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Modernizing Korean Folk Song: Popularization through New Folk Song and Artistic Transformation through Choral Compositions

A Case Study of Byunghee Oh's Sae-ya Sae-ya as Choral Art Music

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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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ABSTRACT

Korean folk music has been transformed into many different forms under the influence of Western music that was introduced to Korea in the late nineteenth century. This altered folk music has often been criticized as Westernized music that has lost its Korean essence. However, the question of whether this type of music can be viewed as merely Westernized music became the starting point of this dissertation. This musical progress coincided with the introduction of Western civilization into Korea, and is often used in conjunction with the concept of "modernization." This study offers a deeper understanding of how Korean folk songs have been modernized, both through their popularization via mass media and their transformation into art music. It focuses on two key areas: first, the role of New Folk Song of the 1930s in the popularization and transformation of traditional Korean folk songs under Japanese colonial rule (Chapter 2); and second, the contribution of contemporary choral compositions based on folk material to the artistic legacy of Korean traditional music, with a particular focus on the analysis of Byunghee Oh's choral work Sae-ya Sae-ya (Chapter 3). In addition to analyzing the lyrics and music, examining the historical and social aspects in Chapters 2 and 3 reveals that Koreanness is expressed through several aspects: 1) the pronunciation and nuances of the Korean language, 2) the historical context underlying the lyrics, 3) the instruments and singing style, 4) musical characteristics such as the pentatonic scale, sigimsae, and 5) Korean sentiments such as han (한). This study shows that while traditional Korean folk songs have been transformed to keep pace with society and culture through the introduction of Western civilization and music, their essence has not been erased. Rather, their 'Koreanness' has been preserved, allowing them to appeal to a wide and diverse audience. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the historical,

musical, and cultural contexts surrounding the modernization of Korean folk songs, this study contributes to fostering greater appreciation and respect among Western singers for Korean folk music and Korean culture more broadly, while also supporting more informed and authentic musical performances. I hope that tradition, embracing its essence in various forms, will continue to be loved by Koreans and people around the world.

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. Research Background and Rationale

Recently, choral pieces by Korean composers are increasingly gaining recognition on the global stage. One contributing factor seems to be the unique blend of traditional Korean elements, particularly those rooted in Korean folk songs, with Western musical techniques. As a Korean performer and conductor, when I listen to Korean choral pieces based on folk melodies, I perceive a distinct sense of "Koreanness," even when the music is infused with modern or Western influences. However, many international audiences might not perceive the unique Korean musical elements that underpin these choral pieces. This dissertation explains the historical trajectory of Korean folk songs and their influence on Korean-composed choral works.

In my experience, Korean folk songs often do not resonate well with Western audiences. Most of these audiences have little to no experience with Korean folk music, which makes it unfamiliar to them. Korean composers are creating choral works to target younger Koreans and international audiences. This move was in response to Korean conductor Hak-won Yun (b. 1938) who conducted Bach's *Mass in B Minor* in Germany in the early 1980s.[1] The German conductors responded that even though the Korean ensemble had performed the piece with excellent technique, it lacked a "German spirit." In response, Korean composers began composing choral works that were in the Western harmonic structure but also included Korean musical elements, like Jangdan (Korean rhythmic patterns), ornamentation, the pentatonic scale, and traditional Korean instruments.

[1] Hak-won Yun, *Hak-won Yun's Youth Choir: The Best Conductor in My Life is God* (Seoul: Duranno, 2021), 140.

Since the late 19th century, Korean society has rapidly absorbed Western culture, including Christianity, advanced technology, and modern values. This led to swift Westernization across many aspects of life.[2] The transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society, the migration from rural areas to urban centers, and the shift from extended to nuclear families all contributed to significant cultural changes. As a result, traditional folk songs have become endangered. For instance, farming songs, once essential to easing physical labor, lifting spirits, and strengthening community bonds, began to disappear with the advent of industrialized agriculture in the 1960s. These songs, once organically embedded in daily life, lost their original context.[3]

Faced with this reality, Korean people must ask: Should we allow Korean folk songs to vanish? Or can we reimagine their function and role to ensure their preservation? Today, farming songs are no longer confined to the fields. Instead, they are performed on formal stages, particularly during festivals or commemorative events, such as the Korean National Arts Festival at the National Korean Traditional Music Center and the Namwon Pansori Festival showcasing regional traditional vocal performances. I view this transformation as a form of modernization.

I.1.1. Understanding Modernization: K-Food as a Metaphor

For me, modernity is a space in which tradition and innovation can overlap and support one another, which opens up different possibilities for keeping cultural heritage alive in today's world. I do not consider modernity as something negative or as a break from the past. It is more

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[2] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects in Korean Folk Songs," trans. Serra Miyeun Hwang, in *Contemporary Directions: Korean Folk Music Engaging the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. Nathan Hesselink (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California–Berkeley, Center for Korean Studies, 2001), 76.

[3] Ibid., 87.

like a neutral frame, something that can sit alongside tradition without pushing it out. So, I do not imagine two sides fighting each other. Tradition can be reinterpreted and revitalized through modernization.

I define modernization as a process where the inner essence remains unchanged, while the outer form adapts. What is inside represents tradition, and what is outside reflects modernization, something that can change according to circumstances. One example is that the introduction of Western fast food into Korea has gradually replaced traditional Korean foods, which had long been considered healthy, among Korean consumers. However, as the convenient foods of the West began to reveal various health-related side effects, they became a social issue. As a result, new evaluations of Korean cuisine began to emerge. For example, kimchi, a representative fermented food of Korea, has regained attention in Korea for its benefits in promoting healthy digestion and strengthening the immune system. This renewed appreciation also aligns with the traditional Korean idea of "Sinto buri" ("the body and the land are one"), which emphasizes the importance of Korean food and ingredients.[4]

Furthermore, as the value of kimchi has gained recognition abroad, various adapted and fusion dishes using kimchi have emerged both in Korea and internationally. For instance, kimchi mac and cheese combines the American dish macaroni and cheese with Korean kimchi, while kimchi pizza incorporates kimchi as a topping on pizza. In this way, Korean kimchi, while remaining essentially unchanged, has become known and loved worldwide through its integration with various cuisines.

However, the name of this process varies across disciplines and among individuals. For example, many popular musicians in Korea use the term "fusion," while classical musicians and

[4] The idea of "Sinto buri" will be discussed in detail in Chapter III.

scholars often describe it as "reinterpretation," "hybridization," or "synthesis." In contrast, Western music scholars and ethnomusicologists may refer to similar processes as "folklorization."

For example, in his book *Panpipes & Ponchos: Musical Folklorization and the Rise of the Andean Conjunto Tradition in La Paz, Bolivia* (2020), ethnomusicologist Fernando Rios argues that the performance practices of Bolivian Andean conjuntos[5] can be interpreted through the concept of "folklorization."[6] According to Rios, Music scholars generally use the term "folklorization" when rural music-dance practices are "highly stylized, recontextualized, and resignified."[7] He points out that these new versions tend to be "presentational" within new performer-audience contexts, unlike their communal nature rooted in traditions.[8] While the "folklorization" seen in the performance practices of Bolivian Andean conjuntos bears similarities to the New Folk Song that emerged in Korea in the early 20th century and the process by which Korean composers use traditional folk songs to create music in new contexts, "folklorization" is not entirely appropriate for the Korean context.[9] Therefore, in this dissertation, I understand the reinterpretation and recontextualization of traditional folk songs in a modernizing Korean society influenced by Western and Japanese culture as "modernization."

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[5] Andean conjuntos are musical ensembles found in Latin America that adapt and stylize musical elements from Andean Indigenous communities and popularize this music through performances in Europe and other parts of the world. See Fernando Rios, *Panpipes & Ponchos: Musical Folklorization and the Rise of the Andean Conjunto Tradition in La Paz, Bolivia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1-2.

[6] Ibid., 5.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Since Rios's research is significant to my dissertation, I will introduce his study of the Andean conjunto of La Paz, Bolivia, in the Literature Review (Chapter I.3). Furthermore, I will compare the Andean conjunto's "folklorization," a process of reinterpreting and recontextualizing Indigenous music with the "modernization" of traditional Korean folk songs in order to demonstrate a critical reflection on the concepts used in my dissertation.

I.1.2. The Definition of Folk Song and Its Historical Significance

Traditional Korean music is commonly divided into two branches: music for the court and music for the common people. The former is called court music (kungjung umak, 궁중음악), and the latter, folk music (minsok umak, 민속음악).[10] Unlike court music, which was often documented[11] and performed within institutional settings, folk music has no written historical records, as it was transmitted orally and preserved through communal practice. Folk songs, a major branch of Korean folk music, are particularly distinctive in that they were passed down directly by ordinary people, not by professional musicians. Other types of folk music, such as Pansori, were often performed by members of the lowest social class trained in music, whereas folk songs emerged more organically from everyday life, reflecting the voices of the common people themselves.

Folk songs in Korea are typically divided into three categories: local (t'osok minyo, 토속민요) and popular (t'ongsok minyo, 통속민요), and new (sinminyo, 신민요).[12] Local folk songs, also called traditional folk songs, were passed down within specific local communities and served particular functions in daily life. They were sung by ordinary workers in informal settings. Popular folk songs, by contrast, spread beyond their original locales. These were performed more formally, often by professional singers, and featured broader melodic ranges and

[10] Bang-song Song, "The Historical Development of Korean Folk Music," trans. Serra Miyeun Hwang, in *Contemporary Directions: Korean Folk Music Engaging the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. Nathan Hesselink (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California–Berkeley, Center for Korean Studies, 2001), 5.

[11] Bang-song Song, "The Historical Development of Korean Folk Music," 16.

[12] Ja-woon Choi (최자운), *"Minyo (Folk Song)" 민요*, *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원), n.d., accessed July 2, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0020212.

stylistic refinements, including the use of *sigimsae*[13] (ornamental embellishments). Both types exhibit distinctive styles of melody, ornamentation, and rhythmic patterns that reflect the geographic regions from which they originated, shaped by natural and cultural boundaries.[14] New Folk Song, which emerged in the modern era as a more commercial and hybrid form, will be discussed in Chapter II.

In Korea, folk songs accompanied all kinds of manual labor, rituals, and amusements in the daily lives of the common people, particularly those of the lower classes. This perspective, widely shared among Korean scholars, parallels but also differs somewhat from that of Western scholars. For example, Raymond Williams observed that, in Western modern society after 1870, folk songs became associated with a pre-industrial, pre-urban, and oral past. They stood in contrast to the popular, working-class, or commercial music that emerged with industrialization.[15]

However, in Korea, folk songs were sung throughout the nation's history, including during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and into modern times (1953- present). Although the meaning and interpretation of folk songs have shifted in response to these historical contexts, a deep, shared emotion, born from Korea's long history of hardship and resilience, has consistently emerged through their singing. Folk songs thus serve as

[13] *Sigimsae*, a distinctive Korean technique of melodic ornamentation, plays a crucial role in shaping the heterophonic texture characteristic of traditional Korean music. See Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects in Korean Folk Songs," 84.

[14] Hilary Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs: Shin Minyo of the 1930s," in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave*, ed. Keith Howard (Folkestone, Kent, England: Global Oriental, 2006), 11.

[15] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 136–137; Roald Maliangkay, *Broken Voices: Postcolonial Entanglements and the Preservation of Korea's Central Folksong Traditions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 54.

a vital link between past and present, connecting Korea's traditional and modern cultures and people.[16]

I.1.3. Obstacles to the Continuity and Preservation of Folk Song Traditions in Modern Korea

Throughout Korea's past, Korean folk songs have faced major threats to their preservation in two key periods: during the years of Japanese colonial domination (1910-1945), and in the current era (1953- present), when globalizing forces and capitalist systems influence the nation's cultural landscape.[17]

During Japanese rule, the colonial government implemented policies aimed at erasing Korean national identity, suppressing native traditions, language, and cultural practices. Koreans were prohibited from using their native language and were even forced to adopt Japanese names.[18] Folk songs, too, were subject to censorship. Viewed as potential expressions of Korean nationalism, folk songs were targeted by the colonial government, which saw them as a threat to their assimilation efforts.[19] As a result, they were gradually replaced by Japanese popular songs and came to be regarded as nearly extinct.

In the modern era of globalization and capitalism, Korea was ultimately compelled to open its doors to international trade and diplomacy. In 1882, Korea signed its first treaty with a Western country, the United States, followed by treaties with other Western nations. Western

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[16] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 14.

[17] Jonghoe Yang, "Globalization, Nationalism, and Regionalization: The Case of Korean Popular Culture," *Development and Society* 36, no. 2 (2007): 177–99, http://www.jstor.org/stable/deveandsoci.36.2.177.

[18] Yong-ha Shin (신용하), "Japanese Colonial Period (일제강점기)," *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원), accessed July 2, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0047318.

[19] Roald Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice: Korean Traditional Music SPs (Standard Play Records) under Japanese Colonial Rule," *World of Music* 49, no. 3 (2007): 62.

culture, Christianity, and modern values, introduced largely by missionaries, brought many positive changes, including improved healthcare, education, and women's rights. However, these changes also encouraged imitation of Western models, sometimes at the expense of Korea's own rich and distinct cultural traditions.[20] For example, traditional folk songs are frequently dismissed as outdated or irrelevant—especially by younger generations—viewing them as "old" music, disconnected from contemporary life.[21]

In contrast, popular music continues to evolve dramatically, often blending with other genres to meet the demands of both commercial media and consumers. Meanwhile, traditional music has been hesitant to adapt to modern or global trends. There has long been a belief that traditional or "art" music must remain unchanged to preserve its authenticity. Blending it with Western or Japanese influences was even seen by some as a kind of cultural betrayal. In his book *Our Music, Its Flavor and Sound* (1993), Gugak musician Dae-cheol Shin criticizes the tendency for Korean music to be performed and listened to in a Western style rather than a Korean one. He points out that Korean folk songs included in textbooks are arranged in a Western style and accompanied by organs or pianos instead of traditional Korean instruments.[22] Furthermore, he notes that Koreans tend to prefer the Western bel canto style, which emphasizes a smooth and beautiful tone, rather than the rough, raw vocal sounds characteristic of traditional Korean songs

[20] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 76.

[21] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 13-14.

[22] Dae-chul Shin (신대철), *Our Music, Its Flavor and Sound* (우리음악, 그 맛과 소리깔) (Seoul: Kyobo Book Centre, 1993), 70-72.

and Pansori[23].[24] He argues that singing and performing Korean music in a Western style prevents people from feeling the true sound and flavor of Korean music, and consequently, from experiencing its emotion and excitement. While this perspective is not entirely incorrect, it fails to acknowledge the broader societal changes that have already taken place. Korea's traditional society has already undergone profound change with the shift from an agricultural economy to modern industrialization.[25]

Folk songs, for example, were once closely tied to farming life. These work songs accompanied every stage of the agricultural cycle—from plowing to harvest—serving practical and communal functions: they eased physical labor, lifted spirits, and strengthened social bonds.[26] The melodies and lyrics varied by region and season, reflecting local identities and the rhythms of nature. However, with the rise of industrial agriculture in the 1960s and the adoption of Western farming techniques, traditional farming practices—and the songs that went with them—began to disappear rapidly.[27] Today, only a few elderly farmers may still sing them in private. These farming songs have largely lost their original function and meaning. While we may no longer live the lives that originally gave rise to these songs, they can still be preserved and reimagined in diverse and meaningful ways.

For example, in response to the growing sense of cultural loss, national and local governments have taken steps to preserve farming songs by designating them as elements of

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[23] Pansori is a traditional Korean narrative song genre, performed by a vocalist accompanied by a Korean drum called the buk. Pansori was selected as a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on November 7, 2003, and was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008. See "Pansori (판소리)," National Heritage Digital Service (국가유산 디지털 서비스), accessed March 15, 2026, https://digital.khs.go.kr/heri/heriDetail.do?ctptUid=13932623205693004952&ctptNo=1279900050000.

[24] Dae-chul Shin, *Our Music, Its Flavor and Sound*, 224-227.

[25] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 87.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

intangible cultural heritage.[28] Today, these songs are often performed on formal stages, particularly at festivals or commemorative events.[29] However, their transformation from lived, functional traditions into staged performances inevitably alters their original context.[30] What was once a natural part of daily labor has become a symbolic representation—still valuable, but fundamentally changed.

I.2. Research Scope and Intended Readership

This study explores how New Folk Song[31] and contemporary choral compositions based on traditional folk melodies have contributed to the reinterpretation and revitalization of Korean folk music.

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[28] Byung-ju Hwang (황병주), "Minjung Cultural Movement" ("민중문화운동"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), 2018, accessed August 2, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0075909.

[29] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 88.

[30] This phenomenon can be observed in the Andean conjunto. Fernando Rios, who studied the Andean conjunto in La Paz, Bolivia, notes that although Indigenous music and dance were popularized through Andean conjunto performances, the original traditional contexts were altered, reflecting the process of "folklorization." See Rios, *Panpipes & Ponchos*.

Professor of folkloristics and ethnology Valdimar Tr. Hafstein views state-led folklorization negatively. In *Making Intangible Heritage: El Condor Pasa and Other Stories From UNESCO* (2018), Hafstein discusses a letter sent by the Bolivian government to UNESCO (Hafstein 2018, 23). On June 19, 1968, the Bolivian government declared state ownership of folk music (anonymous, popular, traditional) through Decree No. 08396 (ibid.). During this period, under the military dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer Suárez, the Bolivian government deprived Indigenous people of their land and suppressed their identities (ibid., 47). Ironically, the Banzer regime simultaneously used Indigenous culture to foster national unity, promoting it as a form of national popular culture (ibid.). Concerning this policy, Hafstein argues: "It is important to understand, then, that the Bolivian government's efforts to protect an indigenous Andean folksong, 'El Condor Pasa'–and by extension, its efforts to protect other folk music, dance, and crafts–hide the real oppression of indigenous peoples within Bolivia in this period. In fact, the government's efforts to safeguard this expressive culture were part of its oppressive regime: a tool for cultural disenfranchisement" (ibid., 48). As Indigenous music was nationalized, it lost its connection to its original context and was used and popularized in a different context for national political strategies. Ultimately, state intervention resulted not in the protection of cultural heritage but in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the denial of their right to cultural self-expression.

[31] The New Folk Song emerged as a popular genre through modern mass media during the 1920s and 1930s under Japanese colonial rule. In this process, Korean folk songs were transformed through the incorporation of Western musical elements. For more information on the New Folk Song, see Chapter II.

Chapter II focuses on the Japanese colonial period, during which the introduction of recording technology and radio facilitated the fusion of traditional folk songs with Western-style accompaniment, giving rise to a new genre known as New Folk Song. These songs outlasted the popularity of Japanese popular music because they uniquely blended Western musical elements with Korean sentiment. As a form of popular music, New Folk Song served both as an expression of resistance against Japanese oppression and as a reflection of the sorrow associated with the loss of national sovereignty. Chapter II.2 will explore the musical characteristics of New Folk Song, focusing on how Western and modern elements influenced their transformation. For this examination, *Arirang* has been chosen as a representative example, since its various regional versions are among the most systematically documented and easily accessible. The discussion will begin by comparing the traditional *Gujo Arirang* with the version transcribed by the American missionary Homer Hulbert (1863–1949). Hulbert's transcription, published in his 1896 article "Korean Vocal Music" in *The Korean Repository*, represents the first known Western notation of *Arirang*. This analysis provides valuable insight into how Western listeners perceived Korean folk music at the time, highlighting the contrast between Korean musical expression and its Western interpretation.

