the various cultural elements that came into play.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Cho’s biography. I rely extensively on an interview that I conducted with Cho in May of 2006 in order construct an understanding of his personal life-story and his family’s unique relationship with jazz music. I also explore his cross-cultural musical experiences and his compositional philosophy as they relate to the production of Jazz Korea. The primary goal of this chapter is to develop an understanding of how Cho’s multi-cultural experiences shaped the process through which he produces his music. I also explore Cho’s stated goals in producing Jazz Korea, which include, in his own words, “enhancing the folk version’s dormant emotional and spiritual concepts and…assimilating them into a jazz setting.”

Chapters 5 and 6 address the two focal selections from Jazz Korea, “Arirang” and Han-O- Baek- Nyun. I analyze both the folk versions of each song and Cho’s jazz adaptations, and compare these versions in order to elucidate their connections. Cho carefully chose the most popular folk songs from his homeland. He then meticulously took the essential melodic gestures from each song and used them as motives to create his own jazz interpretation, incorporating jazz harmonies and rhythms into the mix. In order

5 Ibid.
to better understand Cho’s approach to redefining the folk melodies, I compare the two versions of “Arirang” and *Han-O-Baek-Nyun* in terms of their melodies, rhythms, and structures. I take the most crucial melodic gestures and rhythmic structures and compare their manifestation in both versions of each song. In this way, I hope to map out the musical structural heritage of two of Cho’s most representative and fascinating works.

Having detailed my research and analyses in chapters 2 through 6, I summarize my conclusions chapter 7. Here, I assess how Cho’s diasporic experiences led him to explore and redefine his Korean roots through *Jazz Korea*. In the process of transforming these selections from folk into jazz, Cho seems to have been careful to make them clear and accessible, so that listeners who were familiar with the original songs could recognize them readily, without them seeming awkward or uncomfortable as jazz recordings. The results embrace two distinct traditions, Korean folk songs and American jazz, and exhibit features typical of both genres. It is not be my intention to provide either a complete description of Cho’s works or an exhaustive account of his diasporic activity. My main concern in this project is to elucidate the cross-cultural elements that have been prevalent in his life and in his music and to explore how the two have influenced each other.
CHAPTER 2
KOREAN FOLKSONG

Folk music is the spontaneous and traditional music of a people, region, or nation. Contra\ry to “art music,” which is created by musically trained composers, folk music is usually for and of peasant people who are learning through oral tradition rather than trained formally. Since folk music is preserved by tradition, often the original composers are almost unknown and it usually undergoes a continual process of change. Consequently, there are often many different versions of the same song or same title. Also, since it is created spontaneously, folk music naturally reflects the certain musical idiom of its people in specific regions.

The concept of Korean folk song is somewhat different from that of its western counterpart. The Korean definition of folk song would include not only the simple work songs of the peasants and farmers but also the polished and arranged songs of the professional folk singers that travel from village to village to perform in entertainment troupes.

Minyo

Literally speaking, the meaning of Minyo is basically “local song of the people.” Originally, the term Minyo was invented and commonly used to signify folksong during

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6 “People” in this context means specifically people in rural areas.
nineteenth century. However, in reality, the Minyo has been sung for hundreds of years passing from generation to generation. It has been sung for work, entertainment, ceremonial function and even shamanistic ritual. It was part of the everyday life of common people who are not at all trained in music professionally.

No one has definite clue as to how or when Minyo was evolved and became a part of way of living. Still, however, they are spread out from among the people and are transmitted orally. Folk song contains words or lyrics which constantly keep changing in time and place fixed to melodies, but they still are taking free forms, because they are result of non-professional works of rhythms, lyrics, orchestration, and so forth. Nevertheless, what constitutes Minyo does not depend on the perspective of certain individuals. A consideration of how Minyo was performed and by whom, the distinctions between local and popular are critical to what follows next.

From a distant past, going back centuries, two distinctive folksong types have evolved, one denoting the more widely distributed and professionally performed songs, and the other local and rural songs, sung mostly during work and communal activity.

The more professional Tong-Sok Minyo is performed for passive audiences and indicates the popular and common song with widespread popularity throughout each province in Korean peninsula. On the other hand, the local To-Sok Minyo is considered to be the folkloric cultural heritage of the people and is mostly sung by the common people who are not in any way professionally trained in music. Although they may have been used in contrasting terms, To-Sok Minyo versus Tong-Sok Minyo, and Korean scholars

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have not always made clear distinctions between *To-Sok Minyo* and *Tong-Sok Minyo*, some scholars have accepted this distinction.\(^8\)

In current times, professional musicians who usually perform for the media and for recording sing *Tong-Sok Minyo*. Even though the two songs to be discussed in this thesis were developed as *To-Sok Minyo* in a regional province in the Korean peninsula, they have gotten so popular that they were later considered to be *Tong-Sok Minyo* when these songs began to be performed nationally by professional performers. The overall picture is rather still complex because scholars and journalists tend to label local songs as *Minyo*, while local performers identify *Minyo* with popularity. Also, all of these subcategories above are interrelated to each other since they all come from the same roots.

One way to characterize the Korean folk song is its rhythmic structure. In contrast to the folk songs of neighboring China and Japan in which duple meter is the common feature, the predominant rhythm of Korean folk song is in the form of simple triple meter, and triplets instead of dotted rhythms, which resemble accentuated syncopation, are characteristic.\(^9\) This triple rhythm gives the impression of a lightly moving and dancing-like motion to provide an entertaining working environment for peasants and farmers while they are in the field. Also, triple rhythm based Korean folk songs never begin with the upbeat, but open with the downbeat.

Most Korean folk songs are in call and response form. This singing style, which

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\(^8\) Ibid., p. 1.

continues today, originated in the fields where farmers were working. A leader Normally, a leader sings an eight-measure verse\textsuperscript{10} and the chorus responds with an unvarying refrain of vocables\textsuperscript{11} for the same number of measures; this practice eases the workers’ fatigue from hours spent bent over in their work posture.\textsuperscript{12}

Each district in Korea has unique texts for songs, but these can be borrowed across regions and set to new melodies or even revised according to the performer’s wishes. If the leader must extend the song beyond its original text, he can use words from other songs to create the improvised solo tune and keep the refrain as it was. Thus, a song will often take its name from the first words of the original text or from its refrain; besides, the borrowing process can make it difficult to distinguish the original text of the folksong from borrowed versions.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, if the borrowed text is shorter or longer than the original, then the leader must adapt the original melodic phrase to fit the new text. As a result, folk songs with text borrowed from other folk songs may be more difficult to perform than those with the original text intact.

In their typical form and style, most of the folk songs of Korea are fairly simple. They belong primarily to one of the basic sectional structures: binary or ternary song form. In fact, folk songs are generally simple and essentially fixed rhythmically as well as melodically. Although the scale for Korean folk songs may differ by locality,

\textsuperscript{10} In most cases, the leader sings eight measures. However, this does not apply to all cases.
\textsuperscript{11} It conveys the same effect of “fa-la-la” of the English madrigal of the Renaissance period. Also, in each region in Korea, refrain is often partially varied even it is a same song.
\textsuperscript{12} Man Young Hahn, Traditional Music of Korea: Aspects of Korean Culture (Seoul: Soodo Women’s Teachers Co., 1974), 248.
pentatonic and tetra-tonic scales are typical. If, however, the slight intervals of ornamental notes are left out, this makes the rendition inauthentic. Yet, as a side effect, these songs provide rich melodic materials that contribute thematic ideas to many masterpieces.

The boundaries of Minyo are always being broken down, and this has significance for the present. Professional performers in urban areas may include Minyo in their repertoires; indeed, such songs may be adapted to create popular or concert music. To interest today’s audience, the songs are often presented in modern arrangements on radio and TV programs. With changing ways of life, the gradual loss of some songs that are no longer relevant to modern ways is probably inevitable. However, it is important to record and preserve the songs still remembered and to use these materials to make new arrangements, which appeal to the people as popular songs.

Concept of Han—Emotion/ Sensibility

There can be no proper consideration of Korean aesthetics or of Korean art music that does not address the native word and concept of Han. This term is not easy to comprehend or appreciate. For many, it is easier to recognize this property in Korean folk music than it is to define it. However, the concept has always been and still remains very dear to the hearts of Korean people. Thus, one who seeks an appreciation of Korean folk music must be able to experience Han within it. Also, one who can achieve this goal

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14 There are over 50 different scales and modes depend on where the first note is in Korean traditional music. However, most of them can be categorized and interpreted as usual western pentatonic or tetra tonic scale.
has the ability to realize the essence of Korean folk music.

In addition to its use in the discussion of Korean folk music, the term Han is frequently heard in everyday conversation. Before clarifying the meaning of Han in Korean folk music, it would be a good idea to begin with a consideration of the circumstances surrounding its origin.

Throughout their 5000-year history, Koreans have suffered many hardships. One particular emotional concept imbues a great deal of Korean music, acting as a motivating catharsis to create various art forms. This emotional concept, Han, is regarded as a national ethos or even a recurring theme: a concept unique to the Korean people and unfamiliar to others, including the neighboring cultures of China and Japan. Basically, it is a sentiment and an ideology, emotion and feeling, which have been motivating the Korean art form for a long time. As nearly as can be translated, Han can be described as a grudge, resentment, bitterness, hatred, rancor, a mixed feeling of sorrow, regret, or grief, as well as all of these emotions together. When used in this sense, Nancy Ablemann states:

Han refers obliquely and variously to anger and resentment that build over time and under the weight of hardship. It connotes both the collective and the individual genealogical sense of the hardship of historical experience.\(^{15}\)

Han did not come into existence in short period of time. While Han is a special term for Koreans, it has been formed over centuries, a condensed and repressed natural human emotional state that has been building up for a long time, which is also triggered by an outside force and social conflict between aristocrats

and peasants. And it reflects most of the negative side of emotional aspects like those I have mentioned above.

The *Han* is elusive in nature. Heather Willoughby states that “The origin of Han can be considered as a historical situation that means diverse and divergent things to different people according to their varied perspectives and intentions.”\(^\text{16}\) In fact, there is considerable debate\(^\text{17}\) about the origins of the term and how it began to have an influence on Korean art, becoming as it did one of the nation’s most distinguishing characteristics. To know more about it, we must go briefly over some historical background.

Some Korean musicologists agree that the adaptation of *Han* in traditional Korean art did not exist before 19th century,\(^\text{18}\) but was triggered by and conceived by Japanese colonial rulers in the nineteenth century as a way to subjugate the Korean people and justify the need for their government control.\(^\text{19}\) In other words, they say that Han, as a national phenomenon, did not exist in ancient Korea, but was an idea retroactively imposed on the people of the Korean peninsula.

This intention of Japanese occupying control was able to force the Korean people to be unnecessarily burdened by sorrow and suffering, and the idea that they were


\(^{17}\) However, none of these debates have been resolved.

\(^{18}\) The Society of Korean traditional musicologist has not been able to come to an agreement with notion that Han was presented in Korean musical form before the nineteenth century. See Heather Willoughby, “The Sound of Han: P’ansori, Timbre and a Korean Ethos of Pain and Suffering,” Yearbook for Traditional Music, vol. 32 (2000): 18.

\(^{19}\) There is another theory that suggests a longer period of hardship initiated by the roughly 1,000 foreign invasions in 5000 years of history. This, of course, includes Japanese oppression. Thus, latter theory would be more in general. See Heather Willoughby, “The Sound of Han: P’ansori, Timbre and a Korean Ethos of Pain and Suffering,” Yearbook for Traditional Music, vol. 32 (2000): 2.
somehow inferior to Japanese. Koreans have suffered many abuses at the hands of fate and the social structure of Japanese oppression. Naturally, it created the dominant mood of our verse literature as regret and longing of losing the country. It was naturally reflecting on the circumstance of the entire nation; much of the literary output of Korea in colonial times has dealt with the suffering and sorrows of the Korean people, and comprises a chronicle of the nation's survival. Eventually, Minyo tells us with sorrow about the passing of time, about the sad surroundings of the people, deprived of their homeland by colonial occupation. It expresses, indirectly, protest against Japanese imperialists’ occupation of Korea, in which the Japanese are referred to as the root of all misfortune.

Using this emotional distress as an inspirational motive, Korean folksong has evolved. The Han is found in varying degrees in most of the narratives, as well as singing, gesture and dancing. In the particular genre of Minyo, we can see the ways in which Han is expressed, and perhaps even has found its roots even. Marshall Pihl states:

As the Minyo performer strives to reflect everyday life and so mirror the realities of his or her listener's lives, the suffering and lamentations of his or her characters are frequently less in service of the plot than of an audience's need for catharsis…. It gives its audience a means to endure sorrow.20

Although the general vocal timbre of Minyo is described as “sad,” this sound quality is accentuated and intensified in order to portray the sentiment of Han.

Sound qualities in Minyo became symbolic modes to convey national and personal experience. These experiences came to be seen as more significant when the “sad” sound quality, combined with certain rhythmic patterns, melodic modes, and gestures, is used to

breathe life into the text. In addition to Minyo, Han has appeared in many ways in literature and in literary arts, such as prose fiction, masked dance dramas, shamanistic rituals, and puppet show.

Even when sound quality and sentiment are clearly aligned, the present paper captures only a small part of the significance of Han and sound quality in Korean Minyo. Moreover, there can be no firm resolution of this matter, because the identities of Minyo are constantly shifting. Folksongs treasured by the nation certainly survive; in the modern world, however, they survive largely as relics off the past. The important question, which Koreans are beginning to ask, is not how Minyo reflect the "common people" of the past, but how folksong can be promoted in a modern, industrialized society. This is likely to promote an active debate in the near future.
CHAPTER 3

CURRENT STATUS OF KOREAN JAZZ

In this chapter, I do not presume to enumerate all the facts of the current status of the Korean jazz scene. However, I am submitting concise information regarding Korean jazz in its present condition to assist in understanding jazz in Korea. Jazz was introduced through Japan in the time of Japanese oppression in early twentieth century. In 1927, Korean composer Nan Pa Hong conducted Kyong-Sung symphony orchestra playing jazz\(^\text{21}\) for the first time at a YMCA recital hall in Kyung Sung.\(^\text{22}\) By the 1930’s, blues became very popular in Japan and when the Japanese empire took control of the Korean peninsula, popular blues music in Japan was transferred to Korea, which signified the birth of Korean jazz from then on.\(^\text{23}\)

The actual starting point of modern Korean jazz started with establishment of the jazz clubs Janus and All That Jazz in late 1970’s in Seoul for the purpose of entertaining exclusively foreigners who were staying in Korea at that time, including diplomats, business personnel, and U.S army personnel. For the past twenty years or so, these two clubs have been the common ground for every Korean jazz musician.

In 1988, with the opening of 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and a notion of so-called world music, there was a chance for Korean jazz to gain the unexpected benefit of abrupt


\(^{22}\) Kyung Sung is the old name for present day Seoul.

and explosive popularity in the 1990’s. Under these conditions, Korean jazz were able to secure the basis for such popularity with the combined help of a new generation of jazz musicians who had studied jazz in the U.S and Europe and those who were/are extensively active only in Korea. Many new jazz clubs were opened, a few jazz festivals began to be held annually²⁴ and more jazz musicians than ever before were hired not only to let the media and public know about jazz but to serve their role as cultural missionaries. Books were published in Korean describing the history of jazz and various jazz recordings. In 1997, the first jazz magazine, *MM Jazz*, started to publish monthly on current jazz trends in and out of Korea, followed by another magazine *Jazz People* in 2007. These magazines have popularized jazz music to the Korean public since then.

Beside the wonderful appearances that were formed on the outside, however, the sudden popularity of jazz in Korea had its downside and started to crumble. Whenever a TV is turned on, jazz is heard in numerous TV commercials. Many movies and TV soap operas with titles that included the word “Jazz” were premiered. Restaurants or cafés with expensive menus and exuberant interior design were named with the word “Jazz” and jazz was even advanced into the cosmetic industry. These conditions created a cultural space for yuppies and were also considered to be an independent cultural trend, which would be seen oddly in the eyes of foreigners. This so-called jazz syndrome mistakenly interpreted jazz as a favorably impressive, even mesmerizing image rather than as a preference and love for the music itself.

Just as quickly as the jazz phenomena arose, its popularity began to decline, and

²⁴ There are three major jazz festivals held in each year: Mu-Ju jazz festival, Jara-Sum festival and Ul-Jin jazz festival.
the release of licensed jazz albums and recordings decreased from the middle of the 1990’s. Jong Wook Ha, a Korean music critic and director of televised music program EBS space, said that, since mid 1990’s, jazz album sales and the gross income of album sales have been decreasing every year.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the existence of TV programs specialized in jazz, the expansion of jazz radio programming, a dozen jazz clubs in Seoul and students who study jazz in several universities and colleges, not many people in the Korean jazz community are actually able to make a living playing jazz in Korea.\textsuperscript{26} On top of that, the number of musicians who are capable of producing jazz albums that continually offer musicianship to the public has become even smaller.\textsuperscript{27} Also, they were left out of the standard production and distributional environments so that they had no choice but to work under the independent production.\textsuperscript{28} These poor conditions of the Korean jazz scene are the indisputable proof of being part of a bubble effect and it is time for audacious reformation and changes for improvement.

The reason jazz is not understood and tolerated as music but as a conceptual cultural trend is fairly simple. The media rather often falsely represented news coverage prepared by the production companies.\textsuperscript{29} In truth, it may be considered as a dangerous choice to give up the certain part of the originality of jazz if the media is too caught up

\textsuperscript{25} Jong Wook Ha, “한국 재즈를 위한 제언” [Suggestion for Korean Jazz in the Future], MM Jazz (May 2001): 37.
\textsuperscript{26} The fact is that it is difficult just to play jazz and make a living; many musicians are actually doubling their day job with playing session for popular music in Korea.
\textsuperscript{27} Jong Wook Ha, “한국 재즈를 위한 제언” [Suggestion for Korean Jazz in the Future], MM Jazz (May 2001): 37.
\textsuperscript{28} Jong Wook Ha, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 12 October 2006, Seoul, Korea.
\textsuperscript{29} Jong Wook Ha, “한국 재즈를 위한 제언” [Suggestion for Korean Jazz in the Future], MM Jazz (February 2001): 34.
with ratings. Therefore, this wrong assumption or comprehension of jazz and uncertain sympathy may cause trouble in determining a place for jazz music. If the boundary of jazz is not firmly classified just as now, in the end, the basis shaped for jazz will be taken away by the popular, entertaining music of Ka-Yo. Ka-Yo is the generic term for popular musical genre. It literally means “Singing song” and includes all of popular music regardless of their musical style.

In Korea, people often mistakenly assume that jazz music is so difficult to perform and comprehend that only highly trained certain individuals and few jazz fans could enjoy while Ka-Yo is easy enough for anyone to enjoy and would be considered as purely entertainment. This judgment is not relevant at all with hierarchical relationship of jazz and popular music. However, the popularity of jazz based on these wrong assumptions would not contribute to the propagation and expansion of jazz in Korea.

Lack of Mainstream

Based on its roots in the bop sub-style of jazz, mainstream jazz takes greater part than any other sub-genres of jazz music itself in term of number of produced albums and popularity from general public. It often interpreted as a basis for all current jazz music with the notion of not being placed in hierarchical relationship with popular fusion or crossover music. Even great artists like Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, who led fusion itself along with other people in the 70’s, also base their musical philosophy in mainstream jazz and experimented as many other great jazz musicians did as well. The reason why great artists like Wynton Marsalis and Keith Jarrett hold their reputation as
being jazz maestros might be because they are the guardians of the mainstream. Even though jazz music is still a minority music, they are still protecting the pure lineage of jazz through continuous album producing with jazz standards and directing *Jazz at Lincoln Center* by Wynton Marsalis. From that base, jazz communities in the western world were able to lay down a strong foundation for fusion, acid jazz and other styles to flourish. This is usually the case in American and European jazz scenes. Even in neighboring Japan, with the exception of a few famous fusion bands such as Cassiopeia and T-square, which would be considered as the representative bands of Japan, mainstream also takes a great part in the Japanese jazz scene.

When a Japanese music critic states that there seem to be only free jazz and fusion jazz in Korea, it forces us to realize how little mainstream jazz takes part in the Korean jazz scene. The situation is worse with the younger generation of musicians in their twenties and early thirties who have to, someday, ensure the survival of Korean jazz. For instance, when the third Ul-jin jazz festival was held in 2002, there were only two bands that played mainstream jazz out of the six-day period of the festival. Not entirely suitable to the name “jazz festival,” most of music that was played there was not jazz music. Simply, there weren’t enough jazz musicians to have them participate in the six-day festival. Also, unlike Jara-Sum Jazz Festival, which invites many jazz musicians from U.S and Europe, Ul-jin festival was formed with Korean musicians. With simple

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31 Jong Wook Ha, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 12 October 2006, Seoul, Korea.
32 Ibid.
33 Jara-Sum festival is more famous than Ul-jin festival. Just last year, Chick Corea played at Jara-Sum
reason of not having enough number of musicians, sponsors had no choice but have Korean pop singers, rock bands and even hip hop groups to play in the festival.\footnote{Jong Wook Ha, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 12 October 2006, Seoul, Korea.}

Obviously, it is no surprise that only two bands had played mainstream jazz in 2002.

The present condition of Korean jazz can also be explained by the elimination of high school bands, which led to the discontinuance of big bands. People in the jazz communities often still joke that there are only enough brass and woodwind players to form just one big band in Korea. When musicians only tend to play popular music, it causes mainstream jazz to be less well known to the public. And lesser known mainstream jazz will cause even less musicians to participate in this particular style of music. These examples show that the lack of mainstream jazz is not a just temporary condition, which cannot be overlooked any longer.

Jazz music is constantly evolving. Not only has mainstream jazz never ceased to be the foundation of all of sub-genres of jazz, but also a variety of jazz music should be formed on the strong foundation of mainstream jazz.

Absence of Originality and Antiquated Repertoires

When I was visiting Korea a few years ago, I witnessed one particular saxophonist within a jazz band organized with players with certain recognition and reputation, who would exactly copy saxophone solos from Dave Brubeck’s recording “Take Five.”\footnote{This saxophonist is now a department chair of applied music in one of the music schools in Korea.}

Personally, I am not against copying solos of great musicians. On the contrary, even
though copying solos is advisable practice method to develop jazz improvisational skills, copying solos in public is often tabooed and should only remain in practice time.\textsuperscript{36}

The beauty of jazz lies in the music in which a performer’s instant instinct is expressed in an improvisation based on an individual interpretation of the music. If spontaneous and instant improvisations are considered one of crucial characteristics of jazz, playing someone else’s already recorded solos may often be treated as undesirable, even rude behavior. When musicians are too indolent to develop their musical skills and ideas, they deprive the audiences and listeners of a chance to experience a new interpretation and new music. Even though this does not necessarily apply to all Korean jazz musicians, this certainly applies to some musicians for their lack of devoting themselves to this music, which requires constant edification.

According to my observation, I find that being lazy may have something to do with jazz music and musicians being a musical minority. Since jazz is outside of mainstream popular music in Korea, few people listen to and enjoy jazz music and even fewer musicians actually perform jazz. Consequently, those who play instrumental jazz, especially rare instrumentalists such as trumpeters and trombonists,\textsuperscript{37} have little trouble finding gigs and there’s little competition among instrumentalists to be musically stimulated by each other. Situations like this can unintentionally cause musicians to be indolent.

Jazz standards are deeply loved by jazz fans and musicians regardless of time and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{36}] In my years of study of drumming, I was taught to copy only as a way to practice.
\item[\textsuperscript{37}] Especially, it is difficult to find trombonists in Korea. Currently there are only 2 or 3 jazz trombonists in Korea.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
place. Jazz standards are useful materials with which to explain and demonstrate the beauty of jazz to the public and audience as the music of interpretation and arrangement. However, when some musicians are too indolent or inept to actually invest time and energy to come up with new arrangements or original tunes, jazz standards are not to be underestimated as musical notes that can be performed at the last minute just to fill in time when no originals or arrangements have been prepared.38

To avoid such situations, even if it is not familiar in the ears of the public or there may be some communicational problems between musicians, it is important to present new music and arrangements based on themes that matter to the Korean public and audience, or newly made arrangements of already existing jazz standards with a strenuous effort. Accomplishing that would be not only a positive way to communicate between musicians and audiences but also it will lead to the further prosperity of Korean jazz. Also, only with increased production of original music with the Korean jazz industry eventually have enough national power to compete in the international musical industry.

New Music vs. Old Music

In 1999, American saxophonist Kenny Garrett had his first solo concert in Korea. Prior to that concert, he already had participated in the MUJU jazz festival in Korea, where he had received the highest and positive reaction from many jazz fans. This shows that he is not at all unfamiliar to the Korean public. However, despite his reputation, his

38 Jong Wook Ha, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 12 October 2006, Seoul, Korea.
first solo concert was not a success at all. In fact, the box office of his concert in Korea was a failure, contrary to what many music critics had predicted.39 On another occasion, when Chuck Mangione was in Korea around in the same season as Garrett, some critics had predicted the concert would not be a success financially. Surprisingly, Mangioni’s two-day concert tickets were sold out even before he arrived in Korea.

Jazz critic Jong-Wook Ha stated

Since Kenny Garrett is in his prime and Mangione has been around jazz scene for so long, I sort of expected Garrett’s concert would be more successful, not the other way around. I was wrong.40

In another case, when the American rock group Mamas and Papas came to Korea for a concert after decades of separation; surprisingly, their concert sold out. The interesting thing is that they had regrouped for this one-time concert in Korea only because their song “California Dreamin’” had been included in the sound track in a big hit Korean soap opera.41

Comparing these two exemplary situations, I can surmise that the Korean public tends to prefer to hear the music that is familiar to them. I do not dare to say Chuck Mangione is musically way past his prime; however, as one can discuss in the case of Kenny Garrett, the lack of a positive attitude towards experiencing a relatively new trend in music from new and talented musicians may reduce the degree of public patronage.