Following this, Chapter II.2.3 will present an analysis comparing Hulbert's version with the Arirang popularized through Woon-gyu Na's 1926 silent film *Arirang*. This comparison will help define the general musical characteristics of New Folk Song as they evolved under Western and modern influences. Finally, Chapter II.3 will explore how New Folk Song produced by recording companies under Japanese rule expressed a sense of Koreanness[32] within the context of colonial cultural production.

[32] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 65-68.; Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs,"15-19.

Chapter III explores how Westernized music in Korea turned its attention to the recovery of folk songs by incorporating traditional melodies into modern Korean choral compositions as a form of artistic expression. Korean choral music heavily depends on Western musical traditions, with its origins rooted in Western hymns. During the processes of Westernization and globalization, Koreans embraced Western music and culture with little critical reflection. Consequently, Western music is often regarded simply as "music," while Korean music is labeled specifically as "Korean" music.[33] This distinction reveals an implicit bias, positioning Western music as the norm and Korean music as a separate or lesser category.

However, efforts to revive Korea's native voice, rooted in the respect for and preservation of traditional Korean values, emerged through the *Minjung* (people's) *Movement* and the philosophy of *Sinto buri* ("the body and the land are one"), as discussed in Chapter III. In this context, the slogan coined by conductor Hak-won Yun, "Korean in identity, yet modern and universal enough to resonate with international audiences,"[34] inspired a new generation of Korean composers to create choral works that integrate traditional Korean elements with Western musical forms.

Through an analysis of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, this study demonstrates how contemporary composers continue to reinterpret folk songs by incorporating Western harmonies, transforming traditional folk songs into artistic works that are accessible to global audiences while preserving Korea's distinctive cultural identity. Special focus is given to the history of *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, a folk song sung during the Donghak Peasant Revolution (as discussed in Chapter III). As a choral conductor, I provide the lyrics and their romanization, an annotated score, and a

[33] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 76.
[34] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 146.

theoretical analysis of the piece, including harmony, melodic structure, and tonal scale, specifically designed to engage non-Korean singers interested in Korean choral music. The United States is a global leader in advocating for diversity in music, and many of its music education institutions encourage students to explore and highlight underrepresented composers. During my master's program, I presented choral works by a Korean composer in both a choral literature seminar and at my university's ACDA Texas chapter. Later, in April 2025, Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya* was included in my doctoral recital. When the singers first encountered the Korean piece, they sensed that it differed from Western choral music, but they were unable to articulate what constituted its "Koreanness" or how to approach its expressive qualities. However, once they learned the historical significance of the lyrics—symbolic in nature because they were originally concealed under Japanese colonial rule—as well as the emotional context and the proper pronunciation of the text, their level of interest and engagement increased substantially. Many were already fans of K-Pop; some even asked about the meanings of K-Pop lyrics and whether their pronunciation was correct, which made me feel proud. The experience proved that singers' interpretation and performance can be more convincing to audiences when they understand the cultural, historical, linguistic, musical, and performance practice contexts of Korean folk songs. When they do not have access to this information, Korean choral works based on Korean folk songs may be interpreted in ways that lack the distinctive spirit of Korea that differentiates them from Western music. Therefore, this study provides Western singers with a comprehensive understanding of the historical, musical, and cultural contexts surrounding the modernization of Korean folk songs in order to enhance more informed and authentic performance.

I.3. Literature Review

A substantial portion of the material comes from Korean-language resources produced by government-affiliated institutions. Three key encyclopedias were particularly useful: the *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (*한국민족문화대백과사전*) by the Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원); the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture* (*한국민속대백과사전*) by the National Folk Museum of Korea (국립민속박물관); and the *Gugak Dictionary* (*국악사전*) published by the National Gugak Center (국립국악원). These sources provided foundational information on the classification, history, and stylistic characteristics of traditional and new Korean folk songs.

The *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전) is an encyclopedia that systematically organizes and compiles the cultural heritage and achievements of the Korean people. It began in 1979, was completed in 1991 with a total of 27 volumes, and was published digitally in 2001. In this dissertation, articles related to music ("Folk Songs," "Sin Arirang," "Joseon Gayo Association") and to Korean history and culture ("Minjung Cultural Movement," "Gwangju Student Movement," "Donghak Movement," "Ganghwado Treaty," "Japanese Colonial Period") were used; those sources provide academic support for the study. Additionally, the article on "Parangsae-yo (파랑새요)" included various versions of the lyrics, contributing to the comparison of lyrics in Chapter 2. The *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* is a valuable reference for this dissertation, as it provides academically reliable knowledge written by experts in the field, including Sujeong Lee, an academic research professor at the Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원), and Yong-ho Jo, an Arirang

specialist and author of *Study on Original Arirang* (아리랑 원형연구, 2011), as well as other researchers from the Academy of Korean Studies.

The *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture* (한국민속대백과사전), compiled by the National Folk Museum of Korea (국립민속박물관) since 2001, contains information on Korean folk culture. Articles related to Jangdan, the Korean rhythmic patterns, were used from this encyclopedia. One benefit is that Jangdan is notated in both Western and Korean systems, making it understandable to both those familiar with Western music and those who perform Korean traditional music. In this dissertation, the notation of "Semachi Jangdan" (Ex. 2-3) by Korean traditional music scholar In-gyo Bae and the "Gutgeori Jangdan" (Ex. 3-8) by Korean traditional music scholar Hyesung Ban were cited.

The National Gugak Center (국립국악원) is a national arts institution established to preserve, transmit, disseminate, and develop Korea's traditional music and dance. The center carries out tasks related to Gugak, including performances, research, education, and the improvement of musical instruments. The *Gugak Dictionary* (국악사전), published by the National Gugak Center since 2022, provides not only professional knowledge about Korean traditional music and dance but also audio and video recordings. This allows readers to understand music through listening as well as through specialized knowledge, which is an advantage compared to other dictionaries, such as the *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* and the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*. The authors of the articles are performers and composers rather than theoretical researchers. For example, the author of "Batnorae" (Boat Song) and "Nilliriya" used in this dissertation is Hyoju Kang, a recipient of National Intangible

Cultural Heritage No. 57 (Gyeonggi Folk Songs) and a performer who was active as a member of the National Gugak Center's Folk Music Ensemble for over 20 years.

In addition, three major English-language books published by international institutions offered valuable external perspectives. The first, *Broken Voices: Postcolonial Entanglements and the Preservation of Korean Folksongs*,[35] presents a Western scholar's interpretation of Korean folk music. Maliangkay, an expert in Korean Studies,[36] argues that several Korean intangible cultural properties have changed since their designation. In this book, he focuses on the historical transformation of three major folk song genres[37] and investigates the forces that have shaped these changes. To support this analysis, he conducted fieldwork beginning in the mid-1990s and interviewed various informants involved in these traditions,[38] acting as the ethnographer for the study. In Chapter II, *Defining Korean Folksongs: Characteristics and Terminology*, Maliangkay discusses how Korean folk songs are not merely translated factually but are interpreted emotionally and culturally—for example, describing their vocal timbre as "husky, occasionally raspy, as well as intense and seemingly unpolished."[39] The chapter also touches on the modernization of folk songs and the emergence of New Folk Song as a cultural adaptation, examining the influences of colonialism, Japanese music, and Western church hymns.

The second book, *Contemporary Directions: Korean Folk Music Engaging the Twentieth Century and Beyond*,[40] is a collection of eight chapters written by both Korean and Western

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[35] Roald Maliangkay, *Broken Voices: Postcolonial Entanglements and the Preservation of Korea's Central Folksong Traditions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

[36] Maliangkay, *Broken Voices*, 334.

[37] Sŏnsori sant'aryŏng (Standing Mountain Songs), Kyŏnggi minyo (Folksongs from Kyŏnggi Province), and Sŏdo sori (Folksongs from the Western Provinces)

[38] Maliangkay, *Broken Voices*, 42.

[39] Ibid., 58.

[40] Nathan Hesselink, ed., *Contemporary Directions: Korean Folk Music Engaging the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California-Berkeley, Center for Korean Studies, 2001).

scholars. Chapter I, *The Historical Development of Korean Folk Music* by Bang-song Song, outlines a general history of folk music in Korea. Chapters IV and VII—*Some Westernized Aspects in Korean Folk Songs* by Dae-cheol Sheen and *Korean Folk Songs for a Contemporary World* by Keith Howard—explore the diverse roles of folk music in modern Korea, including its transformation into New Folk Song, student protest songs, and pop music. These Korean and Western scholars emphasize that Korean traditional music has played an important role in the roots of new Korean music from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. Their perspectives have helped me better understand and appreciate the value of traditional music.

The third book, *Korean Pop: The International Rise of the Korean Music Industry*,[41] includes 16 chapters contributed by international scholars. The "K-wave" (abbreviated from "Korean Wave") became prevalent in Northeast and Southeast Asia at the beginning of the twenty-first century and continues to be influential today and likely in the future. Korean popular culture encompasses Korean film, television dramas, fashion, dance, and popular music. However, academic studies on Korean popular music have been scarce, often inaccurate, brief, and based on limited data. This book traces the history of Korean popular music from the 1920s to the present day (2004). Before reading it, I held certain biases toward popular culture, but the book provides readers with a positive perspective on popular music and its relationship to capitalism. Two chapters are particularly relevant: *The Beginnings of Korean Pop during the Japanese Occupation* by Young Mee Lee, and *New Folksongs: Sinminyo of the 1930s* by Hilary Finchum-Sung. These chapters examine New Folk Song as a popular music genre, influenced by Japanese and Western styles yet still embodying Korean identity, and further explore whether it

[41] Keith Howard, ed., *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave* (Folkestone, Kent, [England]: Global Oriental, 2006).

can be understood as an expression of Koreanness. Their academic arguments have significantly shaped my understanding of popular music during the Japanese colonization period.

Roald Maliangkay, in his article *Their Masters' Voice: Korean Traditional Music SPs under Japanese Colonial Rule*,[42] explores the interaction between Koreans and Japanese within the recording practices of the popular entertainment industry during the colonial period. Furthermore, the author examines whether the colonial government could manipulate recordings of Korean folk songs for political propaganda and economic purposes. His perspective led me to consider the extent to which New Folk Song embodied a unique form of Korean identity.

Further critical perspectives come from Korean scholars such as Do-hee Kwon, whose work *Signs of Resistance and Victory: The Staged Transformation of Modern Minyo and Its Meaning*[43] and *Industrial Folksong and the Popular Music in Modern Era*[44] argues that New Folk Song combines traditional and Western styles, functioning not only as popular or commercial music but also as a subtle form of nationalist resistance. Moreover, the author examines how New Folk Song, as a form of popular music, could be incorporated into Korean folk song discourse, despite being devalued by both elite nationalist folk song theories and the colonial discourse on folk music during the Japanese occupation. The author's study helps me understand the significance of commercial music in that historical context.

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[42] Roald Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice: Korean Traditional Music SPs (Standard Play Records) under Japanese Colonial Rule," *World of Music* 49, no. 3 (2007): 53–74.

[43] Do-hee Kwon (권도희), "Signs of Resistance and Victory: The Staged Transformation of Modern *Minyo* and Its Meaning" ("저항과 승리의 기호, 근대 민요-음악 양식의 단계적 변화와 그 의미"), *Journal of the National Gugak Center* (국악원논문집), no. 45 (2022): 175–211, https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002834333.

[44] Do-hee Kwon (권도희), "Industrial Folksong and the Popular Music in Modern Era" ("근대기 상업민요와 대중음악"), *Tongyang Ŭmak* (동양음악), no. 36 (December 31, 2014): 167–223, https://doi.org/10.33452/amri.2014.36.167.

Fernando Rios's book, *Panpipes & Ponchos* (2020), serves as a significant reference for this dissertation. In *Panpipes & Ponchos*, Rios presents a comprehensive study of the Andean conjunto, which established itself in La Paz, Bolivia, in the late 1960s, as well as the musicians and groups active in La Paz from the 1920s to the 1960s.[45] Many global audiences view Andean conjuntos as authentic expressions of Indigenous highland culture.[46] However, Rios reveals that Andean conjunto performance practices are not rooted in Andean Indigenous musical practices. For example, the instruments used by Andean conjunto differ in construction and tuning from those found in rural communities.[47] Furthermore, Andean conjuntos, typically composed of four to six musicians, perform expansive repertoires in folkloric performances and recitals, unlike community-based Indigenous musical traditions.[48] It is noteworthy that Andean conjunto is not an ensemble of rural Indigenous musicians, but rather urban criollo and mestizo[49] folkloric artists.[50] They express their own folkloric music by incorporating Indigenous musical elements into a Westernized musical framework grounded in equal temperament and triadic harmony.[51] The interest in folkloric music emerged in Bolivia in the 1920s, significantly influenced by Latin American Indigenismo.[52] This state-sponsored folklore movement was disseminated and widely

[45] Rios, *Panpipes & Ponchos*, 3-4.

[46] Ibid., 1.

[47] Ibid., 1-2.

[48] Ibid., 2.

[49] Historically, criollos referred to people of Spanish descent born in the Americas; as the social, economic, and political elite, they belonged to the upper class in Bolivia. See ibid., 9. Mestizos originally meant persons of mixed Spanish and indigenous descent, but later came to be defined in relation to an individual's occupation. "Artisans, retail workers, domestic laborers, and persons working in other traditional blue-collar occupations made up most of the mestizo class in 19th-century urban La Paz, as censuses from this period document." Ibid., 14.

[50] Ibid., 2.

[51] Ibid., 6-7.

[52] Indigenismo is a political, social, and cultural movement in Latin America that seeks to restore the rights of marginalized Indigenous peoples and promote the revival of their cultures and ideologies. In Bolivia, with government support, criollo and mestizo musicians participated in Bolivian folklore festivals and developed folkloric music from the early years of the Indigenismo movement to the folklore music boom of the 1960s. See ibid., 6.

known through mass media such as radio and the recording industry.[53] Bolivian urban artists stylized and reinterpreted Indigenous music to meet the expectations of the state and the public; this process is generally considered "folklorization."[54]

The concept of folklorization in Rios's book is closely connected to my dissertation on the modernization of Korean folksong. The preservation of traditional music in both Latin America and Korea involves similar processes not through strict authenticity, but through creative adaptation. The influence of urban-centered institutions, formalized performance contexts, and the expectations of national and global audiences has reimagined the traditional music of both countries. These parallel practices of folklorization reveal how traditional music can serve as a flexible tool for cultural preservation, national identity formation, and even commodification, blending rural customs with modern aesthetics. However, the folklorization of Bolivian Indigenous music differs from the modernization of traditional Korean folk songs. Above all, the hostility of criollos and mestizos toward Indigenous peoples hindered the development of a true folkloric movement. In Bolivia, Indigenous peoples were regarded as second-class[55] and were unable to assimilate into urban criollo and mestizo society.[56] In this historical context, the rise of Indigenismo in the early 20th century led the Bolivian government to promote a folkloric movement rooted in Indigenous traditions. Furthermore, urban artists adapted Indigenous music, presenting and popularizing their "folklore music" in new contexts. However, criollos and mestizos did not embrace Indigenous peoples; instead, they exploited

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[53] Ibid., 7-8.

[54] Ibid., 5.

[55] Ibid., 9.

[56] Even after the colonial period (1530s-1825), racial hierarchy and segregation persisted in Bolivia. In the sociocultural hierarchy observed in 19th-century La Paz, criollos were at the top, mestizos were in the middle, and Indigenous peoples were at the bottom. Furthermore, criollos and mestizos showed little interest in Indigenous culture and traditions. For more information on Criollo-Indigenous relations in 19th-century Bolivia and on the music of La Paz in the 19th century, see Rios, *Panpipes & Ponchos*, 9-17.

them for national projects. From this perspective, Rios takes a critical view of Bolivian "folklorization." In contrast, in this dissertation, I take a positive view of the growing interest in Korean folk songs and their reception in a changing political and social context. The New Folk Song (discussed in Chapter II), which emerged during the Japanese colonial period, expressed Korean sentiment and fostered a sense of national identity united by the anti-Japanese spirit. In addition, Korean choral music (discussed in Chapter III) reflects the efforts of Korean composers, musicians, and citizens since the second half of the 20th century to promote Korean identity globally through reinterpretations of traditional Korean folk songs. From this perspective, folk songs unite the Korean people, and the modernization of folk songs can be seen as Koreans' efforts to preserve tradition amid changing political, social, and cultural contexts. This phenomenon in Korea differs from the "folklorization" observed in Bolivia.

Lastly, several English-language dissertations written by Korean scholars[57] studying in the United States were consulted. These studies provide historical context for the development of Korean choral traditions and examine how traditional musical elements have been adapted in choral arrangements and compositions. They also offer detailed analyses of specific works, showing how composers incorporate Korean folk melodies, rhythms, and vocal techniques, blending with Western musical elements such as harmony, counterpoint, and formal structure.

[57] Dong-Kyu Lee (이동규), *The Sound of Korea: Twenty First Century Korean Choral Music* (D.M.A. diss., University of Alabama, 2021); In-Gi Min (민인기), *The Development of Korean Choral Music* (D.M.A. diss., University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music, 2001); Seoung Yon Kwak (곽승연), *Interpreting Elements of Traditional Korean Song in Contemporary Choral Music: "Me-Na-Ri" (2005)* (D.M.A. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011); Soyun Ham Kang (강소윤), *Korean Folk Songs as Choral Music: Approaches to the Repertory for Non-Korean Musicians* (M.M. thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 1999); Eun-sil Kim (김은실), *A Study of Arirang and Its Influence on Contemporary Korean Choral Works* (D.M.A. diss., University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music, 2008); Mirae Lee (이미래), *Byung-Hee Oh's Cantata Light of the East: A Fusion of Western and Korean Musical Elements* (D.M.A. diss., University of Arizona, Fred Fox School of Music, 2023).

II. The Influence of New Folk Song on the Transmission of Traditional Folk Music

As the term suggests, the adjective "new" is added to "folk song," indicating a connection to traditional folk music. However, New Folk Song is distinct from earlier forms of folk song. In the history of Korean folk music, a unique genre emerged and gained popularity during the 1920s and 1930s. These songs were called New Folk Song because they differed from the traditional folk songs that had previously been passed down orally.

With the rise of mass media such as phonograph records and radio broadcasts, this new form of folk music spread beyond local communities to urban audiences across the country.[58] Unlike traditional folk songs, which were often limited to specific regions and sometimes unknown outside their local contexts, New Folk Song reached a national audience. Their popularity was further boosted by professional singers who performed and recorded them.[59]

Musically, New Folk Song blended traditional Korean elements with Western musical influences, particularly through the use of harmonic accompaniment provided by Western instruments. Moreover, New Folk Song reflected the social and cultural conditions of the time, emerging as a product of modernization under Japanese colonial rule. In the course of modernization under Japanese colonial rule, the subjects who produced and consumed culture underwent a transformation. Urban actors aspiring toward modernization emerged as the dominant cultural agents. In their desire to reflect their identity through music, New Folk Song became a meaningful and appropriate form of expression.[60]

Chapter II.1 will examine the historical background of New Folk Song during Japanese colonization. Chapter II.2 will explore the musical characteristics of New Folk Song, focusing on

[58] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 11-12.
[59] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 79.
[60] Do-hee Kwon, "Signs of Resistance and Victory," 175, 204-205.

how Western and modern elements influenced its transformation. Finally, Chapter II.3 analyzes how New Folk Song contributed to the popularization of folk music produced by recording companies under Japanese rule and how it expressed a sense of Koreanness within the broader context of colonial cultural production.