Regardless of how much jazz music is globally popular, no one can argue much that the U.S. is still the center for that particular musical genre and music in the U.S. sets

39 Ibid.
40 Jong Wook Ha, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 12 October 2006, Seoul, Korea.
41 Ibid.
the tone and controls the trends in jazz music worldwide. However, Korean audiences may have their own musical taste and it would not be wise just to adopt the musical standards of the U.S. without any reconsideration. In addition to that, the particular taste of Korean public does not need to be compromised with current trends in music of U.S. and other countries. Nevertheless, this explanation indicates that the musical taste of the Korean jazz fan has trouble catching up with the new trends in music worldwide.

After reviewing the examples above, one particular question emerges: can an artist who has an undisputed reputation and is active worldwide have the same success in Korea as he or she has in other countries? Here are some examples which may answer that question: Even with their popularity, the group Fourplay’s new album “X” has not sold more than two thousand copies in Korea.42 Also, not one single album by Tom Harrell, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell and Steve Swallow has been licensed in Korea. Most of the albums produced in Korea through licensing are still limited to artists of the past such as Louis Armstrong, Billie Holliday and Bill Evans, or compilation albums made out of songs that are picked from recordings of various artists. This clearly shows that Korean jazz fans are still lingering around the old names that have left a huge footprint in the history of jazz. Under these circumstances, jazz in Korea has very little chance of catching up with current musical trends and it could also mean that it may not evolve musically. On top of that, it could also mean a disruption of the chance to make new music.

Jazz music has acted on the demand from its environment for never-ending

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adaptation and changes. Thus, analyzing the current trends in music and adapting them in the manner of reconstruction may be permissible to us. The relationship between artists and listeners is the same as that between suppliers and consumers. If the public is still lingering with the retro-movement in music, suppliers/musicians have no choice but to accommodate the request from the public. Also, musicians themselves have to change their mindset and educate themselves and the public to adapt to a new musical environment.

Live Jazz Club in Korea: Jazz as a Part of High Class Culture

It is only in the live stage situation that jazz music can come alive with its full potential and value. Only performance on the stage with musical interaction between musicians and instant improvisation can demonstrate the true characteristics of jazz. In addition, since a stage is an open space for musicians and audiences to allow themselves to connect with each other through live music, it is important that stage should offer pleasant environment for audiences and musicians. However, having said this about pleasant environment, there are a few issues that should be treated regarding live stage of jazz clubs in Korea.

First, I wish to discuss the financial situation in jazz clubs and jazz musicians in Korea. Since jazz clubs are not as profitable, compared with other venues such as hip hop clubs or rock bars, a rather small number of people often go to jazz clubs, which causes jazz clubs to have suffered severe financial trouble over the years. To be more precise, even though after the founding of the club “Janus” in 1970’s, the owner had to
move the club around to different locations in Seoul three times due to financial trouble in which the owner had difficult time to make ends meet or even pay rent. Naturally, the musicians had no choice but to accept small amount of money for their gig. Since 1970’s, prices have been skyrocketing so high that Seoul is almost expensive as New York, Tokyo, London and other major cities in the world. On the contrary, in my own experience, the pay rate for jazz musicians has not been changed at least for the last ten years. This depressing situation that jazz musicians have faced has forced them to struggle with financial instability. The inevitable outcome is that because there is no financial stability for jazz musicians, fewer people want to play jazz music and musicians are left with no choice but to convert to play other musical genres such as rock, hip hop, and so on in which patrons can actually dance to since dance music has been always popular in Korea.

Secondly, ever since jazz music gained unexpected and explosive popularity after the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the public and the media have developed an improper impression towards jazz music especially with live jazz clubs. Objectively, the purpose of existence of live jazz clubs should be foremost the place for performing and listening to jazz music, which has to be put in the first place. However, the problem with live jazz clubs in Korea is that, without having anything to do with their intention, they have been given the impression of being a place for high-class aristocratic society to the public.

There is a particular neighborhood in Seoul called Ap-gu-jeong, which is occupied, by a residential area of wealthy society. Around that area, there are expensive designer shops, spas, restaurants, and cafes as in Beverly Hills in Hollywood. Unlike “Janus” and
“All That Jazz,”\(^{43}\) where people can enjoy jazz without any burden of high cost, within the Ap-gu-jeong area, there is a jazz club called “Blue Moon” where they serve customers in tuxedos with high-priced wines and food. When jazz patrons are admitted, sometimes they are overwhelmed with magnificent interiors, expensive food and drink.\(^{44}\) Not to be biased, however, these new, cool and hip gathering spots such as “Blue Moon” could provoke many jazz fans to feel uncomfortable. In addition to that, not to mention certain jazz-focused magazines, but also in fashion, women’s, decorating interior and restaurant magazines, there are many articles describing jazz music as some sort of hip cultural trend.\(^{45}\) These magazines sometimes also include luxurious hotels and restaurants with live jazz clubs and wine bars, which could be very expensive places for many people to go.

The present situation of Korean jazz shows that jazz is not too far from being a property of high-class aristocrats, and the whole concept of jazz could be tainted and exist only along with westernized fashion and accessories. That is the image of what many people feel about jazz clubs and jazz music, and certainly has been one of the significant problems of jazz in Korea.

The role of live jazz clubs should not be that of deciding a cultural standard for anybody to parade his or her economic and social status. The first and foremost objective of a jazz club should be the provision of live performing music on the stage and let such

\(^{43}\) “Janus” and “All That Jazz” established more than thirty years ago in which environment is rather simple and ingenuous enough for me to be comfortable with.

\(^{44}\) When I used to play in “Blue Moon,” we often had to play simple, easy-to-listen ballads rather than repertoires that we wished to experiment with musically.

\(^{45}\) Jong Wook Ha, “한국재즈를 위한 제언”, [Suggestion for Korean Jazz in the Future], MM Jazz (Feb 2001): 34.
music to be absorbed by audiences comfortably. If jazz music were reserved for a few chosen ones with money and fame, its path to becoming a respectably popular music in Korea would be looked upon very negatively.
CHAPTER 4

YOON SEONG CHO

This chapter explores the cultural-musical upbringing of a diasporic musician and the impact of immigration on pianist Yoon Seong Cho and his music. Although born in Korea, Yoon Seong Cho spent most of his life in Argentina and the U.S, colliding with cultural conflicts in a foreign land. To better understand Cho’s works in Jazz Korea, based on an interview with him, I will present his biography along with his concept about music, philosophy and diasporic life, which are expressed and portrayed in his album Jazz Korea.

Childhood and Family Background

Yoon Seong Cho was born on January 16th 1973 in Seoul, Korea from generations of a very musical and artistic family. His father is a jazz drummer and his mother is a traditional Korean dancer. To review his musical family tree, his great uncle, whose name I wasn’t able to discover due to Japanese occupation over the Korean peninsula,46 was a famous saxophonist in Japan and is actually the one who introduced the saxophone in Korea for the first time and popularized jazz music as well during the time of Japanese oppression in the early twentieth century.

46 I was unable to find out Cho’s great uncle’s Korean name but his last name, Hayashi is in Japanese because, in those times, Korean people were unwillingly forced to change their name in Japanese.
Heavily influenced by his great uncle, Yoon Seong Cho’s father, Sang Kuk Cho also grew up in a musical family. During the 1950’s, in the middle of turmoil of Korean war, Cho’s father, at that time when he was 17 or 18 years old, started to learn and play jazz music with American G.I.’s and later left a footprint as being one of the first generation of Korean jazz drummers. Under this musical upbringing, influenced from an early age, Yoon Seong Cho started to take steps towards music.

As a child, Yoon Seong Cho often was brought to view various genres of musical events by his father. From that point on, Yoon Seong Cho was able to come into contact with various musical genres that naturally led him to be intrigued by music that he was frequently experiencing. In addition, with his mother, being a traditional Korean dancer who often dressed in costume and danced to a triple rhythm that his father was playing on drums, Cho was able to easily understand the concept of traditional triple rhythms that he adopted in *Jazz Korea*. In addition, growing up watching his mother dancing must have left a strong impression on his memory, which I believe, he couldn’t have forgotten so easily. However, when he was at the age of twelve, the biggest change in his childhood and musical life has occurred when his family immigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina where he began to be educated in formal piano training.

Diasporic Life

The reason for Cho’s family’s immigration to Argentina seemed to be quite simple.

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47 Yoon Seong Cho’s father was trained in jazz music from his uncle. Later, his father played in a big band with his uncle.  
48 Also, he has two older sisters who both are musicians. His oldest sister is jazz vocalist who is musically active in Japan and married to a Japanese music producer. His older sister is classical/jazz bassist and is member of La Orchestra Filarmonica Del Teatro Colón (B.S.A.S. Argentina).
When his father, Sang Kuk Cho, was in Argentina for a gig, he found out that, in
Argentina, the musical environment to play music and attitude towards musicians
seemed to be much better than in Korea. Unlike in Korea, where from a long tradition of
Confucian belief, musicians were treated as low class people throughout history, in
Argentina, being a musician is a totally respectable profession to occupy and
Argentinean people love music and they tend to treat musicians very well.

After his family immigrated to Argentina in 1984, at first, just like any other family
who moved to a new surrounding, they had a difficult time making a living. So, his
parents had to work in various jobs to support his family. As for young Yoon Seong
himself, he was also having a hard time to adjust to a new social and cultural
surrounding. Since, he didn’t speak word of Spanish language to make new friends, Yoon
Seong was left alone most of the day feeling lonely. It may have been the hardest time of
his life for him and from that point on he started to get a sense of emotional traits such as
anger, rancor, regret and loneliness. Perhaps, during that time, Cho was beginning to
delve into music intensively since music and the piano were the only friends he had.

While he was attending junior high/high school, he always played the piano alone.
Since he couldn’t speak Spanish very well, he couldn’t play music with other people,
thus he mainly practiced and played by himself alone or played with his father and sister
until he turned 18 years old. However, he wasn’t satisfied with his situation. The more he
felt isolation, the more his undisputed desire to play music with other musicians became
unbearable. Instead, Cho often watched other people play either on the concert stage or
on the street.
It was only after his graduation from high school that he began formal musical training in college in 1989. Nevertheless, he didn’t start to study and play jazz at first. Rather he was trained in classical music in Conservatorio Nacional Superior De Música Superior in Buenos Aires, Argentina in which he studied traditional harmony intensively rather than his piano proficiency. During his study at Conservatorio Nacional Dela Musica Superior, he soon began to be deeply interested in twentieth century music. Especially, the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin’s works heavily influenced him. Scriabin’s harmonic concept and compositional technique also with Russian school-technique, which can be represented as, and I quote, “Cold-Passion,” has had a profound influence on his piano voicing and compositions which also can be acknowledged in Jazz Korea and in the works of Latin jazz pianists such as Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Michel Camilo and Chucho Valdés.50

A Musician and Pianist in the United States

After he moved to the United States to pursue his study in jazz piano performance at the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1996, after receiving a BMG jazz piano scholarship and a Berklee entrance student scholarship, he quickly drew attention as an accomplished jazz pianist and he soon started performing around the Boston metropolitan area. Also, with a strong background in both classical/jazz harmonic theory and piano profiency, he then began to play worldwide tours to Germany, Great Britain,

49 Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 22 May 2006, Cho’s residence, Los Angeles, MD recording.
50 Ibid.
France and Japan with jazz musicians such as Gary Burton, Terence Blanchard, Bill Pierce and many others.

While he was in Boston, he had an awakening as two different professors at Berklee influenced him. With pianist Paul Schmeling Cho learned how to adapt a classical piano component to jazz idioms. Since Schmeling was an admirer of Bill Evans, he passed his knowledge of Bill Evans’s piano techniques on to Cho. Also, Schmeling instructed Yoon Seong Cho in harmonic the concepts of twentieth century composers such as Ravel and Scriabin, which Cho put into practice in Jazz Korea. Yoon Seong Cho also had another major influence from trombonist Hal Crook. Tom Pullsek, who was Hal Crook’s teacher,\(^{51}\) influenced him and Cho learned to use the digitized Brass sound-using midi, which Cho extensively adapted in his jazz version of “Arirang”. After graduating from Berklee, he attended briefly New England Conservatory of Music in Boston until he was admitted to the Thelonious Monk Institute with a full scholarship in 2000.

In the course of training and performing extensively in Argentina and United States, he learned, developed, and mastered European, Latin, American, and traditional/popular Korean music. Eventually, his musical education merged with his own unique ideas, methods and techniques, which later resulted in Jazz Korea.

The Album Jazz Korea

As is well known, in the twentieth century, Jazz originated from the music of African slaves and has embodied folkloric and ethnic elements of African musical

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\(^{51}\) Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 22 May 2006, Cho’s residence, Los Angeles, MD recording.
heritage combined with European musical practices. So, from the early stages of history of jazz, it was seemed to be fundamentally African-American yet simultaneously a complete cultural and musical hybrid, and in both respects it was considered definitively American.\textsuperscript{52} From then on, jazz has always involved issues of race and nationalism, as well as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and politics. Nevertheless, over the years, jazz music also has diversified and developed as international musical genre by grafting diverse folkloric materials from many other countries as well.