II.1. Historical Background of New Folk Song (Japanese Colonial Period)

New Folk Song resonated with modern sensibilities while maintaining a sense of familiarity and nostalgia rooted in traditional folk songs. It appealed to urban actors and aligned with the tastes of the growing popular culture. Some scholars of Korean popular music have criticized the genre for focusing on themes of romantic love, which they argue are lighter or less politically charged than those found in *yuhaengga*[61] (popular songs).[62] However, can its significance be dismissed so easily—especially for Koreans living under Japanese colonial oppression?

Although the role of New Folk Song in the cultural politics of the time remains a subject of debate, it is widely acknowledged that its influence extended beyond mere entertainment.[63] To fully understand this issue, it is necessary to examine the historical context that gave rise to this

[61] Yuhaengga (popular music) is a South Korean genre that began in the 1920s, featuring songs influenced by the two-beat Japanese *enka* style, which originated from the American foxtrot. *Enka* is a traditional Japanese popular music known for its emotional ballads centered on love, loss, and nostalgia.

[62] In their book *A Study of Popular Songs During the Japanese Colonial Period* (일제강점기 대중가요 연구, 1999), Korean scholars Gwang-hae Kim, Yeo-tak Yun, and Man-su Kim criticized New Folk Song for containing less politically engaging themes than popular songs. Hilary Finchum-Sung addressed this in her study "New Folksongs: Shin Minyo of the 1930s" and explored New Folk Song from a different perspective than Gwang-hae Kim, Yeo-tak Yun, and Man-su Kim. I read the perspectives of Korean scholars in Finchum-Sung's article and have included them in my dissertation. See Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 13.

[63] Ibid., 15.

new genre. While the exact origins of New Folk Song are unclear, it is generally believed to have emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, during a period when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule.[64]

In the early years of colonization,[65] Japan implemented aggressive assimilation policies aimed at erasing Korean identity. Koreans were prohibited from using their native language and even forced to adopt Japanese names.[66] New media—such as phonograph records, radio broadcasts, and school music curricula—were used to introduce and normalize Japanese musical styles and aesthetics.[67] Japanese music was actively promoted as a tool to dominate Korea culturally.

These oppressive policies sparked resistance, culminating in the March First Movement of 1919, a nationwide independence movement that played a crucial role in fostering Korean nationalism. This nationalism helped form a collective identity—an imagined community—bound by shared language, history, customs, and cultural values.[68] Folk represented an imagined community, and prior to the March First Movement, there had been no concrete expression or

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[64] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 79.

[65] Korea was under Japanese rule from 1910 until 1945.

[66] Yong-ha Shin, "Japanese Colonial Period."

[67] Maliangkay, *Broken Voices,* 55.

[68] Do-hee Kwon mentioned "imagined communities" ("가상의 공동체", this Korean word could be translated into virtual communities) in his study (see Do-hee Kwon, "Signs of Resistance and Victory," 198). Still, Kwon did not cite Benedict Anderson, who introduced the concept of "imagined communities," in his footnotes or bibliography. Therefore, it is unclear whether Do-hee Kwon borrowed Anderson's concept of "imagined communities."

The national community formed in Korea after the March First Movement shares both similarities and differences with Anderson's "imagined communities." One similarity is that the Korean national community embodies Anderson's criteria for a nation: limited (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 2006, 7), sovereign (ibid.), and a community (ibid.). Unlike Anderson's "imagined community," which was formed through print media (see Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 2006, Chapter 3 "The Origins of National Consciousness"), the Korean national community began as a community of Koreans with an anti-Japanese spirit who pursued independence during the Japanese colonial period (1919-1945). This is where the concept of "nation" was formed. Folk songs, sung by the people, played a crucial role in uniting the newly formed national community, and during the Japanese colonial period, folk song theory (민요론) was developed.

cultural product that embodied this concept.[69] In 1924, Kwang Soo Lee[70] redefined the characteristics of the folk song and reframed it as a deliberately created cultural product, according to Do-hee Kwon, a contemporary scholar of Korean traditional music. Lee wrote: "The folk song is the collective work of the folk who sing it… therefore, the folk song reflects the character of the folk, and thus folk literature should be grounded in folk song."[71] Building on this interpretation, other Korean literary figures aligned with Kwang Soo Lee's view. Consequently, folk song theory evolved into a foundational framework for folk discourse.[72]

However, interest in folk songs was not limited to Korean intellectuals alone. The Government-General of Korea[73] recognized the importance of Korean folk culture, with particular attention to folk songs. Consequently, the Japanese colonial government shifted its policy from strict military and political control toward the so-called "cultural rule,"[74] which aimed to allow a limited degree of cultural activity and nominal self-governance for Koreans. In reality, this policy was designed to promote cultural assimilation and to encourage internal division among the Korean people under the guise of tolerance. Because culture encompasses the totality of a people's lifestyle, the Japanese aimed to achieve two goals under the justification of

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[69] Before the March First Movement (1919), Korea's 500-year-old Confucian-rooted Joseon monarchy was on the verge of collapse due to invasions by Western powers and neighboring countries (Russia and Japan). The Joseon Dynasty (1392~1910) was a time of rigid class systems and hierarchical order; each class and region had its own distinct language, customs, and music. During the dynasty, the people were viewed more as subjects than as citizens. Consequently, the concepts of "nation" and "nationalism" as conceived in modern political systems were virtually non-existent.

[70] Kwang Soo Lee (1892- 1950) was a novelist, thinker, and journalist who was active during the late Joseon period and the Japanese colonial era.

[71] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 198

[72] Ibid.

[73] Government-General of Korea was a government agency established on August 29, 1910, to administer Korea under Japanese rule following the Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty.

[74] National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회), "Foster Various Pro-Japanese Forces to Stabilize Colonial Rule" ("다양한 친일 세력을 육성하여 식민 통치의 안정을 꾀하라"), *Our History Net* (우리역사넷), accessed July 18, 2025, https://contents.history.go.kr/mobile/kc/view.do?levelId=kc_i403000&code=kc_age_40.

"studying" Korean culture. First, they closely observed the daily lives of Koreans in order to detect any signs of resistance or subversive activity. Second, they sought to highlight the perceived inferiority of Korean culture as a means of justifying the superiority of Japanese culture.[75]

In the meantime, on February 22, 1929, in Gyeongseong, a group of literary and musical figures[76] with knowledge of modern Western culture came together to form the *Korean Music Association*.[77] They aimed to reject decadent popular songs and to create a new form of Western-influenced music that reflected the lives and needs of people living in modern society.[78] On May 25, a general meeting was held at the Youth Center, where 14 newly composed pieces were performed. These works incorporated both Western and Korean musical styles.[79] The association criticized the state of popular music in both the literary and musical realms, and proposed the use of folk songs as a new compositional technique.[80] However, their goals were not fully realized, as not enough new works were produced, and the rearrangement of folk songs failed to capture the public's interest or inspire widespread compositional activity.[81]

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[75] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 198-9.

[76] Prominent literary figures such as Gwang-su Lee, Yo-han Joo, So-wol Kim, Yeong-ro Byeon, Eun-sang Lee, Hyung-won Kim, Seok-yeong Ahn, Eok Kim, Ju-dong Yang, Pal-yang Park, and Dong-hwan Kim participated, alongside musical figures including Yeong-hwan Kim, Gi-yeong Ahn, Hyung-jun Kim, Sun-cheol Jeong, and Geuk-yeong Yun.

[77] Sujeong Lee (이수정), "Joseon Gayo Association" ("조선가요협회"), *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 21, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0072624.

[78] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 200.

[79] Sujeong Lee, "Joseon Gayo Association."

[80] Ibid.

[81] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 200.

In this context, unlike the Korean Music Association—which rejected popular music—another group[82] emerged, composing songs widely regarded as "popular songs."[83] Their goal was to create hybrid songs that preserved the regional characteristics of traditional folk music while incorporating Western musical styles.[84] These works represented a new type of folk song. Like the Korean Music Association, this group also drew inspiration from folk music. However, they went a step further by actively engaging in the realm of popular music. New Folk Song was aimed at urban audiences, with the goal of achieving commercial success in connection with emerging commercial capital.[85] In "Some Westernized Aspects in Korean Folk Songs", Dae-cheol Sheen argues that "Korean New Folk Song should be interpreted as a product of imported Western culture," emphasizing their commercial origins.[86]

However, beyond mere profit, Do-hee Kwon suggests that the statements of literary directors at gramophone record companies—who played a key role in planning and shaping the genre—provide valuable insight into the purpose and meaning of New Folk Song.[87] For example, Gi-se Lee, literary director at Victor Records, defined new folk songs[88] as "songs that, rather than being mere popular tunes, carry the scent of Joseon[89], resonate with our hearts, and are still sung to Western melodies."[90] Thus, the creators of New Folk Song intentionally sought

[82] Composers such as Ki-hyeon Jeon, Myeon-sang Lee, Jun-yeong Kim, Yong-hwan Kim, Gyo-seong Kim, Su-rin Jeon, Si-chun Park, and Song-gyu Kim participated, along with lyricists including Do-soon Yoo, An-seo Kim, Ha-yoon Lee, Myeong-am Jo, Pyeong Wang, Yeong-ho Park, Bu-pung Lee, and Baek-o Kim.

[83] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 200.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Dae-cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 79.

[87] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 200.

[88] "New folk song" is lowercased when used descriptively or generically, but capitalized ("New Folk Song") when it denotes a specific, formalized musical genre.

[89] Korea is called Joseon because the name was revived by the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), which chose it to honor the ancient Korean kingdom of Gojoseon.

[90] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 201.

to blend indigenous Korean and Western musical styles in order to evoke the "scent of Joseon" while also achieving popular appeal.

In fact, according to gramophone record company data, more than 6,000 records were sold between 1907 and 1943, with new folk songs accounting for approximately 10 percent of total sales. Remarkably, New Folk Song rose to popularity within just a decade of its emergence in commercial recordings around 1934.[91]

In conclusion, as Do-hee Kwon mentioned earlier, the March First Movement of 1919 played a crucial role in uniting Koreans as a community, fostering a shared sense of nationalism in their long struggle against Japanese colonial rule and for independence. Additionally, other Korean literary figures aligned with Kwang Soo Lee argued that folk songs were a medium capable of embodying nationalist ideology. But how could New Folk Song realize the code of nationalism?

New Folk Song combined diverse tonal structures, vocal styles, and the timbre of traditional Korean music within a unified structure based on Western tonality, rhythm, and meter. This integration blurred distinct regional characteristics and made the music more accessible to the public.[92] This standardization allowed New Folk Song to connect with the modern Western concept of nationalism.[93] Since the principles underlying "folk" were originally developed in modern Western contexts and traditional Korean folk songs could not be codified in the same way, New Folk Song offered a novel solution grounded in modern Western contexts.[94]

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 205.
[93] Do-hee Kwon, "Signs of Resistance and Victory," 204.
[94] Ibid., 204.; Do-hee Kwon, "Industrial Folksong and the Popular Music in Modern Era," 179-80.

Moreover, New Folk Song appealed to urban subjects who sought to experience folk nostalgia while simultaneously fostering a collective community that transcended regional distinctions.[95]

A remarkable example of New Folk Song is Woon-gyu Na's *Arirang* version, popularized by his film *Arirang*.[96] One of the key roles of *Arirang* as a New Folk Song was its ability to evoke shared feelings and a sense of collective identity (ethnic identity) among audiences who watched, sang along, cried, and emotionally connected in the theater. It was at this time that *Arirang* spread nationwide. Dansungsa, the theater company, organized touring troupes that screened the film in 12 cities across the country.[97] As a result, the song was sung widely throughout Korea, transcending distinctions of class, status, gender, or generation, and overcoming existing regional musical styles.[98] In this manner, New Folk Song functioned as a communicative medium that cultivated a shared Korean folk identity and forged a cohesive community that transcended regional boundaries, age, gender, and social class.

II.2. Musical Characteristics of New Folk Song

This chapter examines the musical distinctions between traditional Korean folk songs and new folk songs, focusing on their stylistic differences. These contrasts provide insight into how Korean folk traditions were reshaped under the influence of Western and modern elements. In particular, the chapter explores how the introduction of Western instruments and the tastes of

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[95] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 204.

[96] Set against the backdrop of colonial Korea under Japanese rule, the film tells the story of Young-jin Kim, who suffers a mental breakdown following the trauma of the March 1st Movement, his younger sister Young-hee, and their friend Hyun-gu. Through their experiences, the film conveys the nation's sorrow and spirit of resistance, while also reflecting the broader social conditions of the era.

[97] U-taek Jeong (정우택), "Now the Arirang We Sing Is the Theme of Na Un-gyu's Film *Arirang*" ("지금 우리가 부르는 아리랑은 나운규 영화 '아리랑' 주제가"), *JoongAng Ilbo* (중앙일보), February 16, 2024, accessed July 21, 2025, https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25229221.

[98] U-taek Jeong, "Now the Arirang We Sing Is the Theme of Na Un-gyu's Film *Arirang*," *JoongAng Ilbo*.

Western and Japanese recording companies significantly influenced the development of New Folk Song.

To explore this transformation, I have chosen *Arirang*, one of the most well-known examples of New Folk Song. First, compared to other Korean folk songs, the versions and regional variations of *Arirang* are more systematically documented, making its sheet music easier to find. Therefore, the song is particularly well-suited for this study. Second, some new folk songs are directly derived from traditional ones, while others are newly composed in a folk-like style. The modern version of *Arirang*, now familiar to global audiences, is a reinterpretation that maintains a strong connection to its traditional folk roots. Notably, *Arirang*, the title song of the 1926 silent film directed by Woon-gyu Na,[99] is a prime example of New Folk Song, an innovative hybrid of Korean and Western musical elements.

This approach begins by comparing the *Gujo Arirang* (Old Arirang) documented by American missionary Homer Hulbert, who conducted his work in Seoul, with the traditional *Gujo Arirang* (Old Arirang) variant commonly sung in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province regions, both of which share Seoul as their common geographical origin.

Like many Korean folk songs, *Arirang* cannot be fully captured using the Western notation system, as it struggles to represent exact pitch, rhythm, ornamentation, and vocal style. Nonetheless, this effort provides a broad conceptual framework. Chapter II.2.1 further examines the ways Western-trained listeners might have perceived and interpreted Korean folk music. It

[99] Born in 1902 in North Hamgyong Province, now part of North Korea, Woon-gyu Na enrolled at Myeongdong Middle School in Gando, Manchuria, at the age of 12. However, his education was cut short when the school was forced to close under Japanese pressure. Later, due to his involvement in the Korean independence movement, he was arrested and imprisoned for a year and six months. After his release, he pursued filmmaking and made a significant impact with the 1926 silent film *Arirang*, in which he starred and directed. The film's success led to two sequels and marked a turning point in Korean cinema. See "Na Un-gyu" ("나운규"), *e-Gonghun Digital Archive* (공훈전자사료관), n.d., accessed July 1, 2025, https://e-gonghun.mpva.go.kr/user/IndepCrusaderDetail.do?goTocode=20003&mngNo=7471.

highlights the contrast between indigenous Korean musical expression and its interpretation through a Western auditory framework. Following this, Chapter II.2.3 will examine Hulbert's version alongside the *Arirang* popularized by Woon-gyu Na's film. This comparison will help identify and define the general musical characteristics of New Folk Song as they developed under Western and modern influences.

II.2.1. Comparison between the *Gujo Arirang* of Hulbert and Traditional *Gujo Arirang*

The musical form and date of origin of Arirang are unclear, as it was transmitted orally. Unlike court music, folk music in particular was neither systematically recorded nor notated. After Korea opened its doors to the Western world, scholars were able to study the melodic contours and texts of folk songs. Ironically, the first documented notation of *Arirang* was written not by a Korean, but by the American missionary Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949), who transcribed *Gujo Arirang*, one of the versions of *Arirang*, in his article "Korean Vocal Music,"[100] published in *The Korean Repository* in 1896.[101] His notation predates the New Folk Song that became famous through the 1926 silent film *Arirang*, directed by Woon-gyu Na. In his article, Hulbert praised the musical talent of Koreans, writing: "When Koreans sing, they become poets like William Wordsworth, and they are masters of improvisation."[102] Hulbert critiqued his own

[100] "Hulbert Memorial Society USA Chapter: Accomplishments/Biography," n.d., accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.homerhulbert.institute/accomplishmentsbiography.

[101] Betty Moon (문베티), "A Study on Contemporary Korean Choral Music Using Arirang Melody" ("아리랑 선율을 사용한 창작 합창곡의 전통적 요소에 관한 연구"), *Journal of Ewha Music Research Institute (JEMRI)* (이화음악논집) 21, no. 3 (2017): 46.

[102] "Hulbert Memorial Society: Accomplishments/Biography."

work in the article, writing: “The author made a weak attempt to score it, omitting the trills and quavers, but if you give one or two to each note you will not go wrong.”[103]

Before analyzing the music, it is important to examine the origin of *Gujo Arirang* to gain a better understanding. Over time, *Arirang* evolved into more than 60 regional versions and thousands of lyrical variations, each reflecting the unique culture, dialect, and sentiment of its locality. Prior to a key historical event, each regional *Arirang* maintained its own distinct characteristics.

Many scholars of Korean Traditional Music, such as Bo-Hyeong Yi [104] and Young Wun Kim,[105] identify the reconstruction of Gyeongbokgung Palace[106] in the 1860s as a pivotal event that accelerated the spread of original regional versions beyond their local boundaries—faster than would have occurred through ordinary mobility or trade. This event led to the creation of numerous new Arirang variations based on the Arari lineage of Gangwon Province.[107] Hybrid forms of these Gangwon Arari variants emerged and spread to other regions, especially Seoul and Gyeonggi Province.

Gyeongbokgung Palace, which was ruined during the Japanese invasions of Korea and left abandoned for many years, underwent major reconstruction beginning in 1865. People from

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[103] E. Taylor Atkins, “The Dual Career of ‘Arirang’: The Korean Resistance Anthem That Became a Japanese Pop Hit,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (2007): 651, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911807000927.

[104] Bo-Hyeong Yi is an influential scholar of Korean music and a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture* entry on *Arirang.* Bo-Hyeong Yi (이보형), “Classification of ‘Arirang Sori’ Based on the Characteristics of Culture of Its Formation” (“아리랑 소리의 근원과 그 변천에 관한 음악적 연구”), *Korean Folk Songs* vol. 5 (한국민요 제 5 집, 1997), *Korean Folk Song Studies* (한국민요학): 110.