In 1964, jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter has recorded the tune called “Oriental folk song,” an arrangement of a Japanese folk melody that was first performed on Shorter's album on Blue Note Records, \textit{Night dreamer}. Also, in 1965, Shorter has recorded another tune called “Indian song” on the album \textit{Etcetera} in which he successfully incorporated Indian 5/4 rhythms within the tune. Through these recordings and others, Shorter helped to redefine the new hybrid of music that borrowed from a variety of forms, from jazz and rock to classical, electronic and finally folk music.

Recently, a German jazz quintet Saltacello has released three albums -\textit{Great and Salted} - which have extensively incorporated Korean folk materials such as “Arirang”, and Ong-Heya.

When Yoon Seong Cho’s album \textit{Jazz Korea} came out in 2000, it made a sensational impact on the Korean jazz scene, including music critics, and gained sizable commercial success despite the fact that it is a jazz recording. As jazz music being much

\textsuperscript{52} Nicholas M. Evans, Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture In The 1920s (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 2000), 2.
less popular than mainstream Korean pop music, \textit{Ka-Yo},\textsuperscript{53} it was relatively successful in album sales for a jazz album, especially because this recording was published in a time of specific cultural and musical trends have taken place in Korea. On top of that, Cho’s works have aroused curiosity as to how Korean folk music can be transformed into jazz. Furthermore, since most of the folk and popular songs are very familiar to the Korean public, they are easy to discern in Cho’s works even though they have been transformed.

Much of the album’s success seems to have rested upon the uniqueness of its creative concept. The unique characteristic of this recording lies where two entirely different musical traditions, Korean folk song, and American Jazz, intermingle, thus creating in an aesthetically richer product and musical format. With this recording, Cho has made a great contribution both to the Korean jazz scene and to the re-invention of traditional folk and popular songs of Korea.

\textit{Why Those Two Particular Folksongs?}

Through times, each individual musical tradition represents its unique cultural, ethnological spirits such as custom, religious belief, and emotion. Nevertheless, according to Cho, combining centuries-old Korean musical tradition with iconic musical genre of America was an idealistic and original enough on its own. Before analyzing the music in the next chapter, I will discuss how Yoon Seong Cho’s musical concept, philosophy and his diasporic life have been portrayed and hidden away in \textit{Jazz Korea}.

Unique emotional characteristics, which are often considered to be conceptual\footnote{\textquotedblleft{}Ka-Yo	extquotedblright{} is the generic term for all Korean popular music, regardless of its style.}
ideas of Korean folk music, are represented within these two particular songs, it could very well be the crucial reason for their popularity both within and outside of Korea. By manifesting love, spite, joy and sadness in the texts, these songs are better able to unreservedly express these human emotions. These songs reflect something of the Korean national character and wherever Koreans are, the familiar melodies of these two folk songs are to be heard easily. Since they are so easily heard and portray the unique emotional characters, they are interesting and idealistic musical materials to be assimilated in jazz. On the other hand, since all the melodies are very thematic and the texts add sensibility to the thematic melodies, in those two folksongs, they were easy to develop with their motives, which could be set in a jazz setting.

**Compositional Methods**

During the time Yoon Seong Cho worked on *Jazz Korea*, he experimented with a few ways to create musical expression, which he has acquired before, in the arranging process. The first one is through-composing. Especially in the jazz version of “Arirang”, since the tune is divided in many stylistic sections, Cho needed connecting loops between each section. To smoothly connect each section, regardless of stylistic difference, Cho has concentrated on the naturally progressing sound of the main theme, so even with stylistic changes, the overall main theme would be heard coherently. Later, Cho supplemented each solo section using motivic development technique where it would be together with through- composing. By presenting motivic development

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54 Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 22 May 2006, Cho’s residence, Los Angeles, MD recording.
technique, he enabled the songs to be developed cohesively along with patternized repetition, which is accompanied by more creative and instant compositional improvisation.

The second technique is unpredictability: this concept is put into practice in order to create a surprising impact. According to the interview with Yoon Seong Cho, he calls this compositional technique “Form development.” In the two folksongs, which run for almost ten minutes each, that I will be examining in depth in the following chapters, the forms of those two songs are divided with many sections. Within those formats, he created many sections to boost the unpredictability within the format of through composed arrangements. Cho, with the help of synthesizer effect, used form development technique.

In Jazz Korea, out of more than twenty songs, only the first track and the last one are the folk songs where other tracks are arranged versions of currently popular Korean songs, Ka-Yo. As a close example, the famous American jazz pianist Herbie Hancock released the album, The New Standard in 1996 including arranged versions of popular American songs. In my perspective, since I know that Cho is a big fan of Herbie Hancock, Cho’s concept of arrangements of popular Korean songs of Jazz Korea might have partially inspired from Hancock’s The New Standard.

Here, listeners may acknowledge his unique perspective towards completing a musical picture. First, in simple words, the reason he chose those two folksongs is obviously that they symbolize authentic Korean musical tradition. Then as way to edit
and enumerate, unlike chronological editing process,\textsuperscript{55} he recorded this album with intention of applying frame theory in which often used in motion pictures or written novels. According to Yoon Seong Cho, his intention of applying frame theory is meant to be a part of the storytelling process.

For example, let’s say, in a movie, two person having conversation in a horse-drawn carriage in the beginning and the whole plot of the movie is progressed and at the end the movie is finished with the same two person in the same carriage with conclusive conversation.\textsuperscript{56}

The recording begins with a folk song and the whole musical concept has developed and progressed. The end of the whole journey of musical story telling process would comes back to the beginning with another folk song. With the unique editorial concept above, Yoon Seong Cho demonstrates an adaptation of structural frames to convey the musical story on an artistic level.\textsuperscript{57} Also, through this editing process, what he was trying to emphasize was that, during the entire musical journey of \textit{Jazz Korea}, his musical route starts with authentic Korean music and ends with it.

\textit{Cho’s Interpretation of the Folk Themes or Melody [Melodies] Used in Jazz Setting}

Since traditional Korean musical articulation, especially rhythmic articulation, doesn’t quite fit into American jazz style,\textsuperscript{58} Cho chose to change the musical phrases by omitting some of the melodies from the two folk versions. In the original versions, melodies are often consisted of never- pausing, flowing notes. In the jazz version, Cho

\textsuperscript{55} Easily understood as a way to edit the pictorial material in chronological order.
\textsuperscript{56} Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 22 May 2006, Cho’s residence, Los Angeles, MD recording.
\textsuperscript{57} I will discuss this frame theory more in the following chapter, linking it to the concept of Han.
\textsuperscript{58} Traditional Korean rhythmic structure mostly consists of triple meters, whereas American jazz rhythm is in duple meter.
has revised the same melody in the form of call and response. By leaving space between each melodic phrase, Cho has allowed other performers to play more freely, thus letting them play with enough expression to spare.

Logical Connection between Themes and Solos

As a major musical concept of jazz, main melody and solo improvisation are not to be separated, since solos often base their melodic ideas on the main theme. Even though, at first glance, it seems that there are not definitive connections between theme and solo in the two jazz versions of the folksongs, the main folk theme used in the jazz setting serves as a pivotal guideline as to how the tune should progress.

In addition, since the original thematic material is not sufficient enough, during the course of development, it would have been relatively easy for the players to develop them into other musical styles and improvisation by following the previous ideas or materials coherently. This process may have allowed the players to perform each solo section using their own interpretation and musical sense. At the same time, they were able to enhance and sequence the main melody, which is structurally organized.

His Intention through Making a Conversion from Folk to Jazz

One thing that should be kept in mind is that Cho's music does not fall entirely into the category of fusion or crossover music. Rather his music could be simply characterized as westernized Korean music. His intention in making this record is that he wanted to show off the adaptability of Korean folk songs, which can be acknowledged
with their pure representation of the unique emotional concept of “Han.”

From the interview with Yoon Seong Cho:

How can you define the true characteristics of art?
In my opinion, art is all about uniqueness and originality. For example, jazz music is one thing, which have been researched and practiced for a long time. So is the popular music. However, if you combine those together, by accident or not, there could be other truly original musical tradition that can be the whole lot of material to be experimented. According to Walter Benjamin, art has to be unique, only and can never be repeated. Even though, there are many musical and artistic jazz works produced by many artists, if two totally different musical traditions would have fused together, the outcome could be entirely unique and original. Just like Latin jazz in which Latin rhythm and American jazz idioms were fused together, I always wondered what would happen if I combine Korean folk music and American jazz. By making this album, I hope that this album might boost new trend in music in Korea.  

Why Should Listeners Care about These Two Particular Jazz Versions of Korean Folksongs?

The jazz arrangements of these two folk songs are significant in Korean jazz community. They are not only the most well known Korean folk songs in and outside of the Korean peninsula, but they also represent traditional and cultural main ideas and feelings of the Korean people.

Subconsciously, people prefer scandalous ideas or notions. For example, popular Korean music has a lot of it musical tradition from western music. However, Korean folk music has nothing in common with western music. It is completely independent on its own. So, when you crossbreed these two independent musical species, naturally, it brings out attention. Never know what to

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59 Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 22 May 2006, Cho’s residence, Los Angeles, MD recording.
expect, I wanted to see what happens.  

I argue that if Yoon Seong Cho had not lived in another country, he would never have been able to come up with these musical ideas. Yoon Seong Cho has said,

In any given situation, any form of whether music or art, they are the reflection of each particular time of period in which they were produced. In short, if I had not moved to Argentina and studied in U.S, my musical inspiration would have been very limited. I was able to produce this album only because I had witnessed much different musical and cultural aspect of other regions. For that, I am a lucky man.  

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF “ARIRANG”

Folk Version

Quite recently, on 25th of February in 2008, the importance of “Arirang” was demonstrated recently when the New York Philharmonic played an arrangement of “Arirang” first time ever in Pyongyang, North Korea. The director of N.Y Phil. Lorin Maazel said with a strong sense of gratitude, “Playing “Arirang” brought American and North Korean together in tears.”

Perhaps the most well known Korean folksong of Korea which reflects something of the Korean national character, according to David R. McCann, Korean people often consider “Arirang” as a national folksong and it exhibits also characteristic features of historical and social background that set the stage for its role as a national symbol. McCann also said, as it expresses and symbolizes a national spirit, “Arirang” became a national symbol through a process of transformation in which quite unassuming elements took on an order of symbolic representation of the national character. Also, with “Han-O-Baek-Nyun,” the distinction of “Arirang” came alive through periods of social and political crisis from the late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. Both songs expressed national sentiments in times when national identity was at stake.

Since the song has been inherited to this day mainly by oral transmission, there are

64 Ibid.
almost as many versions of it as there are many regions, with significant differences in text, melodic and rhythmic phrases. Among them, in this study, I will examine one particular version of “Arirang”, the Kyong-Ki version or Bonjo version,\textsuperscript{65} which is the most popular version, as a case study.

\textit{Origin/History}

Over the years, there have been a variety of theories regarding the true origin of “Arirang”. One states that the origin of the song is to be discovered as far back as the \textit{Silla} period (7\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D.) in ancient Korean history.\textsuperscript{66} This theory, however, remains only as a speculative claim, which didn’t receive much notice.\textsuperscript{67}

Another theory, which scholars view as more persuasive,\textsuperscript{68} explains the origins of the song, during the nineteenth century reconstruction of Kyong-Bok Royal Palace in Seoul, which would explain the question as to why there are so many regional variant forms of the song within each region of Korean peninsula.

It is known that the song of “Arirang” originated form the time when Tae-won-goon, the father of the last king of the Lee-dynasty (\textit{Chosun} dynasty),\textsuperscript{69} was rebuilding the Kyung-Bock palace. This particular theory appears to be sound because during the reconstruction of the palace in early nineteenth-century, peasants and workers were

\textsuperscript{65} Also referred as Bonjo version. “Bonjo” means “original” in Korea.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 47.
\textsuperscript{69} The Lee dynasty is also called the Chosun. Moreover, Tae-won-goon was not a king. However, his son, King Go-Jong (last king of Chosun), was a selected king by a committee of the entire royal family, since his predecessor had died without an heir to the throne. When King Go-Jong was chosen for the throne, he was so young that his father, Tae-won-goon, was in charge of state affairs as regent.
summoned from all the regions of Korean peninsula. During reconstruction of the palace, there were government-sponsored entertainments during the evenings where “Arirang” was composed and performed by unknown artists among many other particular chosen folksongs. Therefore the songs could have been dispersed throughout the country upon completion of the reconstruction of the palace, to be filtered into regionally distinct forms.

Even though many versions of “Arirang” exist, they would eventually connote the same nostalgic emotions: a yearning for home, a mortifying feeling of being taken away against their will, and so on. But such emotional accumulation is merely a half of what “Arirang” is meant to express. Decisively, the melancholy melody and text of this song seems to symbolize the sorrowful and painful downfall of the Lee-dynasty.70

After the victory against China (Ching- dynasty) in 1894, Japan was able to control the Korean peninsula. At the same time, the Japanese empire sent military forces into Korea to start another war against Russia. Based on significant military power superiority, Japan forced Korea to sign the treaty. As a result, Korea had no choice but to offer any accommodation, especially warfare resources, to Japan including their own military forces as well as estates and labor. In the same year, Japan, once again but not for the last time, forced Korea to sign another treaty to deprive the country of its rights to financial affairs and diplomacy. After taking over the entire country, Japan deliberately assassinated the queen in 1895 and king Go-Jong in 1919 after having taken the throne away in 1907, which has led to the end of the 519-year of Lee dynasty. During those

times, under Japanese occupation, Korean people have shed tears of national indignation
of over their country having been taken away through singing “Arirang”, which
portrayed in which determined to portray anger and grudge: a consideration of aesthetics
presented by the concept of “Han.”

Text

To better understand emotional traits in “Arirang”, one should examine the text.
Examining the text (lyric) and what it emotionally expresses would be the first to be
analyzed. The following are the lyrics of “Arirang” followed by an English transition.

In- Korean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arirang</td>
<td>Arirang</td>
<td>arariyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arirang</td>
<td>kogero</td>
<td>nomo kanda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-1</th>
<th>II-2</th>
<th>III-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>narul</td>
<td>borigo</td>
<td>gashinun nimun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simnido</td>
<td>motgaseo</td>
<td>balbyong nanda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In – English translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>airang</td>
<td>Arirang</td>
<td>arirariyo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arirang</td>
<td>I am going over</td>
<td>the Arirang hill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I-1</th>
<th>II-2</th>
<th>III-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you</td>
<td>going way and</td>
<td>leaving me behind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won’t get</td>
<td>far away from here</td>
<td>‘cause of swollen feet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the format of text is quite simply formed with three lines of verse (first line of I-III and I-1~III-3) and another three lines of chorus (second line of I~III and I-1~III-3). Within each line of the text, each unit coincides with three beats each with stress on the first downbeat except III and III-3 where three beats with stress on the first downbeat happens twice.

Ex. 1) each unit of text with stressing on the first downbeat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 3</td>
<td>&gt; 2 3</td>
<td>&gt; 2 3</td>
<td>&gt; 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a~ ri rang</td>
<td>a~ ri rang</td>
<td>a ra~ ri~ yo~~~~~</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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71 Translation by Hwa Joon Joo.
72 “>” means accent.
While the word *Arirang* itself does not have any specific meaning,\(^{73}\) it serves the purpose of executing its job to keep rhythmic to flow more naturally.\(^{74}\) It is clear that the text itself exhibits its emotionality of lingering attachment metaphorically. The English translation of “Arirang” shows feelings of sadness, longing, abandonment, and unrequited love that are also the essential elements that constitute the *Han*. Even though the song may show a small emotional fragment of *Han*, the simple text symbolizes the widely spread emotions among Korean people at that time.

**Form**

“Arirang” is constituted with a total of sixteen measures in which each section is composed equally of four measures, which completes the song in ABCB form. This sixteen measure form is can also be found in “Han-O-Baek-Nyun.” Also, in “Arirang” as well as in “Han-O-Back-Nyun” each section serves its role within the song itself by independently motivating and inspiring the following section. To be precise, each four measure melodic phrase continuously influences the next phrase by either creating intensity or resolving it.

The verses of “Arirang” have been transformed in many ways according to different regions and different ages. The transformation is somewhat more extreme in the latter part than in the former part of the verses.

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\(^{73}\) Yun-Gap Kim, 아리랑 시원설 연구: 아리랑의 아리랑 · 정선 아리랑 · 과 목은 이색 [Investigation on the Origin of “Arirang”] (Seoul: Myung Sang Press, 2006), 64.

\(^{74}\) It conveys the same effect of “fa-la-la” of the English madrigal of the Renaissance period.
In “Arirang”, every two measures of melody either build up or release tension. Also, each four measures, where every two measures with increasing or decreasing tensions occur, independently stand out affecting the next four-measure phrase in the same way as the two measure phrase. In short, every four-measure phrase contains two measure sub-phrases.

Ex. 2) 1\textsuperscript{st} verse\textsuperscript{75}

Ex. 3) 2\textsuperscript{nd} verse\textsuperscript{76}

From above, second verse starts on high C (Na~) where first note of the first verse starts on middle C (A~). In the first two measures of the first verse, the melody of each measure sequentially ascends from middle C to G, which exhibits build up of tension (mm.1-2 of ex. 2) then on m.3, from A to C shows some release but not fully resolved because C is not a tonic note in F major key.

Unlike in the first verse, high C note as the first note of the second verse keeps its place for six beats, which exhibits conserving tension within the first two measures. Then, on the third measure, melody again descends back to D, with a few passing notes on the

\textsuperscript{75} Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo  
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
way, which shows another not fully resolved release within those two measures.

Throughout the entire song, including the refrain sections, melody exhibits either tension or release in every two measures.

Ex. 4) 1st refrain

Ex. 5) 2nd refrain

In the first two measures of “Arirang” (mm.1-2 of ex.6), they are in sequence with a perfect 4th between the first and second measures, creating gradual melodic intensity. Here, the intensity can be interpreted as an emotional build up.

Ex. 6) mm. 1-2.

Where every four-measure phrase is an independent phrase resolving a semi-resolution, in example 7, every two lines (mm.1-8 and mm.9-16) form separate independent phrases.

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77 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
The first two lines above (mm. 1-8) serve to prepare for what is coming next which is the climax in mm.9-12. The key point here is mm.8-9. Even though F on the third beat of m. 8 is the tonic and resolves the preceding phrase, it also inspires the first note of high C on the first beat of m.9 of the second verse to be a starting note of the climax.

*Rhythm/Meter*

The rhythmic structure of “Arirang” consists of four sets of independent phrases and time signature of either 3/4 or 9/8 in moderato tempo.\(^81\) In “Arirang,” the basic function of triple meter initiates the emotional tone throughout the entire song. This basic effect of slow triple meter creates a sluggish feel, which tends to continue without a

\(^{80}\) Ibid.

\(^{81}\) No such terminology of 3/4 or 9/8 exists in traditional Korean music. For convenience, I use such a system.
certain rhythmic cadence for ending. Since triple meter is counted as 1, 2 and 3 where duple and quadruple meter can be counted as 1 and 2, triple meter, with an extra counting of “3,” progresses spaciously than duple meter for one extra beat to be counted. So, the triple meter exhibits a sense of composure and slow paced feel better than duple meter that can be hardly found in Korean folk song.

The basic rhythmic structure of verses and refrains consist of three beats in each measure that fits the text and it is clearly noticeable throughout the entire song (refer to ex. 7). In the example below, the first and second refrains are simple variations of the basic four sets of triple rhythms, having each set stressed on downbeat (see ex. 1), implied at the ends of these lines with pauses.

Ex. 8) 1st & 2nd refrain

In actual performance practice of the song, although the text is composed of independently motivating lines, the final syllable of each line is detached and often sung with a fourth musical beat which doesn’t show on the notation.

In “Arirang,” the melody and rhythm express the affect of Han, an important part

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83 Ibid.
84 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
of the emotional common ground of the Korean people. Realizing that this melody is
frankly reflected in the modern history of Korea, everybody will give assent as to how
suitable this song is for the Korean people.

**Jazz Version**

The jazz version of “Arirang” includes the extensive length of the prologue
section, which builds up the mood of the tune when the A section comes in. In the jazz
version of “Arirang”, a major modification of the folk version has occurred. It is
almost as if, at first glance, the two separate versions don’t have any melodic
resemblance at all. In fact, Yoon Seong Cho did not reproduce, mirror or reflect the folk
contents in his arrangement. He rather evoked and represented the folk version through
the modification process.

By changing the shape of the melody and the form and using certain parts of them,
Yoon Seong Cho developed them as a main theme, which has taken the role of the
conceptual stage of the actual arrangement, because, through this process, he was able to
maintain his own interpretation of the folk version and twisted it around as he sees fit.

**Form**

The jazz version of “Arirang” is relatively simple in form. Excluding the sizable
length of the prologue, the simple form of the jazz arrangement of “Arirang” is a

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85 Participating musicians are; Donna McElroy on Voice, Billy Pierce on Tenor Saxophone, Yoon Seong
86 Since Cho had composed a separate Introduction prior to the A section, he calls this the Prologue.
single-nine measures of A section which the soloist plays solo over, which repeats, and another three measures of tag,\textsuperscript{87} which is from the last three measures of the folk version.

Within the prologue, the electric bass and synthesizer set the tone of the tune. Right after the free solo introduction of electric bass and synthesizer, four measures of drum set rhythm sets up the first rhythmic groove, among a few more rhythmic styles to be followed, of the tune: 12/8 afro-Cuban style rhythms with back beat feel, which coincides with the triple meter of folk version.

Ex. 9) “Arirang”\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\end{center}

After the prologue, the first four measures of tenor saxophone introduction are played, followed by only piano comping. Then, it leads to A section, which is formed in

\textsuperscript{87} The tag section is the B section. Even though there is no improvisation over B, for convenience, I will call this the B section. Also, the B section is later converted to the ending section.

\textsuperscript{88} Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
9 measures, played twice, with three measures of tag section, which is used as the interlude and coda. In the A section, saxophone and voice play the melody in unison to add color and texture. More detailed description of color and texture in prologue and coda will be followed later in this chapter.

Melody

The melody of the jazz version is a condensed version of melody of the folk version. Even though Cho has omitted some of the melodic material from the folk version, he has chosen essential melodic phrases from the folk version and modified them in a way that allows the melody to keep the momentum going.

Ex. 10) Melody of folk version

\[\text{Ex. 10) Melody of folk version}\]
Ex. 11) Melody of jazz version\(^{89}\)

In the first four measures (mm.16-19) of A section of the jazz version, the melody, which repeats twice, is actually a condensed version of first four measures of the folk version. Comparing the first two measures (mm. 1-2) in example 10 and first line of example 11, it is clear that the original melody has been modified to be shorter. Also, Yoon Seong Cho has omitted the third and fourth measure of folk version (refer ex. 10) and compressed the first and second measures of the folk version into one measure in the jazz version (m. 16). In addition, by shrinking the length of the melody, ascending to the last note, and leaving the next measure empty, he aimed for the contrasting effect of intensity and space, which represents balance of anxiety and composure within every two measures of the first half of the A section in the jazz version.

In m. 20 of jazz version, which is another condensed version of refrain section of folk version, the same modification has again happened just as in the first four measures of the A section.\(^{90}\) The last two measures of the A section are not necessarily related to...

\(^{89}\) Ibid.

\(^{90}\) The refrain of original version is the 2\(^{nd}\) and 4\(^{th}\) lines of the original version.
any melodic phrase of the folk version in terms of similar melodic progression. However, the last measure of the A section (m. 24 in ex. 11) forms a turnaround with C#m7 chord.

The chord progression in the introduction and the A section is the same (see ex. 9). To emphasize the mood of the A section, Cho added the same chord changes in the introduction. Also, the harmonic rhythm of the introduction and the A section is evenly spread out in two chords per measure to stabilize the emotional uneasiness of the melody.

Ex. 12) Tag section

Once again, in the Tag section, m. 25 is another compressed version of last three measures of the folk version (mm.14-16 in ex. 10). However, here, Yoon Seong Cho has omitted half of melody, leaving only mm. 14-16 of the folk version to be modified to fit the four measure melodic phrase, which harmonically provides emotional relief or release in the end, hinting that the musical journey has come to an end. In order to achieve the maximum emphasis of the emotional state of text, Yoon Seong Cho let the part of the original melody do the job instead, since the text of “Arirang”, has very little function as a reference of the emotional flow in the jazz version.

*Rhythm*

The tempo of the jazz version ““Arirang”” is much faster than the tempo that the

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91 Cho said that he later composed the Introduction only to accentuate the A section.
original version is generally performed in.\textsuperscript{92} The slowly proceeding tempo of approximately 60 bpm, combined with the pentatonic scale, enables the original version of the song to sound as it exhibits a sense of calmness and quietness. This sense of calm and quiet could imply emotional sense of grief and sadness.

In the jazz version, by changing the tempo to be much faster than the folk version, Cho metamorphosed the original feeling of sadness into two opposite emotional characteristics, which signify anxiety and composure.

The main rhythmic structure of the jazz version is 12/8 Afro-Cuban rhythm. Traditionally, the 12/8 afro-Cuban rhythm used in the jazz version is called \textit{Náñigo}.

Ex. 13) 12/8 Afro-Cuban rhythm\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{drums.png}
\end{center}

In addition to Náñigo, he added simple backbeat on 2 & 4 to help create intensity. Also, there are two superimposing rhythms that comprise the essence of 12/8 feel since 12/8 rhythms lend themselves to many polyrhythms.\textsuperscript{94} The difference between the two lies in the subdivision of eighth notes. The jazz version is in 12/8, but has a dotted quarter note pulse as in 4/4 time, which is in quadruple time, 4 beats. More interestingly, this is against the usual usage of triple meter in most of Korean folk music. Also, co-

\textsuperscript{92} “Arirang” is usually performed with slow tempo (andante).
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
existing with this feel is a 6/4 pulse, where two eighth notes exist as a quarter note, equally which is in triple time. In other words, the main triple time can also be metrically transposed as a duple time feel. Thus, the implication and superimposition of these two feels are what gives this tune its rhythmic interest.