[105] Young-woon Kim (김영운), “The Past, Present, and Future of Song Arirang” (“노래 아리랑의 과거, 현재 그리고 미래”), *Korean Folk Song Studies* (한국민요학) 66 (2022): 20.
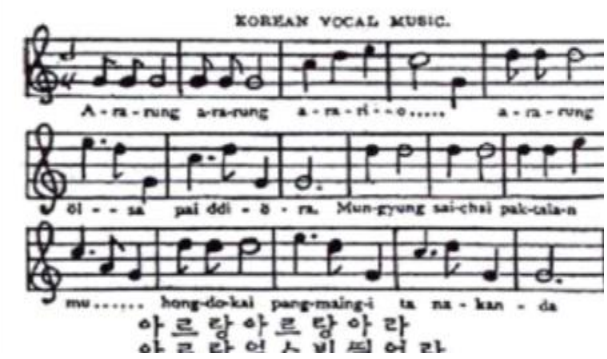
[106] Gyeongbokgung Palace, originally built in 1395 (the 4th year of King Taejo’s reign), was destroyed during the Japanese invasions of Korea in 1592 (Imjin War). It remained in ruins for centuries until Regent Heungseon Daewongun initiated its reconstruction between 1865 and 1868 to restore the declining royal authority. See U-taek Jeong, “Now the Arirang We Sing Is the Theme of Na Un-gyu’s Film *Arirang*,” *JoongAng Ilbo*.

[107] *Jeongseon Arari* and *Jajin Arari* are the major *Arirang* variants of Gangwon Province.
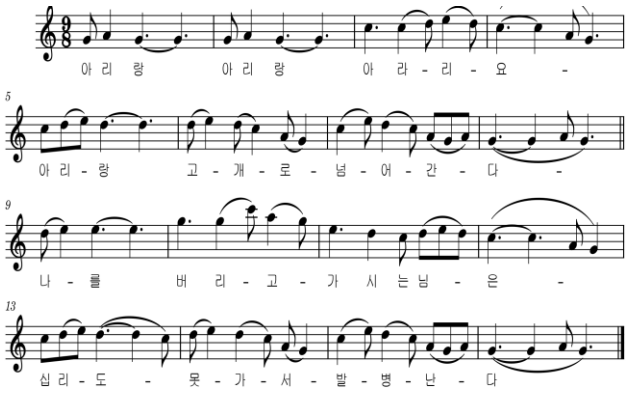
all eight provinces of Joseon[108] were mobilized for the reconstruction project. Timber from the Gangwon-do region was transported down the Han River, and raft workers from the Yeongdong area also took part in the labor. During this time, a laborer from Gangwon-do sang *Jeongseon Arari*. Deeply moved by the performance, a professional singer adapted the melody into what became Gyeonggi-style Arirang, known as *Gyeonggi Gin Arirang* (slow tempo) and *Jajin Arirang* (fast tempo). These versions soon gained popularity and became widely performed in traditional music and entertainment circles in the Seoul and Gyeonggi regions.[109] In other words, the *Gangwon Arari* variants were passed down to the *Gujo Arirang* of Gyeonggi, which Hulbert notated in 1896.[110]

This study compares Hulbert's notated version of *Gujo Arirang* (Ex. 2-1) with the traditional version of *Gujo Arirang* (Ex. 2-2) that was sung by the Korean people in Seoul, the capital of Korea.

[Ex. 2-1] Hulbert's Transcription of *Gujo Arirang*[92]



[Ex. 2-2] *Gujo Arirang* from Arirang Archive[93]



[108] Joseon (1392-1910) was a Korean dynasty that ruled for over five centuries.
[109] U-taek Jeong, "Now the Arirang We Sing Is the Theme of Na Un-gyu's Film *Arirang*," *JoongAng Ilbo*.
[110] Young-woon Kim, "The Past, Present, and Future of Song Arirang," 17.

What stands out most between the two scores are the ornamental notes and the difference in meter. Hulbert notated the song in 3/4, whereas *Gujo Arirang*, as sung by Korean people, is recorded in 9/8. On closer examination, Hulbert's notation is based on a duple subdivision of the beat, rather than the more typical triple subdivision found in traditional Korean music. Korean music follows a rhythmic pattern called Jangdan[111] ("chang" means long, "dan" means short). In Western notation, these cycles are often written as 12/4, 12/8, 18/8, 9/8, or 6/8. *Gujo Arirang* is notated in Semachi Jangdan (Ex. 2-3).



[Ex. 2-3] Semachi Jangdan[112]

3/4 was more familiar to Western audiences and closely associated with Western dance forms. Additionally, the Christian hymns introduced by missionaries in Korea were mostly composed using duple subdivision.[113]

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[111] Yong-sik Lee (이용식), "Jangdan (장단),"*Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore* (한국민속대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 1, 2025, https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/topic/%EC%9E%A5%EB%8B%A8.

[112] In-gyo Bae (배인교), "Semachi Jangdan (세마치장단)," *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore* (한국민속대백과사전), accessed July 1, 2025, https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/topic/detail/6275?pageType=search&keyword=%EC%84%B8%EB%A7%88%EC%B9%98%EC%9E%A5%EB%8B%A8.

[113] Duple subdivision refers to dividing each beat into two equal parts. This is the most common subdivision in simple meters such as 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. For example, in 4/4 time, each quarter-note beat is typically subdivided into two eighth notes.

Both versions use the same tonal material — sol, la, do, re, mi — without half steps. However, when looking at the melodic contour, Hulbert's transcription appears more like an outline of the *Gujo Arirang* sung by Koreans. The latter (Ex. 2-2) incorporates additional ornamental notes, which serve to emphasize or highlight the main tones. Much like the ornamentation in Western Baroque keyboard music — without which the music loses its character and vitality — the ornaments in *Gujo Arirang* bring life and expression to the melody. By comparison, due to the absence of ornamental inflections, Hulbert's version misses the expressive nuance and distinctly Korean aesthetics that define the characteristic beauty of *Arirang*.

These findings highlight the limitations of Western notation in capturing Korean music, even when *Gujo Arirang* is transcribed in that system. Moreover, Western audiences often struggle to fully hear and perceive the distinctive qualities of Korean music.

II.2.2. Origin of Woon-gyu Na's *Arirang* Version

The widely known version of "Arirang" is not a traditional folk song but a new folk song, originally derived from *Bonjo Arirang*, a branch of the Gyeonggi folk song tradition. However, after it gained widespread popularity as the theme song for the 1926 silent film *Arirang*, directed by filmmaker Woon-gyu Na, *Bonjo Arirang* evolved into the foundation of the *Arirang* associated with New Folk Song tradition.[114] This has led to renewed interest in the origins of Na's *Arirang*. According to Young-woon Kim's[115] comparative study of *Arirang* versions, it is highly likely that Na's *Arirang* traces its roots back to *Jeongseon Arari*, a traditional folk song

[114] Yong-ho Jo (조용호), "Sin Arirang (신아리랑)," *Encyclopedia of Korean National Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed June 23, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0077498.
[115] Young-woon Kim, "The Past, Present, and Future of Song Arirang," 19-20.

from Gangwon Province.[116] The following paragraphs will explore how *Jeongseon Arari* may have spread to North Hamgyong Province, where Woon-gyu Na spent his youth and likely first encountered the song. Woon-gyu Na, in an interview featured in the January 1937 issue of the humanities magazine *Samcheolli* (삼천리[117]), addressed the question of who composed the piece.

> I composed it. When I was a young student, I heard laborers singing 'Arirang, Arirang' while working on the railroad between Hoeryeong and Cheongjin. For some reason, the sound of that song stirred something in my heart. Even when I was just walking along the road, if I heard that song, I would stop in my tracks and listen for a while. And then, I would try to memorize that tender and beautiful melody on my own. […] Later, when I came to Seoul, I searched for this 'Arirang' song. There was no way to find the one I remembered. So I remembered the melody I had once heard, composed the lyrics, and had the musical score arranged by the Dansungsa (단성사[118]) orchestra.

Na explained further:

> At that time, Kim Young-hwan was a composer and violinist in the Dansungsa music department. He helped arrange my version of *Arirang* for an orchestra of ten musicians. The orchestra had a designated area on the stage where they would sit and perform during the screening of silent films.[119]

Unfortunately, the original film remains lost to this day, and the original performance of the music is also shrouded in mystery. The singer of *Arirang*, long the subject of speculation, was finally identified in 2019 by the Hankyoreh Arirang Association (사단법인 한겨레아리랑연합회) as

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[116] Gangwon is a mountainous, forested province in northeastern South Korea. It borders Gyeonggi Province—which includes Seoul, the capital—and lies along the coast of the East Sea.

[117] *Samcheolli* was a comprehensive magazine launched by Dong-hwan Kim on June 12, 1929, during the Japanese occupation of Korea.

[118] Dansungsa (단성사), founded in 1907 in Seoul, was the first full-fledged permanent cinema in Korea.

[119] Yu-gyeong Kim (김유경), "Dansungsa and Arirang: The Birth of Film and Song" ("단성사와 아리랑; 영화와 노래의 탄생"), *Kim Yu-gyeong's Cultural Column* (김유경 문화산책), *Pressian*, November 13, 2019, accessed July 17, 2025, https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/265340.

Kyung-i Yoo, through research in the *Collection of Korean Film Songs Arirang*[120] was also found.[121]



[Figure 2-1] A Photo of Singer Kyung-i Yoo (left), the Cover of the *Collection of Korean Film Songs* (center), and the Sheet Music and Lyrics of the Film Theme Song *Arirang* from the *Collection of Korean Film Songs*[122]

These documents (Figure 2-1) are invaluable for tracing the sound source recorded by the original singer, Kyung-i Yoo, in order to identify her unique vocal style and determine whether she incorporated *sigimsae* (ornamental inflections) characteristic of traditional Korean folk songs, even though this version of "Arirang" is a contemporary arrangement. Additionally, the original sheet music serves as a reliable and important resource for academic analysis of the music.

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[120] The *Collection of Korean Film Songs* was published by Dansungsa.
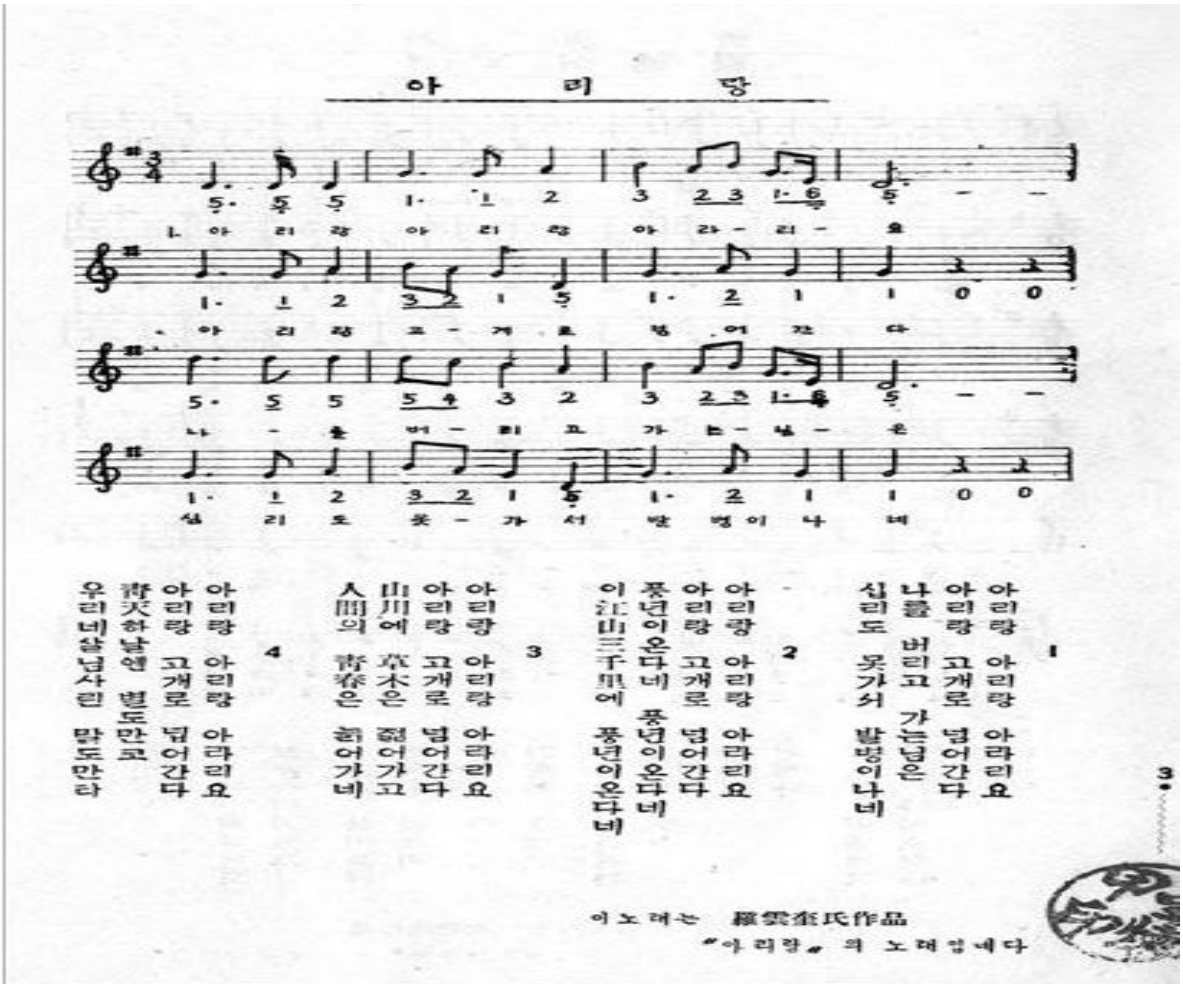
[121] Hye-jin Song (송혜진), "We Found the Singer of *Arirang* That Moved Dansungsa 93 Years Ago" ("93 년前 단성사를 울린, 아리랑 가수를 찾았다"), *Chosun Ilbo*, October 1, 2019, accessed July 17, 2025, https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/10/01/2019100100131.html.

[122] Hye-jin Song, "We Found the Singer of Arirang That Moved Dansungsa."

II.2.3. **Musical Analysis of Woon-gyu Na's *Arirang* Version**

In an interview with the humanities magazine *Samcheolli*, Na confirms that his Arirang version was accompanied by a movie orchestra. This use of accompaniment of Western instruments was not only for the new Arirang version, but also for new folk songs recorded on phonograph records in the 1930s. It was also influenced by Western vocal techniques, often lacking the distinctive singing style and sigimsae (ornamental inflections) characteristic of traditional Korean folk songs. In this sense, the film music *Arirang* exemplifies the key features of the emerging New Folk Song genre.

One prominent characteristic is the accompaniment by a Western orchestra or band, which implies a musical foundation built on Western harmony, typically based on the major and minor systems. The piece is notated in G major, indicated by one sharp, even though the note F♯ does not actually appear in the melody. This suggests that the key signature—particularly the inclusion of F♯—likely serves the harmonic framework of the Western instrumental accompaniment rather than the vocal melody (see Ex. 2-4).



[Ex. 2-4] *Arirang* by Woon-gue Na sung by Kyung-i Yoo from the *Collection of Korean Film Songs*[123]

Another example of how the piece adopts a Western harmonic framework is that the cadence in the first line can be harmonized using a secondary chord—either A major or A minor—following the dominant D major chord within the key of G major (see Ex. 2-4). There is a natural tendency for the C♯ in the harmony to resolve upward to D. In the melody, however, the tone E moves down to D. This melodic contour can be interpreted in two ways. First, if C♯ were used instead of E in the melody, it would create a tritone interval—an uncommon and unstable

[123] Hye-jin Song, "We Found the Singer of Arirang That Moved Dansungsa."

sound in traditional Western harmony. Second, the phrase ending in the melody aligns with common traits found in many regional versions of *Arirang*, which often conclude with a descending melodic figure. The characteristic concerning a descending melodic figure is found in *Jeongseon Arirang* and *Gujo Arirang* (see Ex. 2-5 in footnote 124).[124] This suggests that, despite harmonic Westernization, the melodic line retains elements characteristic of traditional *Arirang* styles.

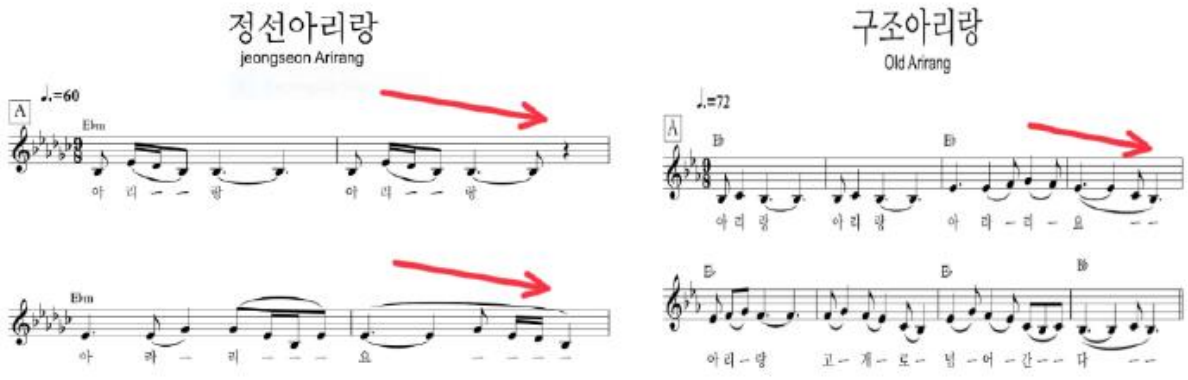
This blending of a Western harmonic structure with a Korean melodic idiom reflects the coexistence of traditional and modern musical elements, highlighting the hybrid nature of the New Folk Song tradition.

Second, the use of dotted rhythms, which are related to duple subdivisions, is actually uncommon in Korean traditional music. Thus, both the dotted rhythms and the notated 3/4 meter are presented within a Western rhythmic framework.[125]

Third, it is difficult to judge from the written score alone whether the unique singing style and sigimsae (ornamental inflections) of traditional folk songs were preserved in performance.[126] These distinctive Korean vocal characteristics were likely restrained or excluded

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[Ex. 2-5] *Jeongseon Arirang* mm.1-4 (left), *Gujo Arirang* mm. 2-4 from Arirang Archive

125 Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 91.

126 Maliangkay, *Broken Voices,* 58.

because they might create dissonances or clash with the Western-style harmonic accompaniment. After the 1929 *Collection of Korean Film Songs* was rediscovered in 2019, the identity of its singer was finally confirmed. In 2022, Chang-kwan Jung succeeded in locating and restoring the original recording of Kyung-i Yoo's performance.[127] Jung's website[128] offers a recording of Kyung-i Yoo along with information about the accompaniment, which was performed by the Chosun Theater Orchestra and the Gwangwoldang Korean Music Club. While not overly pronounced, there are subtle elements of traditional folk singing style or *sigimsae* (ornamental inflections) in the singer's performance. Kyung-i Yoo's vocal delivery is smooth and controlled, with minimal vibrato and limited use of expressive ornamentation typically found in Korean folk songs.