Cho intentionally reforms the rhythm for a few reasons. First, in the course of rhythmic changes, the space between the beats can be more spacious so that they leave more room to maneuver the melodic structures. Two, he was able to quicken the pace of the music throughout so it will go along with the compressed melody that he modified from the original version. The rhythmic styles of the music constantly change throughout the tune. Every soloist takes a solo based on a different rhythmic style. For example, during the voice solo, the rhythmic pattern takes a drastic turn into 4/4-medium tempo swing rhythm.

**Color, Effect and Orchestration**

Instead of using the text as a guideline for the emotional flow as in the folk version, in the jazz version, Yoon Seong Cho concentrated on the tone color and orchestration of the tune to exhibit emotional changes throughout the piece using synthesizer effects as part of the arrangement. Normally, electronic effects are not commonly applied in conventional mainstream jazz music for its sounds less genuine and artificial, in comparison to a musician playing an acoustic instrument. However, Cho not only used electronic effects in an associating and supporting role within the arrangement, but he also intended for them to interact with the other instruments. Cho
incorporated synthesizer effects to connect the between each melodic phrase and the
improvised solo sections. Starting with the electric bass solo, with using electronic
chorus effects, later sets the tone of tune. Also, using various synthesizer sounds,
especially atmospheric effects, added more ambiance.

In this regard, Cho mentioned stated as follows:

Using synthesizer effect heavily, especially in “Arirang”, could have easily
become a disaster. However, when you look at the opposite side, by applying
synthesizer with its cold, artificial and negative characteristics, I was, even,
able to strengthen and harness the emotional traits of sadness, rancor, and
regret and so on as an unintended effect. Also, with its big sound,
sometimes, it’s even easier to portray the concept of “Han.”

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95 Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 15 October 2007, Seoul, Korea. MD recording not
included in appendix.
CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF HAN-O-BAEK-NYUN

Folk Version

Origin

The origin of Han-O-Baek-Nyun is relatively less known. However, it is believed to be a modified version of Jung-Seon “Arirang.” Drastically modified from the original Bonjo “Arirang,” it took another transformation in a particular area in Kang-Won province called Jung-Seon. In short, Han-O-Baek-Nyun is another derivative version of an already modified version of the original Bonjo “Arirang.” The title of the song is actually from part of its refrain text and this song is well known for its simplicity and for its presentation of lamentation and relinquishment which is part of the emotional elements that constitute the concept of “Han.”

Kang-Won province is located in the east of the country, surrounded and isolated by huge mountain ranges that divide Kang-Won province from rest of the Korean peninsula. Within that region, the local folksong developed in that area is slightly different, compared with folksongs developed in other regions of Korea, in the sense of performance practice, rhythm, and sensibility, which exhibits simplicity, desolation,

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Dong Chul Lee, 강원민요의 세계 [The World of Kang-won Minyo] (National Archives of Korea, 2001), 95.
lament, and entreaty. Also known as “Eastern Minyo,” with severe irregularity within a melody, folksongs from Kang-Won province draw more exuberant sensibility with anger and resentment.

**Form**

The peculiar thing about this song is that, along with “Arirang,” it has been arranged many times in the style of contemporary Korean popular music, *Ka-Yo* by other Korean artists throughout years. In 1970, prior to the release of Cho’s album *Jazz Korea*, the famous Korean singer-song writer Yong Pill Cho (no relation to Yoon Seong Cho) had recorded an arranged version of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun* as popular music. His new arrangement of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun*, then, had provided an opportunity to let the public know about the song.

As I explained in chapter 2, the majority of Korean folk songs are in the form of call and response. A leader sings four to eight measures of melody or verse first, followed by the chorus singing same duration of measure of refrain. Slightly different than the usual form of Korean folksong, the form of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun* takes the form of verse followed by chorus or refrain, which consist of total of sixteen measures, which takes the form of call and response.

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101 Ibid.
102 This will be dealt with further below.
105 Ibid.
Ex. 14) the form of “Arirang”

1st verse-1st refrain-2nd verse-2nd refrain

Ex. 15) the form of “Han-O-Baek-Nyun”

1st verse-2nd verse-1st- 1st chorus-2nd chorus

Text

The title of the song Han-O-Baek-Nyun originated from part of the text in refrains or chorus sections of the song. In the same way as “Arirang,” where the text of the song metaphorically expresses emotional distress, text of “Han-O~” expresses the concept of “Han” more directly, in which the text is formed with various emotional distresses. So, it is relatively easy for people who are unfamiliar with this song to assimilate the emotional distress that this particular folk song represents.

Below is the text in Korean followed by an English translation.

In-Korean

(Verse)

Han\textsuperscript{107} ma-nun/ ii-se-sang/ ya-sok-han/ ni-ma
Jung-eul du-go/ mom-man-ga-ni/ nun-mul-man/ na-ne

(Chorus)

a-mu-ryum/ gu-ro-chi/ gu ro ku-mal/ ku~
han\textsuperscript{108} 0-back-nyun/ sal ja nun de/ wen-sung-hwan/ ga~

\textsuperscript{107} The word “Han” here refers to the accumulation of negative human emotions, as discussed in chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{108} However, although both words are spelled the same, the word “Han” as used in the chorus means “approximately.”
(Verse)

In this world of sorrow and sadness you are the one with cold heart.
You are leaving me without sympathy what am I to do but cry

(Chorus)

Of course go ahead indeed of course
Why do you press me all I want is eternity with you

As you can see from the English translation, the text itself enumerates the way the singer feels about being left behind. Even though the person the singer could rely on is leaving, without rage (see the first line of chorus), the singer lets him/her go in despair. In the first line of verse, “In this world of sorrow and sadness,” the singer is already in a state of despair, skeptical about the surrounding, and suspects that something bad may happen. Then, “You are the one with the cold heart” and “You are leaving me without sympathy” directly imply that the singer has been betrayed. Then, “What I am to do but cry” exhibits the sense of giving oneself up to renunciation.

In the chorus section of the song, which is very sorrowful as it is, the singer exhibits so much sorrow, he/she almost exposes a feeling of renunciation. Repeating the phrase “Of course” twice in the beginning of the chorus and again in the end of the first line clearly demonstrates the emotional distress of giving up or reconciliation by doubling the phrase. So, all these mixed up feelings of sadness, betrayal and despair are

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109 Translation by Hwa Joon Joo.
what this song is about in regards to human emotion.

There is also a hidden significance of the text. It is also believed that in the time of Japanese oppression in the early twentieth century, Korean people may have made up new text, to fit the already existing folksong melody, to express their sense of losing the country to outside forces and feeling victimized. However, to avoid the censorship system that the Japanese government had set up, the texts were often metaphorically written about love, loss and betrayal.

Melody/Scale

In traditional Korean music, a certain melodic mode or scale is incorporated within each song in order to draw out the best sound quality and the suitable emotional connotation of the sound. These modes or scales are slightly different within each region of Korea and it is quite certain that detailed and specific emotions are conveyed through particular modes. These modes, in combination with timbre and rhythms, contribute to the totality of the sound quality and the hidden sentimental value that the mode exhibits.

The folksong Han-O-Baek-Nyun is well known for its use of the unique traditional Korean Maenari tori scale/mode system. Maenari tori has been used, traditionally, in the Kang-Won and Kyung-Sang regions, which are located in the southern-eastern part of

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111 Ibid.
Korean peninsula in which the eastern region comprises the entire eastern half of the Korean peninsula. The folk songs of this region are built on three principal tones with a fourth joined to a minor third. This unique scale or mode is consists of five notes of E, G, A, C and D in which E, A and C are the keynotes of the scale where the cadences occur. The Maenari tori scale, when is sung in slow tempo, sounds very sad and it is preferable for expressing emotional distress.

Staring with the slow chungmori rhythmic pattern, this song, starting with E and ending with A, consists of E, A and C as pivotal notes, with cadences on E or A. However, in the descending progression, the short use of G plays an important part in bringing out the melodic mood of the song and the notes D glides downward to C. In the traditional way of singing this melody, it should be sung in a way that melody would be heard as if the singer is sighing. For listeners, the song should sound more like lamenting than singing. The melodic structure of this song is speech-like melody with very simple phrases. Also, in the two verse sections, there is no noticeable repetition in melodic phrases. However, the rhythmic pattern of the two verses is identical.

Ex. 16) 1st verse section (mm. 1-4)

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114 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
Ex. 17) 2nd verse section (mm. 9-12)\textsuperscript{121}

![Musical notation]

On the notation above, it is clear that the first two measures from both examples are not the same, while the latter two measures are identical. In addition, in mm.3-4 of ex. 16 and mm. 3-4 of ex.17, the sudden note drop from short (8\textsuperscript{th} note) and high note (D) to long (dotted quarter note) and low note (E), with bar line in the middle, demonstrates the feeling of lamentation by accenting the first note E in the fourth measure. After the sudden note drop, the fourth measure of the two examples, E to A-G-E with A and G as passing tones, will emphasize the previously demonstrated feeling of lamentation. By shaking, and almost crying out, the timbre of the melody of those two sixteenth notes of A and G stresses the already established feeling of lamentation one more time and lets the emotional momentum flow into the refrain sections.

In the refrains, both melodic and rhythmic phrases are identical.

Ex. 18) 1\textsuperscript{st} refrain section (mm. 5-8)\textsuperscript{122}

![Musical notation]

Ex. 19) 2\textsuperscript{nd} refrain section (mm. 13-16)\textsuperscript{123}

![Musical notation]

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
When the melody starts with an almost ranting tone of speech-like phrase in mm. 1-2 of ex. 20, insinuating the feelings of rancor, in mm. 9-10 of ex. 21, the lamenting speech-like melody coinciding with the text creates feelings of deploring, lamentation, and abandonment.

Ex. 20) mm. 1-2¹²⁴

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Han ma nun} \\
&\text{ii se sang__}
\end{align*}
\]

Ex. 21) mm. 9-10¹²⁵

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{a mu ryum} \\
&\text{gu ro chi__}
\end{align*}
\]

**Meter/Rhythm**

As I mentioned in chapter 2, Korean folksong is almost always in triple meter in which dotted rhythms are characteristic. Since the tempi of the farmers’ folk songs are in accordance with the tempi of their work, they usually fall into triple meters.

Before any kind of farming machine was introduced in Korea, farmers had always been working with their hands and feet. Especially, when dozens of farmers are rice-planting in spring, they usually stand abreast in a rank and work together with simple three steps.¹²⁶ First, they put their hands in their pouch to get the rice sprouts; then they

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¹²⁴ Ibid.
¹²⁵ Ibid.
bend over and plant the sprouts with in a coordinated motion. At last, they straighten themselves and take a step back for another set of three steps of rice planting. From a commonsense standpoint, dozens of farmers working together might have required a simple rhythm to work to more effectively and easily. Naturally, simple songs, tunes or even rhythms in triple meter were introduced and performed with this procedure of simple three-step rice planting to ease their daily hard work.\(^\text{127}\)

The theme of any given text is carried out by the particular *Changdan* set rhythmic pattern\(^\text{128}\) utilized with the basic rhythms, while the numbers of beats and accents are, in most cases, already predetermined.\(^\text{129}\) In addition to that, the role of rhythmic patterns is not just limited to allowing the melody to flow naturally following certain pattern, but also helps revealing the emotional content of a particular song.\(^\text{130}\) From here, it becomes apparent that the *Changdan* are not mere rhythms that only accompany the melodic text, but take a role in integrating and furthering the plot.\(^\text{131}\)

The basic rhythm of *Han-O-Back-Nyun* is the slow tempo of *Chungmori* *Changdan* pattern\(^\text{132}\) for its special use in such situations of lyrical and sad atmosphere. In slow tempo of Chungmori changdan, four large beats with triple subdivision (12/8) progressed simultaneously.

\(^{127}\) Ibid.
\(^{128}\) Changdan is an archaic word in Korean, which means rhythm.
\(^{130}\) Ibid.
\(^{131}\) Ibid.
\(^{132}\) The slow tempo of Chungmori rhythm is equivalent in its speed to the western tempo designated as andante: 1/4 note = 72–108
With the simple triple meter that utilized in “Han-O-Baek-Nyun,” each four-measure phrase is an independent musical phrase.

In Ex. 23, the rhythmic phrases between the mm.1-4 and mm.9-12 of Han-O-Baek-Nyun are identical. Also, the melodic and rhythmic phrases of the mm. 5-8 and mm. 13-16 are, again, identical. If divided in half, mm.1-8 and mm.9-16 can be treated as independent phrases. Since both parts of the song is almost identical in rhythm and melody, where sorrowful timbre occurs at the end of the each phrase, repeating the phrase twice could accentuate what this song means to emotionally express, which is abandonment, betrayal and lamentation.

134 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
Jazz Version

In the jazz version of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun*, Yoon Seong Cho stayed fairly true to the original melody, which makes it possible for these two versions of the same music to be related easily by listeners. Conserving the major portion of the melody from the folk version and not emphasizing any drastic changes in its comprehensive musical idioms, Yoon Seong Cho was able to savor the essential emotional sensibility of the original version and put it into a newer jazz version.

*Form*

The form of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun* is complicated in the sense of dividing measures and sections. It is organized with sixteen measures of introduction, eight measures of melody as an A section, followed by another eight measures of an interlude section and nineteen measures of B section.

Ex. 24) folk version (first half)

Ex. 25) jazz version (A section)

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135 Participating musicians are; Jesus Santandrea on Tenor Saxophone, Massimo Biolcati on Acoustic Bass, Kendrick Scott on Drums and Yoon Seong Cho on Piano.

136 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
Since the original melody of the folk version effectively represents emotional distress, with intention of not compromising the original material, in the A section, Cho has taken the original melody from the mm.1-8 of the folk version. Then, Cho barely altered the original material from folk version and used it as the motive.

Ex. 26) B section with saxophone embellishment

In the B section, in contrast to the A section, Cho took a small portion of the

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138 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
original melody (mm. 33-40 of ex. 26) and let the tenor saxophone player play an improvised solo\(^{139}\) (mm. 41-51 of ex. 26) based on the short melody. When tenor saxophone plays the eight measures of motive with nine measures of improvised solo, the player prepares him/herself and the rest of the band for improvised solo sections, but not before the following two measures of unison melody (mm. 50-51 of ex. 26), which signals the start of the improvised solos.

Ex. 27) Interlude (Tag) section\(^{140}\)

In the Interlude (Tag) section (ex. 27), Cho has meant for it to be a transitional phase between the A and B sections.\(^{141}\) By letting the saxophone player play a short improvised solo for eight measures, it brings out the emotional sentiment, which carried out in the A section, would naturally continue to the B section.\(^{142}\)

In terms of ambient mood, both sections show contrasting features. While the A section proceeded rather quietly and calmly, the B section, with the help of a double time feel in the bass and drums, progressed more quickly and intensively with lots of


\(^{140}\) Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.

\(^{141}\) Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 11 March 2008, telephone interview.

\(^{142}\) During the phone interview, Yoon Seong Cho said that he specifically asked the saxophone player to improvise so that those two sections would naturally be connected.
dynamics. So, in between A and B sections, the Interlude serves as a connecting thread to let the progression of the music naturally flow without any abrupt shifts or changes of the sound or timbre.

*Melody/Harmony*

During the process of taking the melody from the original version and modifying it, Yoon Seong Cho was able to retain the emotional contour of the original version and arrange it in the A, Interlude (Tag) and B sections of the jazz version. During the course of arrangement process, he also used his own interpretation of jazz idioms to create a credible jazz version. For instance, by changing the tempo and pace from medium tempo swing to double-time, he metaphorically expresses the feeling of impetuousness of being left behind. Cho then created diversity of emotional distress and instability by comparing and contrasting each section of the tune in which he can elaborate and enhance some of the emotional states that the original version significantly implies.

From the introduction to the A section, with sixteen measures of bass ostinato, the evenly placed (mm. 9-16 of ex. 28) Cm9 and BbM7/D chords begin and dominate most of the chord progression throughout, in attempt to set the tone and mood of the tune right from the start. In addition, concise and evenly placed chords indicate a steady pulse of harmonic rhythm.
Throughout the introduction and the A section, Yoon Seong Cho has avoided any noticeable changes in melody and kept the chord progression simple so that he can drastically modify the rest of the original melody in the Interlude and the B section to be a lot more interestingly busy and active, while the A section features calmness, thus maximizing the contrasting effect between Intro and A and Tag and B section. In other words, A and B are very different in every aspect in terms of harmonic progression as well as harmonic rhythm, thus creating an oppositional effect emotionally within the two sections.

Starting from the Interlude (Tag) section, things are a bit different in the B section.

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143 Transcription by Hwa Joon Joo.
In the same way as “Arirang,” in the B section of *Han-O-Baek-Nyun*, Yoon Seong Cho has modified the melody and let it express a different version of sensibility, aesthetic and emotional status compared to the original version.

In contrast to the Introduction and A section, in the B section, irregular placement of chords is evident. Exclusive use of non-chord tones, putting more density to the chord itself results in an intensification of the emotional instability and confusion. In addition

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144 Ibid.
to that, by using 13\textsuperscript{th} chords with many non-chord tone extensions and irregular placement of chords, Cho created an atmospheric sound that is disordered.

*Rhythm*

In *Han-O-Baek-Nyun*, the rhythmic flow is relatively simple. Within the introduction and the A section, standard 4/4 swing rhythm dominates the music. On the other hand, in the B section, the tempo progresses back and forth from medium tempo swing to double time swing.

If we compare the rhythms of both the folk and jazz versions in the recording, changing the rhythm from triple meter of folk version to 4/4-swing rhythm causes the pace of the jazz version to be quickened. In other words, the triple meter of the original version would have one more beat (count) to spare so that its melodic phrases are more spacious. Since duple meter is one count less than triple meter, in the folk version, the flow of rhythm is also spacious. However, in the jazz version, by going back and forth from medium to double time in 4/4, Cho stimulated the contrasting effect of composure and anxiety, which expresses less spacious rhythm.\textsuperscript{145} Also, with the tempo changes, he aimed at that different sentiment could emerge within the B section as well as the next piano solo\textsuperscript{146} after what he has done in A section. Here, different sentiment could mean that the medium tempo exhibits composure, while in double time, the overall sentiment could be significantly transformed into either anxiety or energy. Either way, it has altered the emotional sentiment by simply doubling the tempo.

\textsuperscript{145} Pianist Yoon Seong Cho, interview by Hwa Joon Joo, 11 March 2008, phone interview.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
Color, Effect and Orchestration

Unlike in “Arirang,” in terms of color and effect, there are no identifiable synthesizer effects. Instead of using synthesizer, Cho heavily relied on percussive effects. In Han-O-Baek-Nyun, the drum set playing takes great part in shifting the ambient mood of the jazz version. In this part of the chapter, I discuss mainly about how the drum set contributes to the overall sound, which enhances the mood of the jazz version.

From the beginning, where the bassist plays eight measures of repeated ostinato phrase into the introduction, the drummer joins in with dynamically increasing drum roll (buzz roll), which creates an atmosphere which intensifies as the drum roll continues (see mm. 1-16 in ex. 28). Then, piano and drums are starting to comp in medium swing for another eight measures of introduction to set the basis for its emotional or ambient representation of the jazz version. Here, the noticeable thing is the ride cymbal of the drum set. Every time the drummer strikes the ride cymbal, it creates a sizzling sound. According to Yoon Seong Cho, to avoid a rigid sound, which is created by stick definition on the ride cymbal, he specifically asked the drummer to play on a sizzle ride cymbal to let the music flow more smoothly. Cho did not want the hard and rigid sound of drumstick definition on ride cymbal, for it may interrupt the smoothly proceeding progression of the music, which he aimed for.

In the A section, tenor saxophone plays the short eight measure melody (see mm. 17-24 in ex. 28). The tempo is still a relaxing medium tempo swing as in the prior

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147 There is no sizzle ride cymbal effect on jazz version of “Arirang.”
149 Ibid.
section. Nevertheless, in the eight measures of Interlude or Tag section (see mm. 25-32 in ex. 29), the saxophone plays a short improvised solo. However, in this part, the saxophonist plays a phrase, which intensively progresses at the end of the section with fast moving notes. At the end of the Interlude, when the ambient mood created by instruments sound reaches high enough, the music progresses into the B section with fast paced double time swing style.

After two measures into the B section, even with fast moving double time swing feel, the entire band suddenly plays very quietly with still keeping that fast tempo (see mm. 35-39 in ex. 29). Only this time, drummer does not play the typical swing ride cymbal pattern. Rather, the role of his playing is fixated on adding color, by striking the ride cymbal very fast, quiet and irregular, to the already toned-down sound that the band plays in sync.

From m. 41 of ex. 29, the band plays in unison with a steep increase in dynamics in just one measure. Starting with a piano tremolo in m. 42, from mm. 42-49, drummer and tenor saxophonist take improvised solos simultaneously with Cho playing piano in a metrically ambiguous way. Very confusing and chaotic sounds are prominent in this part, which has the highest point in dynamics throughout the tune, excluding the solo sections. However, the sense of confusion resolves almost immediately when the band plays mm. 50-51 in unison and forte in dynamic.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Jazz music is constantly evolving and it has been trying to accommodate the ever-changing need for new materials requested by periodic demand. The task that Korean jazz faces is how to integrate already established jazz styles with Korean folk music. Personally, I am interested in how Korean musical concepts are gradually integrated into the mainstream American jazz music, and how they are revitalized and transformed by the Korean—in this case, Yoon Seong Cho—musicians in evolving their own contemporary style. By studying Yoon Seong Cho’s music, I have found an appropriate approach to that problem in which traditional Korean music could be an answer to that demand for new music.

Yoon-Seong Cho’s treatment of “Arirang” and Han-O-Baek-Nyun demonstrates his strategy of enhancing the musical potential of the subject based on his unique concept towards ethnic sensibility, which lies where music itself has affected him. By absorbing the music of several cultures, Yoon-Seong Cho achieved a sufficient integration of these cultural elements and demonstrated it with this recording.

I hope to have helped readers to understand his standpoint in his music and his understanding of Korean folksong with this thesis. Lisa Thorson, a faculty member of the voice department at the Berkeley College of Music, wrote in liner notes of *Jazz Korea,*
“The sentiments based on this tune, which Cho has arranged are sadness and rage.”150

It may take some time for audiences to get used to the new sound and new musical concepts. Also, it may take some time for the musicians to get used to new ideas and concepts. However, new originals and new arrangements based on unique emotional sentiments of Korean culture are quite an important method to deliver the new music to audiences and listeners. So, analyzing the current trends in music will eventually restructure the music of Korea based on that analysis.

From this thesis, I meant to introduce a theoretical basis for the way Korean folk music can be combined with American jazz music. In the end, whether or not I have successfully accomplished the task, I wish that the Korean jazz community would not unconditionally accommodate Western music, but evaluate it subjectively so that Korean jazz music can be developed and evolve with a basis in our ethnic sensibility.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH PIANIST YOON SEONG CHO

May 22, 2006
Joo: Can you tell me about yourself and your family?

Cho: I was born on January 16th 1973 in Seoul, Korea. My father, Sang Kuk Cho, grew up in a musical family and is one of the first generation of Korean jazz drummers and my mother, Man Sil Cho, is trained in Korean traditional dance. During 1950’s, in the time of Korean War, my father, at that time when he was 17 or 18 years old, has started to learn and played jazz music through/with American G. I’s. Also, I have two older sisters who both are musicians. My oldest sister is a jazz vocalist who is musically active in Japan and married to a Japanese music producer. My older sister is a classical/jazz bassist and is member of La Orchestra Filarmonica Del Teatro Colon (B.S.A.S Argentina).

Joo: As for your father, it could not have been easy to play music in those times. Is there any other influence that affected your father?

Cho: Well, my father’s uncle was a famous saxophonist in Japan and is actually the one who has introduced the saxophone in Korea for the first time and contributed jazz music as well during the time of Japanese oppression. So, I guess he has influenced my father in some way musically ergo influenced me as well. However, unfortunately, I do not know his Korean name but his last name Hayashi because, in those times, Korean people were forced to change their name in Japanese. Anyway, my father has encountered not necessarily only jazz music but also western music itself from his uncle. Later, my father played in a big band with his uncle.

Joo: So, as for you, when did you start come into contact with jazz?

Cho: I barely remember but when I was young, my father often brought me along with him to see a big band concert and let me see him playing. Also, when I was coming from school, my father always played records so loud that I could hear the music from outside of the house. I was just a kid and I didn’t know anything about jazz music but it always has intrigued me in some way as I have started to have questions about the music or sound that I am always hearing. With my mother who is a traditional dancer often danced to a triple rhythm and my father playing drums, I was able to easily understand the concept of rhythms which has led me to play music.

Joo: Then, why, like your father, didn’t you play drums instead of piano?

Cho: Hmm, I started to play music because of my father who is a drummer but he also played saxophone. He wished me to play piano so that we can play together and I didn’t have any veto against piano. Besides, my older sister is a bassist so it was perfect for us to form a trio.
**Joo:** So, when did you start playing piano?

**Cho:** I started to play piano when I was 5th grade. When I started to play the piano, it was just a basic training. I began formal piano training in 1989 after my family immigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1986.

**Joo:** Is there any specific reason that your family has move to another country?

**Cho:** When my father was touring in Argentina, he found out that, in Argentina, the environment to play music is better than in Korea. In Argentina, being a musician is a totally respectable profession to occupy. Argentinean loves music and they treat the musician very well. Whether, in Korea, from a long tradition of Confucian belief, musicians were treated as low class people throughout history.