In his book *Broken Voices*, Roald Maliangkay discusses the characteristics of Korean folk music through the lens of Western scholarly perspectives: "The vocal timbre common among professional folksongs singers is husky, occasionally raspy.... the West might be described as 'broken'. To ornament and express their phrases, singers use a wide range of vocal techniques, such as appoggiaturas, exaggerated fricatives and vibratos of different width and speed."[129] The original sound recording of Kyung-i Yoo's performance differs notably from the characteristics of Korean folk song singers as described by Roald Maliangkay. However, her singing style still

[127] Catalog Number: CKJSP-010. This release is a reproduction of Side 3 from two phonograph records—Columbia 40002 and Columbia 40003—originally issued in February 1929 by the Japanese Columbia label. These records contain a four-sided audio narration of the landmark Korean film *Arirang*, which premiered on October 1, 1926, directed by Woon-gyu Na (Un-gyu Na). The reproduction is part of the Yoosung Album Replication Project, and it is designated as the project's 10th album. It features the first known Arirang-related audio recording associated with Woon-gyu Na's 1926 film. The original set consisted of four sides across two discs and was issued two years and four months after the film's debut. The digitized version of the audio can be accessed at the following site: http://www.gugakcd.kr/music_detail.asp?cd_num=CKJSP-010.
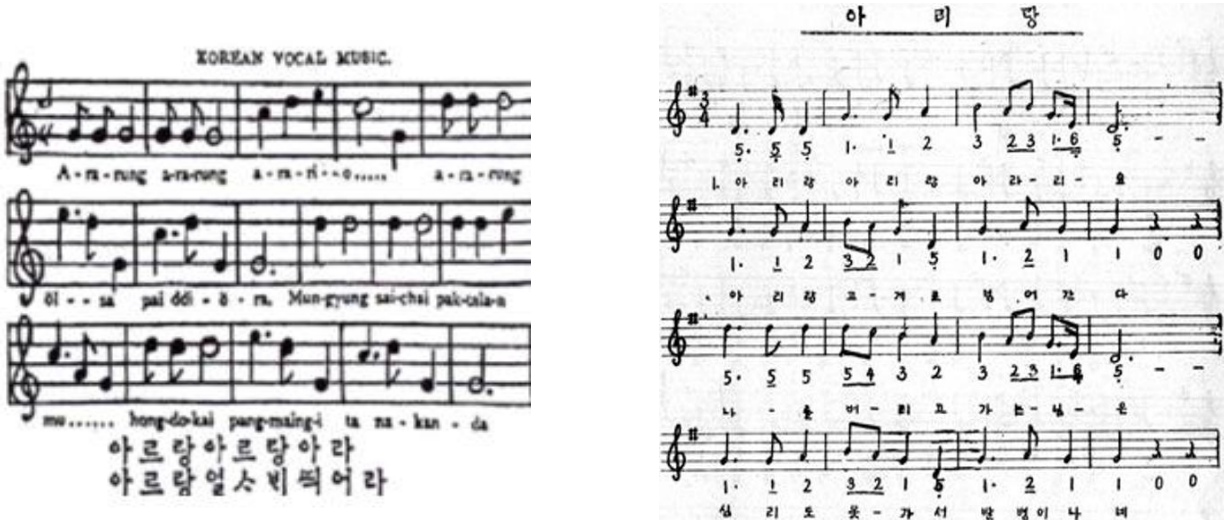
[128] Changkwan Jung (정창관), *The World of Gugak Records* (정창관의 국악 음반 세계), "CKJSP-010," accessed July 17, 2025, http://www.gugakcd.kr/music_detail.asp?cd_num=CKJSP-010.

[129] Maliangkay, *Broken Voices*, 58.

retains subtle elements of traditional Korean folk music, while simultaneously reflecting the influence of Western musical aesthetics shaped by the commercial interests of Western and Japanese recording companies at the time. Her style seems to occupy a middle ground between Korean tradition and Western influence.

Commercial recordings and radio broadcasts adapted the New Folk Song genre to appeal to a wide audience, moving beyond specific regional traits. While doing so, they retained traditional expressive elements to the extent that Western-style accompaniment permitted.[130]
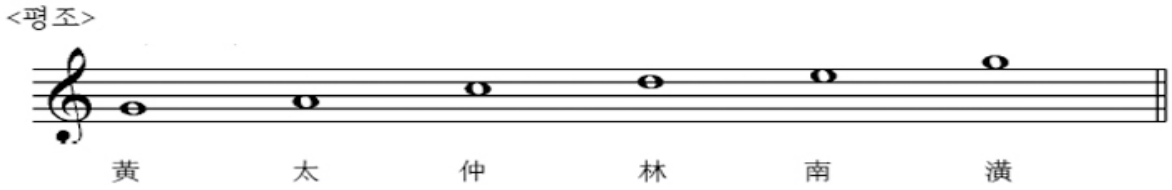
II.2.4. A Comparative Analysis of Hulbert's *Arirang* Version and Woon-gyu Na's *Arirang* Version



[Ex. 2-6] Hulbert's Transcription of *Gujo Arirang*[131] (left), *Arirang* by Woon-gue Na Sung by Kyung-i Yoo[132]

[130] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 204.
[131] Betty Moon, "A Study on Contemporary Korean Choral Music," 49.
[132] Hye-jin Song, "We Found the Singer of Arirang That Moved Dansungsa."

When comparing Hulbert's *Gujo Arirang* with *Arirang* by Woon-gyu Na, a notable similarity is their shared time signature—both are set in 3/4 meter, which may reflect the influence of Western musical conventions. However, *Gujo Arirang*, as recorded by Hulbert, retains a distinctly traditional character through its use of a pentatonic scale. The melody is structured around five tones—Sol, La, Do, Re, and Mi—with Sol functioning as the final (tonic) note. This places the piece in a G-based pentatonic framework, aligning closely with the modal practices found in Korean traditional music. This is similar to the Korean Pyeongjo mode[133].



[Ex. 2-7] Korean Pyeongjo Mode[134]

In comparison, *Arirang*, as performed by Woon-gyu Na, uses six notes—Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, and La—centered around Do as the final (tonic) note. This structure resembles a G-based major hexatonic scale, which is derived by removing the seventh note (Ti) from the standard major scale. Such a major hexatonic scale is not typical in traditional Korean music, suggesting a departure from indigenous tonal systems. However, the note *La* appears only twice, both times briefly as sixteenth notes at cadential points. Despite the Western-influenced scale structure, the melody still retains a distinctly traditional Korean character.

[133] In traditional Korean music, particularly in *gugak*, one of the *sogak* (secular court music) scales consists of five tones: sol–la–do–re–mi.

[134] "[Gugak Knowledge] National Gugak Center Official Blog," *Naver Blog*, accessed July 17, 2025, https://blog.naver.com/gugak1951/220367203494.

The ambitus (range) of the melody in *Gujo Arirang*, as transcribed by Homer Hulbert, and Na Woon-gyu's *Arirang* is different. The former has a narrow range from G3 to E4, while the latter has a full octave range from D3 to D4. This suggests that the former was sung by untrained common people from memory. In contrast, the latter seems to have been influenced by Western hymns, which often stay within an octave and are accompanied by Western instruments.

The Westernized *Arirang* from Woon-gyu Na's film illustrates key musical characteristics of the emerging New Folk Song style, including a clearer tonal center, a wider melodic range, and the incorporation of Western elements such as the 3/4 meter. At the same time, aspects of traditional Korean music remain present. While the harmony, range, and rhythm reflect Western influence, the melodic contour consists of six tones, with the note La appearing only twice—and briefly as sixteenth notes at cadential points. This limited use of La allows the melody to retain a distinctly Korean traditional music character. Together, these contrasting elements demonstrate how Korean and Western musical identities coexisted and intertwined within New Folk Song.[135]

II.3. New Folk Song in Colonial Korea: Recording Industry and Cultural Hybridity

Popular music has long been regarded—and still is regarded—as a low form of art.[136] This attitude was evident in discussions about folk discourse, where the role and contributions of

[135] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 80.

[136] In his writings "High Art versus Low Art," American philosopher John A. Fisher notes that when we listen to string quartets versus rap music, we generally distinguish between 'high' and 'low' art (Fischer, "High Art versus Low Art," 409). Although the distinction between the two is not clear (Ibid., 410), people tend to differentiate between 'high' and 'low' art and to rank them by the following claim: "It is plausible to conclude that the value difference implied by the high/low art distinction has been influenced in part by our tendency to grade the types of cognition and character involved in appreciating various genres of artifacts." (Ibid., 413.) Unlike philosophers David Novitz and Michael Levine, who regard the high/low distinction as a bias of the 20th century, Fischer asserts that the tendency to divide art forms into 'high' and 'low' and to rank them has always existed (Ibid., 412). I agree with Fischer's statement. Koreans also tend to discuss whether music is 'high' or 'low' art. While everyone has different tastes, there is a general tendency to view Western classical music as 'high' art and popular songs as 'low' art. In the rapidly changing political, social, and cultural landscape of the early 20th century, newly

commercial folk songs, such as New Folk Song, were viewed passively. Ironically, the version of "Arirang" that most Koreans know and sing today actually originates from Woon-gyu Na's 1926 film. Many people believe that this version has been passed down through generations as a traditional Korean folk song, but that is not the case. As discussed in the previous chapters, the "Arirang" featured in Woon-gyu Na's film belongs to the genre of New Folk Song,[137] which emerged in the early 20th century as part of Korea's modern cultural development. This genre has its roots in mass media, aiming for commercial profit and appealing to a broad audience. In fact, New Folk Song is a genre deliberately planned by record companies.[138]

In *Tracing the Popular Songs of the Nation's Time of Suffering*, North Korean scholar Chang-ho Choi defines New Folk Song "as newly created folk songs that met the tastes of contemporary times while incorporating older folksongs, developed because record companies decided there was a need for folk music possessing artistic elegance."[139] Chang-ho Choi's statement reveals that record companies were responsible for the emergence of this new genre.

It is unclear when or how the term New Folk Song was first introduced into use in Korea. According to Hilary Finchum-Sung, citing Chang-ho Choi, Polydor Records was the first company to use the label New Folk Song, after which other companies followed.[140] However, popular music scholar Geun-tae Lee offers a different view. He argues that the term New Folk Song first appeared in 1931 in the *Korean Daily News* (*Joseon Ilbo*) in an article announcing the release of New Folk Song by Columbia Records: Nanpa Hong's (1898–1941) *Song of a Girl*

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emerging music genres were often regarded as 'low' because they differed from traditional forms. Therefore, the emergence of New Folk Song as a target of criticism can be understood in this context.

[137] Dae-Cheol Sheen, "Some Westernized Aspects," 80–81.

[138] Do-hee Kwon, "Industrial Folksong and the Popular Music in Modern Era," 178.

[139] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 12.

[140] Ibid.

Grinding Flour (*Bang-a Jjineun Saeksiui Norae*) and *Ring Finger Song* (*Nokseun Garakji*).[141] At this stage, it is meaningful to explore how New Folk Song contributed to the popularization of folk songs, viewed through the framework of the recording industry under Japanese colonial rule.

II.3.1. Aspect of the Recording Industry in Colonial Korea

II.3.1-1. Introduction of Records in Korea

Newspaper reports on the recording industry offer valuable insight into the introduction of phonograph records introduced in the late 1800s. In 1899, the Korean newspaper *The Independent* (*Tongnip Sinmun*) reported: "People listening to a record for the first time found it strange at first, but would then praise its sound and play with it all day long."[142] Prior to this, music could only be enjoyed through live performance—either by professional musicians or by individuals themselves. However, the spread of phonographs made it possible for people to enjoy songs performed by famous singers in their own homes, rather than attending live performances.

Figure 2-2 shows Korea's first advertisement for a phonograph and record, published in *The Mansebo*[143] on March 17, 1907. The advertisement stated that "the phonograph serves as a matchmaker for home entertainment and the harmonious joy of the whole family."[144]

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[141] Ibid., 12-13.

[142] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 55.

[143] A daily newspaper founded in 1906 at the initiative of Donghak's third leader, Byeong-hui Son (1861-1922).

[144] Ji-Hoon Seok (석지훈), ed., "Gramophone (축음기)," National Science Museum, accessed July 23, 2025, https://www.science.go.kr/mps/scienceSubject/gramophone/view.do?subjectSid=176.



[Figure 2-2.] Korea's First Advertisement from the *Mansebo*[145] on March 17, 1907

As a form of critical commentary, the Korean newspaper *The Korean People's Daily* (Taehan Minbo) published a political cartoon in 1909 that depicted two contrasting groups of Korean men. On the right side of Figure 2-3, a group of "modern" Korean men is gathered around a record player, symbolizing their embrace of new cultural trends. On the left side, another group of Korean men is shown, distinguished by their traditional clothing, hairstyles, and hats—emphasizing the contrast between modernity and tradition.

[145] Ji-Hoon Seok, "Gramophone (축음기)."



[Figure 2-3.] Political Cartoon from the *Taehan minbo*, September 1, 1909.[146]

The text on the picture of Figure 2-3 reads: "Would it be because the public speech is a recording, or because the recording is a public speech that the listeners run away holding their nose?"[147] However, this initial fear of the new device gradually faded, and by the mid-1930s, record sales had reached their peak.

II.3.1-2. Recording Companies Involved in the Production of Korean Music

The first was the American company Columbia, which entered the Korean market with the help of Sankōdō, a well-known Japanese trading company and record dealer.[148] Acting as an

[146] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 55.

[147] Ibid., 56.

[148] Hye Eun Choi (최혜은), "The Making of the Recording Industry in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2018), 34, https://login.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fmaking-recording-industry-colonial-korea-1910%2Fdocview%2F2065057498%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12964.

intermediary, Sankōdō helped recruit five Korean traditional musicians, including In-o Han and Hong-mae Choe. In 1906, the group traveled to Osaka to record Korean traditional music, including folk songs from the Gyeonggi Province—these are considered the first commercial recordings of Korean music.[149] The records were released in 1907. A year after Columbia began selling records in Korea, another American company, Victor, joined the competition.[150] According to Yamauchi Fumitaka[151], Homer Hulbert—who had transcribed *Arirang* in 1896—served as the intermediary between Victor and the Korean musicians for these recordings.[152] In 1911, Nihon Chikuonki Shōkai[153], also known as the Japan-American Phonograph Company, released its first recordings of traditional Korean music under the Royal Record Nipponophone label.[154] In 1925, Nittō Chikuonki Kabushiki Kaisha[155] (Nittō hereafter), the first fully Japanese-owned record company,[156] began producing records in Korea.

[149] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 56.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Yamauchi Fumitaka is a modern Japanese anthropologist whose research interests include popular music studies, Korean musicology, East Asian music history, and sound studies. See *Fumitaka Yamauchi*, Graduate Institute of Musicology, National Taiwan University, n.d., accessed July 23, 2025, https://gim.ntu.edu.tw/full-time-faculty/fumitaka-yamauchi/.

[152] Ji-Hoon Choi, "The Making of the Recording Industry," 34.

[153] Nihon Chikuonki Shōkai, the most influential record company in the Japanese Empire during the acoustic recording era, was founded in 1910 by American businessman Frederick W. Horn. See Ji-Hoon Choi, "The Making of the Recording Industry," 23.

[154] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 56.

[155] Nittō Chikuonki Kabushiki Gaisha, established in Osaka in 1920, was founded with Japanese capital and management. See Ji-Hoon Choi, "The Making of the Recording Industry," 32.

[156] Ibid., 32-33.

In 1927 and 1928, three transnational companies—Nippon[157] Columbia[158], Nippon Victor[159], and Nippon Polydor[160]—also established small branch offices in Korea.[161] Alongside these major companies, several smaller Japan-funded record labels also entered the Korean music market in the early 1930s,[162] though most were short-lived.[163] However, a few, such as Okeh (1932), Chieron (1931), and Taihei (1932), managed to survive and compete in the Korean SP (Standard Play) record market. The only company funded by Koreans was Korea, which had sole records under the label "New Korea Record."[164]

The information above illustrates the diversity among recording companies, including Japanese local firms as well as transnational companies from both Japan and the West. If the Japanese government had fully intervened in the recording industry and market, the structure of the industry in Korea might have become a monopoly. In such a market, although Japanese companies may have held an advantage in securing profits over international firms, the Japanese government appears to have been unable to use the industry effectively for political propaganda or exert complete control. This is largely because transnational companies possessed superior technology and greater investment capacity compared to Japanese firms. In reality, Japanese companies that were less competitive—even if they aligned with the government's political agenda—were unable to survive in the market.

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[157] The Japanese names for Japan are *Nihon* and *Nippon*.

[158] Nitchiku, the oldest record company in Japan, strengthened its affiliation with Columbia in 1927 by transferring 35.7% of its shares to U.K. Columbia in May and 11.7% to U.S. Columbia in October. See Ji-Hoon Choi, "The Making of the Recording Industry," 57.

[159] Victor Talking Machine Company of the U.S. established Nippon Victor (Victor Talking Machine Company of Japan, Ltd., also known as JVC) on September 13, 1927. See ibid., 56.

[160] Nippon Polydor, officially Nippon Polydor Chikuonki Kabushiki Kaisha, was founded in 1927 as a licensed affiliate of Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft. See ibid., 58.

[161] Ibid., 56.

[162] Ibid., 62.

[163] They are Deer, Tombo, Million, Lucky, Korai, Shōchiku, Sister, Corea, New Korea, and Kinchō.

[164] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 57.

Some examples help to illustrate the competitiveness of the market. By the early 1930s, as foreign record companies adopted microphone-based (electric) recording technology, those unable to transition from acoustic[165] to electric systems either collapsed or were absorbed by larger companies. For example, when microphone recording was introduced in Japan in 1928, Nittō struggled to compete with newly established transnational record companies and was eventually taken over by Taihei Records in 1935. As another example, companies with less advanced technology than those receiving technical assistance from foreign firms sold their records at lower prices. Nippon Victor and Nippon Columbia records typically sold for 1.50 yen, while Okeh records were priced at just 1.00 yen.[166] To compete with these lower-priced offerings, the former companies introduced discount labels such as Victor Junior, Regal, and Polydor Chŏkban.[167]

Regardless of their size or origin—whether Japanese, joint ventures involving American, British, German, or Japanese companies—these recording companies shared the same goal: to maximize profits according to market conditions. This often involved cutting ties with their own affiliated local companies or engaging in mergers and acquisitions.

The growth and profitability of the recording industry in Korea can be roughly estimated from an article titled "*The War of Records of the Large Six Companies*"[168] published in the May 1933 issue of the journal *Korea in Its Entirety* (*Samch'ŏlli*).[169] According to the article, there

[165] Acoustic recordings were made without the use of electricity. Instead of microphones, sound waves were captured by a horn and transmitted to a stylus, which etched grooves into a wax-covered cylinder or master disc. This acoustic recording era lasted from 1877, when Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, until around 1925, when major record companies widely adopted electrical microphones, amplifiers, and recording equipment. Ji-Hoon Choi, "The Making of the Recording Industry," 21.

[166] Ibid., 63.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Six Companies are Columbia, Victor, Chieron, Polydor, Okeh, and Taihei.

[169] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 60.

were over 300 record shops across Korea at the time, each releasing at least 50 new recordings per month. These recordings typically sold between 1,000 and 2,000 copies each. Based on these figures, the total annual record sales were estimated at 36 million copies, generating approximately 36 million won in revenue.[170] The recording industry—and later, the radio industry—created new spaces for the development of a mass sound culture that could be shared and enjoyed across regional, national, and class boundaries. Prior to the emergence of these public media platforms, folk music was primarily limited to specific geographic areas and was shared mainly among people of the same social class. New Folk Song met the demands of public media by functioning as popular music influenced by both Western and Japanese styles, while also reflecting the tradition of Korean folk songs.

By blending foreign and domestic musical elements, New Folk Song became Korea's first form of indigenous pop music.[171] It served as a cultural bridge between the old and the modern, and between Western and Korean musical sensibilities. This emerging public culture allowed Koreans under Japanese colonial rule to share a sense of 'Koreanness' with a wide audience—even when the content was standardized or carried traces of Japanization or Westernization. The distribution of music through new sound recording technologies made this cultural flow possible, enabling music to circulate widely and consistently across social and regional boundaries.

[170] Ibid.
[171] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 11.

II.3.2. Koreanness in New Folk Song

It is widely known and acknowledged in Korea that popular entertainment industries during the colonial period were colonized by Japan, and Koreans were frequently depicted as passive recipients of the dominant, and sometimes destructive, influences of Western and Japanese popular culture.[172] From this perspective, Koreans' active participation in the popular and traditional music industries was interpreted as a manipulation by the Japanese.[173] In addition, the following remarks by Youn-ku Pak (1914-2016) are also related to this view: "What followed [after the annexation] was almost inevitable. Korea then had no choice but to swallow what must be categorized as a Japanised version of Western music. So forceful was this process that our fundamental tradition in music nearly died away."[174] This perspective, however, fosters a dualistic mindset: the superiority of Japanese culture and the economic exploitation of the Japanese,[175] while the passive attitude of Koreans and the elimination of Korean culture.[176]

The perspectives above regarding the "Japanized" popular entertainment industries in Korea are not without merit. However, can we simply ignore the ideas, tastes, and preferences of the Korean public, who were the actual consumers of this culture? Is it reasonable to assume that the commercial activities of recording companies—whether Western, Japanese, joint ventures, or later Korean enterprises operating in Korea—were driven solely by Japanese political planning from the very beginning?

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[172] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 53.

[173] See ibid., 54.

[174] Quoted in ibid.

[175] The fact that the head offices of the main record companies in colonial Korea were located in Japan was regarded as Japanese economic exploitation. See ibid.

[176] In his study "Their Masters' Voice: Korean Traditional Music SPs (Standard Play Records) under Japanese Colonial Rule" (2007), Korean studies researcher Roald Maliangkay regarded this perspective as Japan's cultural hegemony in colonial Korea and linked it to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. See ibid.

New Folk Song researcher Geun-tae Lee and Popular music researcher Chipyong Kim argue that New Folk Song served as "an artistic platform for expressing nationalistic fervor."[177] Lee points out that the *Chosŏn Ilbo* expressed its intent to promote New Folk Song by stating in a call for song submissions that it aimed to "reflect the emotional tastes of the public amid the flood of popular songs." Lee interprets this as an effort to popularize songs that carried national sentiment.[178] Moreover, Chipyong Kim notes that "New Folk Song emerged from efforts to revive elements of folk music within popular music, as folk songs contain the emotional foundation of the people. Thus, New Folk Song embodies the essential emotions of the Korean people. The 'New Folk Song effort' was both a rediscovery of popular sentiment and a reawakening of national spirit."[179]

Korean sentiment can be found in New Folk Song through its lyrical expressions, musical allusions, and the fusion of historical context and cultural memory.[180] Since musical allusions (Chapter II.2) and the fusion of historical context and cultural memory (Chapter II.1) have already been addressed, this section will focus exclusively on the lyrical expressions found in New Folk Song.

Although most lyrics of New Folk Song focus on unfulfilled love and inevitable separation, the remarkable topics that were addressed in New Folk Song are related to longing for Korea's land, one's hometown, or the mountains. Such sentiment can be interpreted as a wish to escape from the exploring occupation. For example, *Nodeul Riverside*[181] originally refers to

[177] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 15.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., 16.
[181] The song, with lyrics by Bul-chul Shin, music by Ho-wol Moon, and vocals by Bu-yong Park, was released in 1934 by Okeh Records as part of a special album commemorating the company's first anniversary. Composed in the *Gyeonggi Minyo* style, *Nodeul Riverside* remains a beloved part of the *Gyeonggi Minyo* repertoire to this day.

the area along the Han River near Noryangjin in Seoul. At the time of Japan's occupation, it was released as a new folk song and became widely popular for expressing the deep emotional longing of those living away from their hometowns.

1. 노들강변 봄버들 휘 늘어진 가지에다/ 무정세월 한허리를 칭칭 동여 매어볼까/ 에헤요 봄버들도 못 믿을 이로다/ 푸르른 저기 저 물만 흘러 흘러가노라	On the spring willow branches of the Nodeul River, / Shall I tie my waist tightly with the ruthless years? / Hehe, I can't even trust the spring willows / Only the blue water over there flows and flows.
2. 노들강변 백사장 모래마다 밟은 자국/ 만고풍상 비바람에 몇 번이라 지어 갔나/ 에헤요 백사장도 못 믿을 이로다/ 푸르른 저기 저 물만 흘러 흘러가노라	Nodeul Riverside white sand beach, every single sand is a mark of my steps / How many times has it been made by the wind and rain / Hehe, I can't even trust the white sand beach / That blue water over there just flows and flows.
3. 노들강변 푸른 물, 네가 무삼 망령으로/ 재자가인 아까운 몸 몇몇이나 데려갔나/ 에헤요 네가 진정 마음을 돌려서/ 이 세상 쌓인 **한(*han*)**이나 두둥 싣고서 가거라[182]	Blue waters of the Nodeul River, you are a foolish spirit / How many of the precious bodies of the talented and beautiful people have you taken away / Hehe, you really should change your mind / Take all the accumulated **sorrows** of this world with you and go.

[Table 2-1] *Nodeul Riverside*'s Lyrics

The third verse appears to indirectly express sorrow for the independence fighters who perished under Japanese oppression.[183] In the final line of the verse, the word *han*—which is underlined—captures a uniquely Korean emotion: a bittersweet mix of melancholy, resentment, regret, and sadness.

See So-Young Lee (이소영), "Nodeul Riverside" ("노들강변"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore* (한국민속대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 25, 2025, https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/topic/detail/671.

[182] Eun-Ja Kim (김은자), "Nodeul Riverside" ("노들강변"), *Gugak Dictionary* (국악사전), n.d., accessed July 25, 2025, https://www.gugak.go.kr/ency/topic/view/736.

[183] Eung-Baek Ha (하응백), "Han Flowing through 'Nodeul Riverside'" ("노들강변'에 흐르는 恨"), *Sarang Madang: Naver Blog* (사랑마당: 네이버 블로그), n.d., accessed July 25, 2025, https://blog.naver.com/moonhdu/220092703476.

Han has long been expressed in Korean folksongs, often rooted in daily toil, the grief of losing loved ones, the homesickness of women bound by traditional marriage roles, or the pain of suppressed lives.[184] It is a feeling deeply embedded in the Korean consciousness—so much so that Koreans understand it without needing explanation. *Han* carries a clear and powerful emotional connotation.[185] Throughout *Nodeul Riverside*, the underlying sentiment is one of national resistance and profound resentment toward colonial rule.[186]

In contrast to *Nodeul Riverside*, *Pom Machi* (*Greeting the Spring*)[187] expresses joy and happiness in welcoming spring, conveying a bright and hopeful atmosphere. However, scholar Chipyong Kim interprets the song as a metaphor for suppressed emotions: winter symbolizes the period of Japanese colonization, while the melting of ice and arrival of spring represent Korea's liberation.[188]

In 1930, the year following the Gwangju Student Independence Movement,[189] poet Seok-jung Yun made the decision to dedicate himself to children's literature, believing that the future of the country rested in the growth of its young sprouts. He wrote this poem for the children's movement, and it was sung by a children's choir. The lyrics were adapted into a popular song with the tone of a nursery rhyme.[190]

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[184] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 61.

[185] Ibid., 62.

[186] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 16.; Eung-Baek Ha, "Han Flowing through 'Nodeul Riverside."

[187] Written by Seok-jung Yun, composed by Ho-wol Moon, and performed by singer Nan-young Lee, the song was released as a new record by Okeh Records in February 1934. See Singsing Gugak Delivery (싱싱국악배달부), "That Song Heard Every Spring: Lee Nan-Young's 'Spring Greeting'" ("새봄이면 들려오는 그 노래, 이난영 '봄맞이'"), *Singsing Gugak Delivery* (싱싱국악배달부), February 8, 2022, accessed July 26, 2025, https://singsingkukak.tistory.com/92

[188] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs,"16.

[189] The anti-Japanese independence movement led by students in the Gwangju area in 1929. See Se-Hyun Jung (정세현), "Gwangju Student Movement" ("광주학생운동"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 26, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0005301.

[190] Singsing Gugak Delivery, "That Song Heard Every Spring."

얼음이 풀려서 물 우에 흐르니 / 흐르는 물 우에 겨울이 간다 / **어허야하 어어야 어허으리** / 노를 저어라 음 봄맞이 가자	As the ice melts and flows over the water, With the flowing stream, winter drifts away. **Eo-heo-ya-ha, eo-eo-ya, eo-heo-eu-ri,** Row the boat—let's go welcome spring.
냇가에 수양버들 실실이 늘어져 / 흐르는 물 우에 봄 편지 쓴다 / **어허야하 어어야 어허으리** / 돛을 감어라 음 봄맞이 가자	By the stream, willow branches gently hang down, And on the flowing water, spring writes its letter. **Eo-heo-ya-ha, eo-eo-ya, eo-heo-eu-ri,** Raise the sail—let's go welcome spring.
제비 한 쌍이 물차고 날아와 / 어서 가보란다 님 계신 곳에 / **어허야하 어어야 어허으리** / 노를 저어라 음 봄맞이 가자	A pair of swallows fly in, cutting through the water, They urge us, "Go quickly, to where your love awaits." **Eo-heo-ya-ha, eo-eo-ya, eo-heo-eu-ri,** Row the boat—let's go welcome spring.

[Table 2-2] *Pom Machi* (Greeting the Spring)'s Lyrics[191]

The third line of each verse (see Table 2-2) repeats the phrase: "Eo-heo-ya-ha, eo-eo-ya, eo-heo-eu-ri" (어허야하 어어야 어허으리)—a traditional Korean rhythmic chant often found in folk songs. These non-lexical syllables, known as chuimsae (추임새), serve as vocal embellishments that add musical energy and emotional depth.[192] While chuimsae has no literal meaning, it functions like vocables in Western folk or pop songs, enhancing rhythm and atmosphere. Chuimsae is closely tied to the Korean concept of heung (흥)—a feeling of excitement, liveliness, and spirited joy.[193] Heung is a key aspect of Korean sentiment, and it is often expressed through chuimsae in traditional music. In this way, New Folk Song conveys not only sorrowful emotions like han (한), but also vibrant emotional energy through heung (흥).

[191] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs," 16; Singsing Gugak Delivery, "That Song Heard Every Spring: Lee Nan-Young's 'Spring Greeting'".

[192] P'ansori Society (판소리학회), "Chuimsae" ("추임새"), *P'ansori Society* (판소리학회), n.d., accessed July 26, 2025, http://www.pansori.or.kr/subList/32000006343.

[193] Eon-Woo Shin (신연우), "Heung" ("흥"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 26, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0077363.

Therefore, New Folk Song expresses a uniquely Korean sentiment, using textual and musical elements to reflect both the emotional depth and liveliness characteristics of Korean cultural identity.

II.4. Summary and Reflections: Chapter II

In 1933, the Japanese Government-General enacted the Disciplinary Rules to prevent the sale of subversive songs.[194] Following this, the Record Control Rules were introduced to censor recorded music more systematically. Many records were banned for reasons such as "disturbing public peace" or "disrupting public morals."[195] A total of 23 records were destroyed on the grounds of disturbing public order, and 20 were deemed indecent.[196] The first folk song record to be censored was "Arirang," the theme song of Woon-gyu Na's popular film of the same name.[197]

At this stage of organized music censorship, it becomes clear that the Japanese colonial government recognized Korean folk songs as expressions of nationalism. They viewed sound recordings as a potentially dangerous medium for spreading these ideas—going beyond mere economic control under colonial rule. Ironically, despite the government's efforts to suppress this music, the censored songs were often sung even more.[198] This suggests that resistance tends to grow when something is forcibly banned. Songs that resonated emotionally with the people

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[194] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 62.

[195] Jeong-gu Kwon (권정구), "Era-Defining Banned Albums and Songs" ("시대를 대표하는 금지앨범, 금지곡"), *Naver Knowledge Encyclopedia* (네이버 지식백과), provided by the Korean Popular Music Research Institute (한국대중가요연구소), n.d., accessed July 27, 2025, https://terms.naver.com/entry.naver?docId=3560308&cid=58276&categoryId=58607#TABLE_OF_CONTENT2.

[196] Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice," 62.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Atkins, "The Dual Career of 'Arirang'," 668.

could not be erased from their hearts and minds. After all, while authorities may control people's bodies, they cannot control their thoughts.

The perspectives of both international and Korean scholars on New Folk Song reveal the multifaceted role it played in modern Korean music. In her work *New Folksongs: Sinminyo of the 1930s*, Hilary Finchum-Sung[199] suggests that New Folk Song can be regarded as a genre of popular music that reflects and represents the values and aesthetics of Korean culture.[200] In addition, Do-hee Kwon argues that the meaning conveyed through New Folk Song is distinctly Korean and that its function served as a form of resistance to Japanese rule, ultimately contributing to the development of a national culture.[201]

Under the unique circumstances of Japanese colonization, the New Folk Song genre emerged as a reflection of the nation's struggle, utilizing a popular music form that blended traditional Korean folk songs with Western musical styles.[202] This hybrid approach appealed to both the older generation, who cherished Korean folk traditions, and the younger generation, who were drawn to Western music.

Crucially, New Folk Song helped unite Koreans as a community, expressing collective resistance against Japanese rule. Although some may view New Folk Song as a distorted or impure version of traditional music, it is widely recognized for its expression of 'Koreanness'—not Westernization or Japanization—because of the deep Korean sentiments embedded in its lyrics, musical references, and its fusion of cultural memory and historical context.

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[199] Hilary Finchum-Sung is an American ethnomusicologist and academic known for her scholarship on Korean traditional music (gugak), gender and sound performance, and the evolution of Korean musical cultures.

[200] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs,"15.

[201] Do-hee Kwon, "Industrial Folksong," 215.

[202] Finchum-Sung, "New Folksongs,"12.

Importantly, New Folk Song preserved the spirit and ancestry of Korean folk music, often "disguising" its traditional roots to avoid suppression by the Japanese government, which saw folk songs as a vehicle for nationalism.[203] By transforming its form to suit modern culture and appeal to younger audiences, New Folk Song challenged the idea that folk music was only for the elderly.[204] Through the recording industry, new folk songs —with iconic songs like "Arirang"—reached beyond Korea, finding audiences in Japan, China, other parts of Asia, and even Europe and America.

If folk songs do not evolve in response to societal changes—such as the shift from agriculture to industry, migration from rural areas to cities, or the transition from extended to nuclear families—they risk remaining only as relics of the past, like artifacts in a museum. To remain relevant, folk songs must adapt to the changing context of society. This ability to change and develop allows folk songs to live in the present while maintaining a connection to the past, and also opens up the possibilities for future growth.[205]

As discussed in Chapter II, during the period of Japanese colonization, Korean folk songs were transformed to reach a wider audience. These songs, especially in the form of New Folk Song, a genre of popular music, expressed both resistance against Japanese oppression and the sorrow of losing the nation.[206] Moving forward, Chapter III will explore how modern Korean choral composers incorporate folk songs into their works as a means of artistic expression.

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[203] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 205.

[204] Ibid.

[205] R. Anderson Sutton, "'Fusion' and Questions of Korean Cultural Identity in Music," *Korean Studies* 35 (2011): 18-21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23719448.

[206] Maliangkay, *Broken Voices,* 54.

III. The Sublimation of Korean Folk Songs into Art through Modern Korean Choral Compositions

III.1. The Origins of Modern Korean Choral Music and Twenty-First-Century Compositions of Korean Folk Songs

In the twenty-first century, Korean choral activities began to receive significant recognition on the global stage. One of the most impactful moments that introduced Korean choral music to American audiences was the Incheon City Chorale's performance, led by conductor Hak-won Yun, at the 2009 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference. For its fiftieth anniversary celebration, the ACDA selected 40 American choirs and invited four of the world's top choirs to perform. Among those invited were ensembles from Venezuela, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Incheon City Chorale.

At this prestigious event, the Incheon City Chorale delivered a successful performance that made a lasting impression. Their program included a modern arrangement of "Palsoseong" (*Eight Laughter Sounds*), a piece composed using laughter sounds that are universally understood, and "Menari Arirang", a reinterpretation of a traditional Korean folk song. The performance also made creative use of the stage space, further enhancing its impact and reception.[207]

The performance was met with great acclaim. As a result, in 2010, American university professors began visiting Korea to observe and study Korean choral practices. University choirs also flocked to Korea, eager to participate in choral clinics and learn from Korean conductors and ensembles.

[207] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 147.

In August 2014, Korea hosted the 10th World Symposium on Choral Music and Choral Festival, organized by the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM).[208] That year, 26 choirs from around the world and over 1,000 participants were invited to the event in Korea.[209]

At the 10th World Choir Games[210] held in 2018, the Korean choir Harmonize won the highest honor—a gold medal—following their gold medal victory at the 9th Games, achieving the proud distinction of being double gold medalists.[211] The World Choir Games, held every two years, took place in Gangneung, South Korea, from July 3, 2023.[212]

Although the history of Korean choral music spans about 140 years, the musical level and quality of Korean choirs are high and have been internationally recognized. This chapter will examine how Western choral music was introduced to Korea.

III.1.1. A Brief Historical Overview of Korean Choral Music

III.1.1-1. Korean Hymnal

Korea has a rich tradition of Korean music that differs significantly from Western musical styles. Before opening its doors to the outside world, Korea remained closed to foreign influence

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[208] Every three years, the World Symposium on Choral Music brings together choirs from around the world to showcase their unique choral traditions in an eight-day festival. See "Congratulatory Address for the 10th World Choir Symposium and Festival" ("제 10 회 세계합창심포지엄 및 합창축제 축사"), *Korea Copyright Commons* (공유마당), n.d., accessed August 1, 2025, https://gongu.copyright.or.kr/gongu/wrt/wrt/view.do?wrtSn=12201277&menuNo=200019.

[209] Gye-Seok Tak (탁계석), "National Theater Official Blog" ("국립극장 공식 블로그"), *Naver Blog* (네이버 블로그), n.d., accessed August 1, 2025, https://blog.naver.com/ntok2010/223751568229.

[210] The World Choir Games were established by the German foundation INTERKULTUR, inspired by the spirit of the Olympics. The event aims to foster harmony and mutual understanding among people of different nations through the shared experience of singing together. See Bo-Young Son (손보영), "2018 World Choir Games, and the Winning Korean Team" ("제 10 회 세계합창올림픽, 그리고 대한민국 우승팀"), *KOCCA* (한국국제문화교류진흥원), n.d., accessed August 1, 2025, https://welcon.kocca.kr/ko/info/trend/1932765.

[211] Bo-Young Son, "2018 World Choir Games."

[212] Young People's Chorus of NYC, "World Choir Games | Gangneung, South Korea – Young People's Chorus of NYC," April 4, 2025, accessed August 1, 2025, https://ypc.org/ypc-events/world-choir-games-gangneung-2023-2/.

and did not allow religious freedom. Foreign missionaries and religious documents were often met with severe persecution—missionaries were executed, and religious texts were burned.

However, Korea could not remain isolated forever. Faced with growing pressure from powerful foreign nations, the country was eventually forced to open its doors to international trade and diplomacy. Korea began signing a series of trade agreements with Western powers, starting with the United States in 1882, followed by treaties with Britain, Germany, Russia, France, and others. However, all of these agreements were unequal and heavily favored foreign interests.[213] Despite this, the period marked the beginning of religious freedom in Korea.