**Joo:** Was there any trouble or hardship for you and your family to adjust to a new surrounding?

**Cho:** Of course. When we first moved, just like any other family who moved to a new surrounding, we had some hard time to make a living. So, my parents had to work in various odd jobs to support our family. As for me, I didn’t speak any Spanish so I didn’t have any friends. You could say that I spent my teens pretty much alone. I felt very lonely. It was difficult for me to getting used to a whole new environment. I guess then, I started to delve into music more deeply. Piano was the pretty much only friend I had at first. Later, situation got better, though.

**Joo:** So, did you start to attend art school when you got into high school?

**Cho:** No. I didn’t go to any art high school. On the contrary, I went to a junior high/high school in which they teach mechanics. Only after high school, in college, I started to study music formally.

**Joo:** When did you start play music seriously?

**Cho:** While I was attending junior high/high school, I didn’t play music that seriously. I mainly practiced and played by myself alone until I turned 18 years old. However, I often watched other people play either on the concert stage or on the street. In Argentina, there are a lot of street musicians who play great tango music and Latin music. Along with Brazil in southern hemisphere, tango is very popular in Argentina.

**Joo:** What aspect in street music that you like so much about? Also, did it affect you musically? If so, how?
Cho: To the eyes of foreigners, it is very interesting and intriguing to watch them playing tango music with the instrument called Bandoneon. At least, to me, it was very fresh and shocking.

Joo: Tell me about your musical training after high school.

Cho: After I graduated high school, I began the formal musical training in college in 1989. But, I didn’t start jazz at first. Rather I trained in classical music in Conservatorio Nacional Dela Musica Superior in Buenos Aires, Argentina in which I studied traditional harmony intensively rather than my piano proficiency. I guess, in Jazz Korea, my knowledge in traditional harmony along with Latin and jazz music and very Korean melody is well blended and portrayed in that recording. As I got more proficient in piano performance, I studied with and was influenced by Argentinean composer Gomez Carrillo who had composed Argentinean national anthem.

Joo: What other musical aspect that you were influenced by?

Cho: I was deeply into 20th century music. I especially like Alexander Scriabin’s works. His harmonic concept and compositional technique had profound influence on my piano voicing and composition. His Russian school-technique, which can be represented as “Cold- passion” has always caught my attention. Very technical method, which can be found in the performance of Latin pianists such as Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Michel Camilo and Chucho Valdes. In my opinion, they all have Russian techniques due to the coalition relationship with Russia and Cuba. Also, to practice jazz idioms, recordings were only my teacher in that time. First time I had formal jazz training was when I was accepted at Berklee College of Music. In 1988, Miles Davis was supposed to perform in Buenos Aires but the concert was canceled due to his illness. Interestingly enough, if I had been to that concert, I would have taken a different path in music. I would have been into more electric or avant-garde way, which could have been very experimental.

Joo: Would you agree with that, in your album “Jazz Korea” you have incorporated any tools or concept from 20th century music?

Cho: Yes, I think so. Harmonically, especially in “Arirang”, I tried to incorporate some modal mixture in that album.

Joo: Tell me about your studies at The Berklee School of Music.

Cho: I went to Berklee in 1996. When I was accepted, I received BMG jazz piano scholarship and Berklee entrance student scholarship. So, I was able to focus on my
study without financial problem. With strong background in both classical and jazz harmony, I was lucky enough to play with many great musicians from America and Europe.

**Joo:** While you were at Berklee, whom did you get inspirations or influences from?

**Cho:** I had two major influences from two different faculty members at Berklee. One is from my piano teacher, Paul Schmeling. From him, I have learned how to interpret classical component in piano to jazz idioms. He was an admirer of Bill Evans, so he passed onto me his knowledge of Bill Evans’ touch. Also, he has taught me a lot of harmonic concept of twentieth century composers such as Ravel and Scriabin in which I have extracted to put on Jazz Korea. Another major influence is from trombonist Hal Crook. Tom Pullsek who was his teacher influenced him and I have learned to use the digitized Brass sound-using midi.

**Joo:** Is there any connection between your influences from your mentors and “Jazz Korea”?

**Cho:** First, if you would listen to Jazz Korea, you will notice that I have used lots of synthesizer effect. That’s because, from the Hal’ concept, I figured out how to mix piano and midi. Also, I used lots of motivic development as compositional improvisation, which I also have learned from Hal. Including bebop concept, patterned repetition is attracted by more creative and instant compositional improvisation. According to him, jazz is all about moment, spirit, and pure expression. So, all the interpretation depends on what sounded ahead and it is affected by surrounding circumstance.

**Joo:** When did you start working on “Jazz Korea”?

**Cho:** After finishing all the tunes and arrangements, we started recording in August 2000 and album was starting to distribute in November in that same year.

**Joo:** What is your intention of proving or saying through making a conversion from folk to jazz?

**Cho:** I had a huge argument between record company and me. In a very few cases, company and artist come to an agreement. This is a way of music business. They wanted to sell more copies and I wanted to make music that I would really buy and listen. However, very few cases the artist wins over the company because they invest such large sum of money. Also, I couldn’t give up my musicality and knowledge. If you look into the history of western music, all the great composers tried to, in many cases they
succeeded, establish new style of music like Clementi, Hayden, Salieri especially Mozart who totally came up with new unique style of music in phrases, accompanying styles and so on.

Just like Latin jazz in which Latin rhythm and American jazz idioms were fused together, I always wondered what would happen if I combine Korean folk music and American jazz. By making this album, I hope that this album might boost new trend in music in Korea. In that sense, the album Jazz Korea could be experimental in some way.

Joo: However, there are already some arrangements have been done by other musicians. For example, as you might already know, in 1964, jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter has recorded the tune called “Oriental folk song”, an arrangement of a Japanese folk melody that was first performed on Shorter's album on Blue Note Records, Night dreamer. Would it have any affect on your motivation to record “Jazz Korea”?

Cho: I wouldn’t say that just yet. It’s all technical problems. If you look at early jazz, African slaves has brought their rhythmic and melodic structures, which cannot be fully performed with European instruments but African instruments. In a way of imitating African melody with European instruments, I think, the whole idea of blue note has emerged by accident. Perhaps the same, even though my musical tradition and background is not 100 percent genuine Korean, if I can combine subconsciously indwelling my musical inspiration with genuine Korean folk melodic materials and American/western musical format, I sort of hoped that I could suggest a new style of gamut or experiment a way to express a amazing Asian musical idioms with western music. Another reason is that, by recording this album, I certainly hoped that I could contribute jazz to be more easily understood by Korean public and let the American/western listeners to know and be intrigued more about Asian musical context in western outfitting. Of course, since it is my first attempt to do so, it is not all great to my satisfaction. However, in sake of experimentation, I fell good about it.

Joo: Is there any influence from you mother that has been portrayed in “Jazz Korea”?

Cho: Yes. My mother being a Korean traditional dancer, I grew up watching my mother dressed in traditional Korean custom and dancing to a traditional Korea music. That also has strong impact on my musical idea because, I guess being a child and watching my mother dancing is memory, which I cannot forget easily even though I had received western education.

Joo: Out of more than twenty songs in “Jazz Korea,” only the first track and the last one are the folk songs when others are popular Korean songs. Is there any specific reason that you have placed those two particular folk songs in first place and the last?

Cho: For one, the reason I chose those two folksongs are that they symbolize authentic
Korean musical tradition. Besides, it is matter of editing fixation. Unlike chronological editing fixation, before I record this album, I intended to apply frame theory in my recording. It is often used in a movie or a novel. It’s all part of story telling process. For example, in a movie, two person having conversation in a carriage in the beginning and the whole plot of movie progressed and at the end the movie is finished with the same two person in the carriage with conclusive conversation. I tried to adapt this structural frame in my recording to convey the musical story in artistic level. So, in the end, recording begins with a folk song and the whole musical concept and ideas would developed and progressed then, the end the whole journey of musical story telling process would come back to the beginning with another folk song. I guess, what I was trying to tell was that, with the entire musical journey, my musical root starts with authentic Korean music and ends with it.

**Joo:** Is there any artistic aspect that you were trying to compensate?

**Cho:** How can you define the true characteristics of art? In my opinion, art is all about uniqueness and originality. For example, jazz music is one thing, which have been researched and practiced for a long time. So is the popular music. However, if you combine those together, by accident or not, there could be other truly original musical tradition that can be the whole lot of material to be experimented.

According to Walter Benjamin, art has to be unique, only and can never be repeated. Even though, there are many musical and artistic jazz works produced by many artists, if two totally different musical traditions would have fused together, the outcome could be entirely unique and original.

**Joo:** In “Jazz Korea,” why did you choose those two particular folksongs?

**Cho:** Basically, those two songs were easy to develop with their motives, which could be set in jazz setting. Because all the melodies are very thematic and mythical. And the entire phrase sounds like 50’s jazz standards.

**Joo:** What was your main concern regarding to your compositional methods when you worked on “Jazz Korea”?

**Cho:** I have always had respect for three main compositional effects. In Jazz Korea, I have used these three compositional techniques exclusively. First one is through-composing. Secondly, motivic development style. Thirdly, unpredictability: This is about creating the surprising impact. In the two folksongs, which run for almost 10minutes each, the forms of those two songs are divided with many sections. I have created many sections to boost the certain unpredictability within the format while I made arrangements through composed. Because, even though they runs over 10minites or so, their main themes are among the shortest so I sort of had to create and expand many
sections to make them more surprising and interesting. I would call this style of compositional technique, form development.

_Joo:_ *Is there connection or logic between theme and solos? If so, what are those?*

_Cho:_ Yes. Most of my improvisational material or vocabularies or compositional vocabularies comes from the main theme. Even though, musical styles keep changing within a song, melodic ideas within an each musical stylistic section come from the main theme. Even how insignificant material is, during the course of development, it follows previous ideas or materials coherently. It is easier this way to develop the musical ideas and not necessarily need to explore the new ideas.

_Joo:_ *How are the folk themes or melody used in jazz setting?*

_Cho:_ I had to change the musical phrases. Because, Korean traditional musical articulation doesn’t quite fitted into jazz style. However, melodic aspect of traditional Korean song is quite similar to hard bop jazz. Especially, in “Arirang”, pentatonic scale based melody is a lot similar to hard bop jazz tunes of Benny Golson, Woody Shaw and Art Blackey and jazz messenger. For example, either secondary dominants or dominant chords with pentatonic scale based melody are very well matched. Also, many of traditional African melody have pentatonic characters. In addition, pentatonic melodies and improvisation are well practiced in jazz setting. Because, in my opinion, less notes of pentatonic scale can be able to produce more extravagant harmonic progression.

_Joo:_ *Why should listeners care about these two particular jazz versions of Korean folksongs?*

_Cho:_ Subconsciously, people prefer scandalous ideas or notions. For example, popular Korean music has a lot of it musical tradition from western music. However, Korean folk music has nothing in common with western music. It is completely independent on its own. So, when you crossbreed these two independent musical species, naturally, it brings out attention. Never know what to expect, I wanted to see what happens. Obviously, when I released this album, there was a group of music critics that were opposed to it whether there was an agreement. Usually, Korean public is sensitive to new things. Breaking that taboo was a challenge to me.

_Joo:_ *What are so significant about two folk songs?*

_Cho:_ Each individual musical tradition represents their unique ethnological spirits. Combining century’s old Korean musical tradition, which communicates emotional desire
and popular art music, which based on slavery music, was idealistic and original enough on its own.

Joo: If you had not lived in another country, would you have been able to come up with this album?

Cho: Definitely, not. Because, according to Frankfurt school, art works is witness of that particular period. In any given situation, any form of whether music or art, they are the reflection of each particular time of period in which they were produced. In short, if I had not moved to Argentina and studied in U.S, my musical inspiration would have been very limited. I was able to produce this album only because I had witnessed much different musical and cultural aspect of other regions. For that, I am a lucky man.
APPENDIX B

MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS
Arirang (Folk version)

A ri rang A ri rang a ra ri yo

A ri rang Koge to no mo gan da

Na rul po ri go ka shi mun ni mung

shin ni do mot ka so bal byongn Sun du
Prologue and Arirang (Intro-Head in)
Prologue and Arirang

Solo on only
Prologue and Arirang (head out)

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D/E Cm7 Fm9 C#m9 Em9 BbMaj7/C
A#Maj7 C#m7 D(add4) BbMaj/C Fm9 C#m9
Em9
D/F Cm7 Fm9 C#m9 Em9 BbMaj7/C A#Maj7 C#m7
D(add4)/E BbMaj7/C Fm9 C#m9 Em9 Cm7 Caug/F
D/E A7sus4 D7sus4 Eb/D
Ebm7(#9)/A Em7(#9)/B Gm/F G(add3)/D Emaj7/B Emaj7/F# X 8
(Vamps) Drums Solo over
D/E A7sus4 D7sus4 Eb/D
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Han-O-Bak-Nyun (folk Version)

Han ma nun ii se sang ya sok han ni ma a

jang-eul do go mom man ga ni nun mul man na ne

a mu ryum gu ro chi gu ro ku mai gu

han o bak nyun sal ja nun de wea song hwan ga
Han O Bak Nyun

(INTRO)

9 (Piano & Drum come in)

[Music notation]

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DISCOGRAPHY