On April 5, 1885 (the 22nd year of King Gojong's reign), two American missionaries arrived at Incheon Port: Rev. Horace Grant Underwood (1859–1916) of the Presbyterian Church and Rev. Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858–1902) of the Methodist Church.[214] These missionaries dedicated themselves to social development through education, healthcare, and welfare work. As part of their efforts, they introduced Western music, including choral music, contributing to Korea's early exposure to Western musical traditions.

The first exposure Koreans had to Western music came through hymns. In 1892, Methodist missionaries Jones and Rothweiler compiled Korea's first hymnal, which contained 27 translated hymns.[215] This edition included only the lyrics and was sung in unison without musical notation.

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[213] National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회), "Ganghwado Treaty and the Enlightenment Movement" ("강화도 조약과 개화 운동"), *Our History Net (우리역사넷)*, n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://contents.history.go.kr/mobile/ta/view.do?levelId=ta_m62_0050_0020.

[214] Chun Koo (구천), "A Study of Music History in Korean Choral Music (한국합창역사연구)" (DMA diss., University of Gwangju, Gwangju, South Korea, 2013), 6.

[215] Chun Koo, *A Study of Music History*, 15.

In 1894, Presbyterian missionary H. G. Underwood published Korea's first hymnal with musical scores.[216] It was arranged in four-part harmony and included many gospel hymns that were popular in the United Kingdom and the United States at the time. Significantly, it also featured seven hymns composed by Koreans, marking the beginning of indigenous hymn writing.[217]

As hymnody developed in Korea, challenges with translating Western hymns into Korean—such as fitting Korean lyrics naturally into Western melodies—led to growing dissatisfaction. Awkward, forced adaptations and the simplification of formal honorifics like "*하옵소서*" (a respectful form of "please do") into more informal expressions such as "*해*" or "*하게*" ("do") highlighted the cultural and linguistic mismatch.[218] In response, there was increasing demand for hymns composed specifically for Korean worshipers by Korean composers—hymns that reflected the language, sentiment, and spiritual expression of the Korean people more authentically. The recently published *The New 21st Century Hymnal* (2006) holds great significance in that it includes 128 hymns composed by Koreans, reflecting Korean sentiment and cultural expression.[219]

III.1.1-2. The Origins of Korean Choral Culture from Church Choirs

The roots of Korean choral music can be traced back to the history of church choirs, as Western music was first introduced to Korea by Western missionaries. In the early development of Korean choral music, hymns arranged in four-part harmony, sung by church choirs, were the

[216] Ibid., 16.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., 22.
[219] Ibid., 45.

only available resources. Aside from choirs organized for foreign services and composed of foreign believers,[220] one of the first known Korean church choirs is believed to have been formed at Jangdaehyeon Church in Pyongyang (now in North Korea). This choir was composed entirely of men. The church's first pastor, Rev. Seonju Gil (1869 –1935), had a deep passion for music, especially traditional Korean music. He emphasized that "church music made with Korean melodies was more appropriate to the emotions of the Korean people."[221]

At that time, many Koreans struggled to read Western hymns and sing accurately according to melody and rhythm. A major challenge was the lack of trained musicians who could read and teach music. Recognizing this need, Rev. Gil appealed to the missionary department for help. In response, Eli M. Mowry (1880-1970) was sent to the church.[222] Around 1913 or 1914, he and his wife organized a choir composed of 16 young men.[223] According to a letter Mowry wrote to Rev. Jingyeong Gil, the son of Rev. Seonju Gil, this choir was the first known attempt in Korea to sing in four-part harmony.[224]

Due to Confucian cultural norms at the time, forming a mixed-gender choir was not immediately possible. Men and women sat separately in church—divided by a curtain—and even used separate entrances. Despite these limitations, the founding of this first male choir at Jangdaehyeon Church became a significant inspiration for the formation of church choirs across Korea.[225]

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[220] According to Appenzeller's diary, a choir performed during the Easter service on April 11, 1897. See Jung Soo Hong, *A History of Korean Church Music*, trans. Mi-Ock Kim (Seoul: Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press, 2013), 142.

[221] Quoted in Jung Soo Hong, *A History of Korean Church Music*, 143.

[222] Ibid., 144.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid., 145.

The choral tradition established by Jangdaehyeon Church significantly influenced churches and educational institutions in Seoul, including Jeongdong First Methodist Church and Ewha College. According to the *90-Year History of Jeongdong Jeil Church*, a formal choir was organized at the church in 1929 under the leadership of a trained conductor.[226] This marked a turning point, as the choir began singing in four-part harmony. Prior to this, church music typically involved solo performances, women's duets, or all-female choirs during services.[227]

Unlike Jangdaehyeon Church, which initially had an all-male choir, Jeongdong Jeil Church formed a mixed-gender choir. Historical records also show that even before 1929, female students from Ewha College occasionally participated in church music.[228] That same year, Mary E. Young—who had conducted the Ewha College choir from 1929 to 1934—was appointed as a music professor at Ewha College and established a formal choir there.[229]

However, the development of choral music in Korean churches faced significant challenges. One issue was highlighted in the 1922 issue of *The Christian Messenger* in an article titled "Concerning Church Music." It criticized the poor musical leadership in churches, which led to unprepared and low-quality four-part singing.[230] Similarly, a 1902 article titled "Seoul for Hymn" noted that male church members often sang hymns in a tone and style similar to that of young girls.[231]

These attitudes were deeply rooted in Confucian values, which emphasized strict separation between the roles of men and women. Within this worldview, men and women were

[226] Ibid., 151.
[227] Ibid., 152.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid., 155.
[231] Ibid., 156.

not seen as equal participants in public or spiritual life, and their interactions—even in music—were limited.[232] Overcoming such cultural barriers was a gradual process in the development of Korean church choirs.

The beginnings of church choirs in Korea laid the foundation for the development of Korean choral music. What started with simple unison singing has since evolved dramatically. Today, the level of choral music in Korea is considered world-class. The National Chorus of Korea played a pioneering role in this growth, leading to the establishment of over 60 municipal choirs across the country.[233]

However, this rapid development has also brought challenges. In many cases, Koreans have embraced Western music and culture without much critical reflection. As a result, Western music is often regarded simply as "music," while Korean music is typically referred to as "Korean music." This distinction reveals an implicit bias, where Western music is seen as the norm and Korean music as a separate or lesser category. Although Korean churches today are more open to incorporating Korean music than in the past, there is still a lingering perception that Korean traditional music is associated with shamanism,[234] which makes some churches hesitant to fully embrace it.

III.1.2. Reviving Korea's Native Voice

Western missionaries won the hearts of many Koreans through their contributions to education, healthcare, and social welfare. Their work was seen as reasonable, modern, advanced,

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[232] Ibid., 156

[233] Chun Koo, *A Study of Music History*, 201.

[234] Shamanism is a belief system centered around shamans who serve as intermediaries between the human and spiritual worlds. Shamans communicate directly with supernatural beings such as spirits, deities, and ancestors, often through rituals, trance, and divination.

equal, and comforting. However, after enduring Japanese colonial rule and the widespread destruction of the Korean War (1950–1953), much of South Korea was left in ruins. The country depended extensively on assistance from the United States to rebuild and grow its economy, leading to deep dependence on the U.S. in politics, economics, and culture. As a result, many Koreans became more familiar with Western culture than their own traditions, and Western music came to be viewed as modern and progressive. Rapid urbanization also contributed to the disconnection from hometowns and traditional ways of life.

Beginning in the 1970s, several movements—social, cultural, and academic—emerged with the goal of reviving traditional Korean values, aesthetics, and identity. These efforts reflected a growing desire to reconnect with Korea's cultural roots and reestablish a sense of national authenticity. In their early stages, many of these movements were closely tied to nationalism.[235]

The 1970s marked a period of intensified nationalism in the cultural sphere.[236] Two distinct currents developed: one led by the government, and the other driven by intellectuals and university students. Chung-hee Park, the 3rd President of South Korea (in office from 1963 to 1979), promoted a nationalist cultural agenda under slogans such as a "subjective view of national history" and "education with national identity," advocating for a uniquely Korean form of democracy.[237] To support this vision, his administration implemented a range of policies aimed at preserving and promoting traditional culture. These included the designation of intangible (now referred to as intangible cultural heritage) and tangible cultural assets, the

[235] Yang, "Globalization, Nationalism, and Regionalization," 185.

[236] Byung-ju Hwang (황병주), "Minjung Cultural Movement" ("민중문화운동"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), 2018, accessed August 2, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0075909.

[237] Byung-ju Hwang, "Minjung Cultural Movement."

restoration of national heritage sites, and the production of documentary artworks that reflected Korean history.[238] Such initiatives contributed to a growing nationalist interest in Korea's cultural legacy.

On the other hand, intellectuals and university students organized the Minjung (people's) Movement, viewing the *minjung*—the common people—as the true foundation of the Korean nation. This perspective emphasized a clear distinction between the *minjung* and the ruling elite, aiming to reconstruct national culture from the bottom up.[239]

Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, the Minjung Movement was a response to both authoritarian rule and the growing dominance of Western cultural influence. It sought to reclaim Korean identity through art, literature, and popular cultural expression. The Minjung art movement, in particular, aimed to reconnect with traditional Korean artistic forms while also embracing political engagement. Artists used their work to address social injustice, labor struggles, and the push for democratization, combining cultural heritage with a strong sense of activism.[240]

Another movement aimed at reviving Korean traditions in the 1990s was *Sinto buri* (pro-Korean), which means "the body and the land are one."[241] This slogan promoted the idea that Koreans should eat food grown in Korean soil, emphasizing the connection between health, identity, and local agriculture.[242] The movement emerged as a response to increasing

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[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Gi-seon Eo (어기선), "[Economic Review in History] Sinto buri" ("역사속경제리뷰 신토불이"), *Financial Review*, March 12, 2025, accessed August 2, 2025, http://www.financialreview.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=33481.

[242] Gi-seon Eo, "[Economic Review in History] Sinto buri."

Westernization and gained national attention in 1993, when the conclusion of the Uruguay Round trade negotiations raised concerns about the opening of Korea's rice market.[243]

Beyond agriculture, *Sinto buri* inspired a broader cultural shift toward respecting and preserving traditional Korean values. During Korea's rapid economic development, many people began to feel nostalgic for rural life and sought to reconnect with their cultural roots, including folk songs and regional traditions. This sentiment influenced various creative fields—literature, film, music, art, and architecture—where artists and thinkers began exploring Korean identity more deeply. In music, for example, composers increasingly sought to develop a uniquely Korean sound that reflected national pride and cultural authenticity.[244]

Finally, beyond these broader movements, one notable figure who has significantly influenced twenty-first-century Korean choral composition is conductor Hak-won Yun (b. 1938). His choirs have participated in and been invited to numerous international festivals, earning widespread acclaim and global recognition. A pivotal experience that shaped Yun's musical direction—and, in turn, influenced many contemporary Korean composers—occurred during a tour in Germany in the early 1980s, when his choir performed Bach's *Mass in B Minor*.[245] After the concert, German conductors remarked that although the performance was technically flawless—in pitch, rhythm, and technique—it lacked the true spirit of Bach. This comment left a lasting impression on Yun. He realized that, regardless of technical perfection, a cultural gap might still hinder the full emotional expression of the Western repertoire by Korean choirs.[246]

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[243] Ibid.
[244] Yang, "Globalization, Nationalism, and Regionalization," 185.
[245] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 140.
[246] Ibid.

From that moment, Yun began seeking music that was deeply rooted in Korean identity, yet modern and universal enough to resonate with international audiences.[247] In 1995, when he became the music director of the Incheon City Chorale, he took a significant step toward this vision by appointing young Korean composers as resident composers for the choir.[248] His goal was clear: to bring Korean music to the global stage by fostering new works that blended national character with international appeal.[249] As a result, his forward-thinking vision inspired a new generation of Korean composers to create choral works that integrate traditional Korean elements—such as folk melodies, rhythmic patterns, and language—with Western musical forms. This approach helped shape what is now recognized as a distinct 'Korean style' in global choral music.

III.1.3. Contemporary Choral Compositions Based on Korean Folk Songs

Many Korean choral works composed in the twenty-first century are rooted in traditional folk elements, though not all are directly based on specific folk songs. This section focuses exclusively on modern choral compositions that draw directly from traditional Korean folk songs. Special attention will be given to compositions and arrangements created for specific purposes, such as album productions aimed at promoting Korean music globally, commissions for national and international festivals, or pieces written for commemorative events.

Eorang **<어랑>**, composed by Byunghee Oh in 2015, was commissioned for the Incheon City Choir under the direction of Hak-won Yun, in conjunction with their participation in the

[247] Ibid., 146
[248] Ibid., 140.
[249] Ibid.

IFCM[250] held in Korea.[251] This piece is based on *Singosan Taryeong*, a modern folk variation of *Arirang* from the Hamgyeong Province. Also known as *Eorang Taryeong*, it is especially well known for its distinctive refrain: *Eorang~ Eorang~ Eo~heoya*. Oh's *Eorang* was created using the opening phrase of the refrain, "Eorang~," as its main motif.[252]

Sae-ya Sae-ya **<새야새야>**, which will be examined in detail in section III.3.2, by Byunghee Oh, was composed as the title piece for the National Chorus of Korea's 2022 "Voices of Solace" project, an initiative aimed at promoting Korean arts globally.[253] *Sae-ya Sae-ya* incorporates the folk melody *Sae-ya Sae-ya Parang Sae-ya* and is inspired by the historical background of the Donghak Peasant Revolution, led by General Bong-jun Jeon during the Japanese invasion.[254]

Eo Gi Young Cha **<어기영차>**, composed by Hyowon Woo, was commissioned for the 2022 album Voices of Solace by the National Chorus of Korea, as part of the Project for the Global Expansion of Korean Art[255], alongside works such as *Sae-ya Sae-ya* by Byunghee Oh. *Eo Gi Young Cha* is a type of boat song, traditionally sung while fishing or performing labor on the water. Originating from Korea's Gyeongsang province, this folk song reflects the rhythmic patterns of rowing and other boat-related work.[256]

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[250] The International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) was founded in 1982 to promote communication and exchange among choral musicians worldwide. Since its establishment, the IFCM has actively fulfilled this mission through a diverse range of projects and programs. See The International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM), "Mission," accessed May 13, 2025, https://www.ifcm.net/about-us/mission.

[251] Byunghee Oh, email message to author, June 22, 2024.

[252] Byunghee Oh, email to author, June 24, 2024.

[253] Byunghee Oh, email to author, June 22, 2024.

[254] Byunghee Oh, email to author, June 22, 2024.

[255] "Eo Gi Young Cha" ("어기영차"), composed and published by Hyowon Woo (우효원), YouTube, October 13, 2024, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AZYhgvx0SA.

[256] Hyoju Kang (강효주), "Batnorae" ("뱃노래"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Traditional Music* (국악사전), National Gugak Center (국립국악원), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.gugak.go.kr/ency/topic/view/842.

In her reinterpretation of the traditional song, Hyowon Woo blends the rhythmic vitality of Korean folk music with a Western modern compositional style, emphasizing the refrain to make it especially striking. The four syllables of Eo Gi Young Cha unfold in a cyclical and forceful pattern, capturing the physical intensity of collective labor.[257] Phrases like "Set sail!" (배 띄어라) and "Row the boat!" (노 저어라) are delivered as solo calls, with Eo Gi Young Cha functioning as the choral response—a call-and-response structure[258] enriched by contemporary harmonic and rhythmic treatments drawn from modern Western music.

Me-Na-Ri **<메나리>**, composed by Hyo-Won Woo, was written for a 2009 performance at the ACDA[259] Conference.[260] This piece is often referred to as "spatial music" because of its innovative use of physical space, lighting, and multiple choirs.[261] Originally, three separate vocal groups begin scattered throughout the performance space and gradually converge on stage, using only the resonant sounds of buk (Korean drum) and jing (gong) as accompaniment.[262] The result is a mysterious and immersive sonic experience that pushes the boundaries of traditional choral music. The entire text of *Me-Na-Ri* is a variation on the phrase "Ari-ari-rang," a stylized adaptation of the traditional Korean folk tune *Arirang*.[263] The work is a modern choral interpretation of Korean melodic heritage, blending traditional Korean musical elements with contemporary choral expression.

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[257] "Eo Gi Young Cha," composed by Woo, YouTube.

[258] Ibid.

[259] ACDA is the abbreviation for the American Choral Directors Association.

[260] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 145.

[261] "Me-Na-Ri – 2009 ACDA Oklahoma" ("메나리 (공간음악)"), composed by Hyowon Woo (우효원), YouTube video, January 14, 2021, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YdiSwLYRY4.

[262] Sookhee Jeong (정숙희), "Kim Mooseop's Opera Appearance and Hyowon Woo's 'Me-Na-Ri' Choir," *Miju Korean Daily* (미주 한국일보), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, http://www.koreatimes.com/article/20141210/889809.

[263] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 152-3.
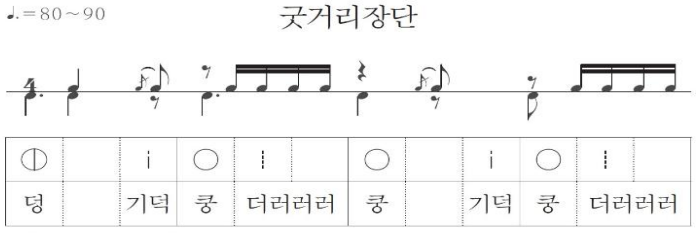
Nilliriya **<닐리리야>**, composed by Hyo-young Ahn, was commissioned for the 178th regular concert of the Incheon City Choir in 2022.[264] *Nilliriya* is a Gyeonggi folk song known for its simple and lively rhythm in the *Gutgeori jangdan*.[265] The title comes from the nonsensical syllables "Nilliriya," which appear in the song's refrain.[266] Despite its cheerful rhythm, the lyrics express sorrow over longing for a loved one—possibly reflecting the gloomy atmosphere of the late Joseon Dynasty.[267] Interestingly, the music maintains a joyful and spirited character throughout, creating a striking contrast with the sadness of the lyrics. In this arrangement, Hyo-young Ahn contrasts colors and moods by alternating between a solo alto section and a full-chorus refrain. The original *Gutgeori* rhythm is preserved, while Western harmonies are skillfully blended with traditional Korean melodic and rhythmic elements, creating a vibrant fusion of styles.

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[264] Incheon City Chorale (인천시립합창단), "Nilliriya – Gyeonggi Folk Song, Arranged by Ahn Hyo-Young, 178th Regular Concert Live Performance," YouTube video, 6:17, January 12, 2023, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA5MbkoTwu4.

[265] Hyoju Kang (강효주), "Nilliriya" ("닐리리야"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Traditional Music* (국악사전), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.gugak.go.kr/ency/topic/view/839.

Gutgeori Jangdan is a traditional Korean 12/8 rhythmic pattern (see Ex. 3-8).



[Ex. 3-8] Gutgeori Jangdan

Source: Hyesung Ban (반혜성), "Gutgeori Jangdan" ("굿거리장단"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore* (한국민속대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/kr/topic/detail/6176.

[266] Byung-ki Hwang (황병기), "Nilliriya" ("닐리리야"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0013390.

[267] Miseon Im (임미선), "Nilliriya" ("닐리리야"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Folklore* (한국민속대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/topic/%EB%8A%B4%EB%A6%AC%EB%A6%AC%EC%95%BC.

As introduced pieces, many Korean choral works based on traditional folk songs have been created for diverse purposes, such as invitations to international festivals like IFCM and ACDA, participation in cultural promotion projects that produce album recordings, and inclusion in regular concert programs. As musical supply and demand increase, Korean choral repertoire continues to expand and reach audiences around the world.

III.2. Historical Background and Lyrics of the Folk Song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

III.2.1. Historical Origins of *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

To understand the folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, it is necessary to look at the political and social changes that occurred after Korea opened its ports following the 1876 Treaty of Ganghwa with Japan.[268]

Two major issues arose that deeply affected the lives of ordinary people. First, the influx of foreign trade disrupted Korea's agrarian society. Foreign merchants—particularly those from Japan and China—imported cotton goods and daily necessities, selling them at high prices, while buying essential agricultural products like rice and beans at low prices. Japanese merchants, in particular, aggressively purchased rice across the country, resulting in a severe shortage in rural areas and devastating the livelihoods of farmers.[269] In response, some provinces attempted to ban grain exports, but Japan paradoxically demanded compensation from the Korean government for these actions.[270]

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[268] Won-sun Lee (이원순), "Ganghwado Treaty" ("강화도조약"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture (한국민족문화대백과사전)*, The Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원), n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0001508.

[269] National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회), "Donghak Peasant Movement" ("동학 농민 운동"), *Our History Net (우리역사넷)*, n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://contents.history.go.kr/mobile/kc/view.do?levelId=kc_i401500&code=kc_age_40.

[270] National Institute of Korean History, "Donghak Peasant Movement (동학 농민 운동)," *Our History Net*.

Second, the crisis was not only external but internal as well. Government officials were corrupt and greedy, focused solely on their personal gain. Many peasants, unable to pay the burdensome taxes, fled their villages in desperation.[271] Faced with both external exploitation and internal corruption, the common people lost trust in the government and officials and began to question their obligation to obey the ruling class.[272]

The oppressed class, with no place to find rest or relief in the world, turned to religion for hope. One such religion was Donghak,[273] which quickly spread among the common people. Donghak's philosophy taught that every person carries the "Lord of Heaven" within their body.[274] This belief emphasized that anyone, regardless of status, could become a noble person by embracing faith in Heaven within themselves. Furthermore, believers were called to become protectors of the nation and its people.[275]

Donghak recognized the humanity and personhood of those who were traditionally treated as lower-class or insignificant. It offered dignity and empowerment to the ruled, not just as subjects but as active agents of change.[276] Eventually, in 1894, this movement culminated in the Donghak Peasant Rebellion. The people rose to demand reform, calling for the abolition of the class system, resistance to foreign intervention, and the correction of a corrupt and failing

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[271] National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회), "Bong-jun Jeon Leading the Donghak Peasant Movement" ("전봉준 동학 농민 운동을 이끌다"), *Our History Net (우리역사넷)*, n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://contents.history.go.kr/mobile/eh/view.do?levelId=eh_n0660_0010&code=eh_age_40.

[272] National Institute of Korean History, "Bong-jun Jeon Leading the Donghak Peasant Movement," *Our History Net*.

[273] Donghak is a religion founded by Je-u Choi in April 1860. Rooted in the belief in serving the Lord of Heaven, Donghak emphasizes the protection of the nation and the salvation of the people as its core values. See Il-cheol Sin (신일철), "Donghak" ("동학"), *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (한국민족문화대백과사전), n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0016857.

[274] Il-cheol Sin, "Donghak."

[275] Ibid.

[276] Ibid.

government. They took up arms against government forces in pursuit of justice and national restoration.[277]

The advent of the Donghak Peasant Rebellion was sparked by civil unrest in Gobu County, Jeolla Province.[278] Gobu, known for its fertile fields and reliable water supply from the Dongjin River, became a prime target for exploitation by corrupt officials. In late 1892, Byeong-gap Cho was appointed as the governor of Gobu, and he quickly gained notoriety for his greed and abuse of power.[279]

Among his many misdeeds, Cho ordered the construction of irrigation dams by cutting down trees without the owners' permission and forcing farmers into unpaid labor. Once the irrigation system was complete, he imposed a water tax on the very farmers who had built it. His corruption extended further when he demanded money from the peasants to build a monument in honor of his father. When the peasants approached him to express their grievances, they were beaten and imprisoned instead of being heard.[280]

This is where Bong-jun Jeon enters the story. His father had died as a result of Byeong-gap Cho's abuses.[281] Unable to tolerate the corruption and suffering any longer, Bong-jun Jeon organized a peasant uprising around the Donghak followers. This marked the beginning of the Donghak Peasant Rebellion—a movement sparked by injustice and fueled by the will of the oppressed to fight back.

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[277] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 186.

[278] Jeolla Province is located in the southwestern corner of South Korea, bordered by the Yellow Sea (West Sea), and divided into North Jeolla and South Jeolla.

[279] Chang-su Kim (김창수), "Donghak Movement (동학운동)," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture (한국민족문화대백과사전)*, n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0016865.

[280] National Institute of Korean History, "Bong-jun Jeon Leading the Donghak Peasant Movement."

[281] Ibid.

The movement quickly spread throughout Jeolla Province. During this time, Bong-jun Jeon organized the Donghak Peasant Army, which successfully defeated government forces in several battles, gaining strength and momentum. However, the tide turned when the Japanese military, alongside government troops armed with superior weapons, launched a counterattack against the peasants.[282] In March 1895, Bong-jun Jeon, the leader of the peasant army, was captured and executed by hanging. Approximately 400,000 Donghak peasant soldiers lost their lives, and the rebellion came to an end after just one year.[283]

In the aftermath, the surviving peasants, filled with grief and sorrow, sang the folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya* as an expression of their pain and loss.[284] Although the Donghak Peasant Revolution ultimately failed to achieve its goals, it is remembered as a powerful attempt to give voice to the common people and as a resistance against the ruling class and foreign intervention, especially by Japan. It marked a crucial first step toward Korea's modern transformation[285] and the rise of popular consciousness. The folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, sung during the Donghak Peasant Revolution, should be understood and interpreted within this historical context as a powerful expression of the movement's legacy and the people's sorrow and resistance.

III.2.2. Voices of Sorrow: Interpreting the Lyrics of *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

Sae-ya Sae-ya is known as a folk song of the Donghak movement, but today it is widely sung as a standardized children's song.[286] *Sae-ya Sae-ya* appears in various regions, featuring

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[282] Chang-su Kim, "Donghak Movement (동학운동)."

[283] Dong-Eun No (노동은), "Music of Donghak (동학의 음악)," *Yeoksa Yeongu, The Journal of History (역사연구)*, no. 28 (June 2015): 23.

[284] Dong-Eun No, "Music of Donghak," 23.

[285] National Institute of Korean History, "Bong-jun Jeon Leading the Donghak Peasant Movement."

[286] Do-hee Kwon, **"**Signs of Resistance and Victory," 186.

similar lyrics, musical forms, and melodic structures.[287] Closely associated with the Donghak Peasant Revolution, the song is believed to have been sung by ordinary people across the country, many of whom actively participated in the movement. While its core elements remained consistent, regional variations emerged, shaped by local dialects and distinctive folk musical traditions.[288]

The lyrical structure will be examined. The song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, characterized by a four-syllable, four-beat rhythmic pattern, is found across the country with minimal variation in its lyrical content. Below are several examples collected from different regions.

Muju County, North Jeolla Province, South Korea	North Pyongan Province, North Korea	Boeun region, North Chungcheong Province, South Korea
새야 새야	새야새야	새야새야
포랑새야	파랑새야	파랑새야
녹뒤 낭케	녹두 잎에	녹두낭게
앉지 마라	앉은 새야	앉지마라
녹뒤 꽃이	녹두 잎이	녹두꽃이
떨어저마	깐딱하면	떨어지면
청포 장사	너 죽을 줄	청포장사
울고 간다[289]	왜 모르니[290]	울고간다[291]

[Table 3-3] The Lyrics of *Sae-ya Sae-ya* from Different Regions

[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

[289] "Parang-yo (파랑새요)," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture (한국민족문화대백과사전)*, n.d., accessed July 30, 2025, https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0059553.

[290] "Parangsae-yo," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*.

[291] Hyeong-o Mo (모형오), "Sae-ya Sae-ya (새야새야)," *Encyclopedia of Korean Traditional Music (국악사전)*, n.d., accessed July 30, 2025, https://www.gugak.go.kr/ency/topic/view/990.

As shown in Table 3-3, although the wording of the lyrics varies slightly, the overall rhythmic structure follows a consistent repeating pattern: each line contains four syllables, and each stanza consists of four lines. This musical symmetry made the song easy to memorize and well-suited for oral transmission. The only distinction between the left and right lyrics lies in the dialect used, suggesting that the regions where these versions emerged were geographically close. Since the Donghak Peasant Revolution began in Jeolla Province and later spread to other areas, the version on the left may be closer to the original. Therefore, for convenience, only the left and middle versions will be translated to examine any differences in meaning (see Table 3-4).

Muju County, North Jeolla Province, South Korea	North Pyongan Province, North Korea
Hey bird, hey, blue bird, Don't sit on the mung bean field. If the mung bean flower falls, The mung bean jelly merchant cries.[292]	Bird, bird, blue bird, sitting on a mung bean leaf, Don't you know you'll die when the leaf shakes?[293]

[Table 3-4] English Translation of *Sae-ya Sae-ya* Lyrics[294]

If we examine only the lyrics, one interpretation is that, because Korea was traditionally an agricultural society, the presence of birds in the fields was not considered charming, but rather a source of concern for farmers. Birds often caused damage, affecting both the quantity and quality of grain harvests, so farmers had to chase them away. As mentioned in the previous

[292] "*Nokdu Flower (OST) – Sae-ya Sae-ya Parangsae-ya (새야 새야 파랑새야),*" LyricsTranslate, translated by Miley Lovato, May 12, 2019, accessed July 30, 2025, https://lyricstranslate.com/en/nokdu-flower-ost-saeya-saeya-palangsaeya-english.

[293] A Literal Translation of the Original Korean.

[294] The English translation of the Korean folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, originally composed of eight lines, has been condensed into four lines for smoother phrasing.

chapter, the folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya* is associated with the Donghak Peasant Revolution. In this context, the lyrics should be understood as metaphorical, carrying significant symbolic meaning.

In the lyrics on the right side of Table 3-4, three symbolic figures appear: the blue bird, the mung bean flower, and the mung bean field. Bong-jun Jeon was commonly called *Nokdu* (meaning "mung bean") due to his small stature, and he later became known by the nickname *General Nokdu*.[295] Thus, the mung bean flower can be interpreted as representing Bong-jun Jeon, the leader of the peasant army. The blue bird symbolizes the Japanese troops, as their military uniforms were blue. The mung bean field may represent the common people who supported the Donghak army. Finally, the line describing the fall of the mung bean flower is sometimes interpreted as a "*chamyo* (讖謠)—a prophetic folk song—alluding to the eventual failure of the Donghak Peasant Revolution"[296].

While the lyric on the right side of Table 3-4 does not literally include the line "Don't sit on the mung bean field," the overall meaning conveys a similar warning.[297] However, the reason for the warning differs: it is not because "the mung bean jelly merchant cries," but rather because the bird is killed.[298] If the blue bird is interpreted as symbolizing the Japanese army, the final line of the right-hand lyrics can be understood as expressing resistance or hostility toward the invading forces.[299]

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[295] "Parangsae-yo," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*.
[296] Hyeong-o Mo, "*Saeya Saeya,*" Encyclopedia of Korean Traditional Music.
[297] "Parangsae-yo," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.

III.2.3. Romanized Lyrics to Aid Pronunciation

Advanced singers who study voice in college usually know the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), as many Western classical songs are written in languages such as German, Italian, or French. However, members of non-auditioned choirs, community choirs, church choirs, and children's choirs are generally not familiar with IPA.

This study is intended for music educators and choral conductors in Western contexts who work with singers who may not have formal vocal training. These educators often need to guide their singers in accurate pronunciation, particularly when performing songs in unfamiliar languages. To support a broad range of vocalists—not only advanced or classically trained singers—this study introduces a romanized version of *Sae-ya Sae-ya*. Romanization is the process of converting non-Latin or vernacular writing systems into the Roman (Latin) alphabet.[300]

Romanization is sometimes criticized for failing to accurately capture the sounds of a language, which can negatively impact pronunciation. For example, the Korean consonant ㄹ, called *rieul*, is often romanized as either "L" or "R," though its actual sound is somewhere in between and distinctly Korean—not equivalent to either English sound.[301]

Romanization is a helpful tool for beginners, providing a basic understanding of pronunciation, although it cannot capture the original Korean sounds. Because it uses the same alphabet, it gives less anxiety to people who use alphabet-based languages and makes them more comfortable dealing with romanized Korean text.

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[300] "Middle East and Islamic Studies Library Resources: Romanization/Transliteration," Harvard Library, n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://guides.library.harvard.edu/mideast/romanization.

[301] Learn Korean with GO! Billy Korean, "3 Reasons to Avoid Romanization for Korean," YouTube video, April 13, 2018, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2jPpO7VG5k.

Two romanizations of the lyrics *Sae-ya Sae-ya* can be found online. One was created by Beth Thompson[302] and the other by the South Korean vocal group FORESTELLA (포레스텔라).[303] Although FORESTELLA is composed of Korean members, they primarily perform in English. The group performed *Sae-ya Sae-ya* for the Korean drama *Nokdu Flower* (*The Mung Bean Flower*).[304] The two romanizations are identical, except for differences in word spacing (see Table 3-5).

Beth Thompson	FORESTELLA (포레스텔라)
Saeya saeya parangsaeya nokdubate anji mara nokdukkochi tteoreojimyeon cheongpojangsuulgoganda[305]	saeya saeya parangsaeya nokdu bate anji mara nokdu kkochi tteoreojimyeon cheongpojangsu ulgo ganda[306]

[Table 3-5] Two Romanizations of the Lyrics *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

[302] Beth Thompson, a music teacher, created the educational website "Beth's Notes" as a resource for music educators. "Beth's Notes" showcases songs from diverse genres and cultures, such as American folk, Native American music, and traditional songs from around the world. See *Beth's Notes Songs & Resources*, April 12, 2025, accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/.

[303] Forestella (Korean: 포레스텔라) is a South Korean male vocal quartet that performs in a crossover style, blending genres such as classical, pop, and traditional music.

[304] The drama *Nokdu Flower* is set against the historical backdrop of the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894. See *Nokdu Flower (녹두꽃) OST Part 1 (SBS Friday-Saturday Drama) / Forestella (포레스텔라)*, Genie Music, n.d., accessed July 31, 2025, https://www.genie.co.kr/detail/albumInfo?axnm=81195900.

[305] Beth Thompson, "*Sae-ya Sae-ya Parangsae-ya,*" *Beth's Notes Songs & Resources*, July 27, 2025, accessed July 30, 2025, https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2024/06/saeya-saeya-parangsaeya.html.

[306] Aliana, "*FORESTELLA (포레스텔라) – Sae-ya Sae-ya Parangsae-ya (새야 새야 파랑새야) [Lyrics],*" *Sleeplessaliana*, April 27, 2019, accessed July 31, 2025, https://sleeplessaliana.com/2019/04/26/forestella-%ED%8F%AC%EB%A0%88%EC%8A%A4%ED%85%94%EB%9D%BC-%EC%83%88%EC%95%BC-%EC%83%88%EC%95%BC-%ED%8C%8C%EB%9E%91%EC%83%88%EC%95%BC-bird-bird-blue-bird-lyrics/.

III.3. Analysis of the Modern Choral Arrangement of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

III.3.1. Byunghee Oh's Compositional Perspectives and Techniques in Korean Folk Song Composition and Arrangement

I conducted an interview with Composer Byeong-hee Oh via email (see Appendix 1: Interview with Composer Byeong-hee Oh (English and Korean)). Both Western and Asian audiences often wonder why Korean choral composers combine traditional Korean elements with Western compositional techniques, and whether traditional Korean music alone is enough to convey its authenticity. Her responses reveal her philosophy and approach toward fusing Korean and Western music, offering insights into her compositional mindset.

In an email interview with composer Byung-hee Oh, she emphasizes the importance of gaining sympathy from both Korean and Western perspectives. Oh explains that her music is neither solely Korean nor solely Western but rather contains both Korean and Western elements. It is significant for her to integrate historical and contemporary elements as well as Korean and Western spaces. Furthermore, Oh tries to maintain a balance between artistry and popularity. Rather than leaning one way, she aims to create music that is artistic yet accessible to the general public. In my interpretation, Oh views music as part of culture, not something created solely by a specific elite, politicians, or artists. She focuses on creating music that the public can understand and enjoy. So, her music is shared by both young and old, not only in Korea but also abroad, combining art and the public.

When composing or arranging traditional Korean folk songs, Oh meticulously researches the social, political, and economic circumstances of that era in which the songs were created. This allows her to understand the lives and suffering of the people who originally sang them, enabling her to express these emotions in her compositions. For example, "Saeya Saeya" became

a representative Korean folk song of the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894. The composer then delves even deeper into the sociopolitical atmosphere of the late Joseon Dynasty and the daily lives of farmers. Oh examines how persecution arose from the corruption of the ruling class and the pressure exerted by foreign powers, which forced farmers to suffer greatly. This persecution led to the Donghak Peasant Revolution, which influenced the anti-Japanese resistance and the independence movement. Perhaps this is why, when I conduct or listen to her compositions or arrangements based on traditional Korean folk songs, I feel that she goes beyond conveying historical facts and instead shares the pain these farmers endured with modern audiences.

Her profound historical research and her willingness to empathize with the times likely stem from her affinity for program music and impressionistic music, which express situations, themes, stories, scenes, and ideas through sound, rather than from absolute music. Many of her works are described as choral symphonic poems, choral epics, choral musicals, and so on. Since most of her compositions deal primarily with Korean history, she inevitably incorporates Korean folk songs and music of a distinctly Korean character. For example, in 2019, she composed music for the celebration of Korean Independence Day on March 1. This work is the cantata *Light of the East*. *Arirang*, Korea's most well-known folk song, appears in several places throughout the piece. In order to portray the sorrow of the independence movement resisting Japanese rule, the composer sought to express Korean suffering through the use of *Arirang*, reflecting the pain of being forced to abandon the Korean language and even Korean names after Japan's occupation. Because folk songs have been a constant part of Korean life, they evoke a strong sense of persuasiveness and resonance. Among these folk songs, the table below simply lists those that have been composed or arranged for choral music.

Title		URL address	Publisher
Saeya Saeya (2021, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5YDEG8UDuQ	Under discussion for U.S. publication
Eorang (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5hqKOXGEYI	2025 Walton Music
Ganggangsullae (mixed, female, piano accompaniment)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAkKhKi-sjU	Final edits in progress at Walton
Boat Song (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhLZqT8vOvU	Korea Chorus Center (Korean Version)
Kwaijina Chingching (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFhxnF5qfm4	2025 Walton Music
Miryang Arirang (piano accompaniment, with assorted drums)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXH1htCZS18	Korea Chorus Center (Korean Version)
Gunbam Taryeong & Kkaturi Taryeong (piano accompaniment)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYFJQ9F8vWw	Korea Chorus Center (Korean Version)
Arirang (2018 Orchestra Version)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsfWUTRbsyk	Not yet published
Arirang (2021 mixed, female, a cappella)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFBovFqkqmg	Under discussion for U.S. publication
Taepyeongga (2022, female, piano accompaniment)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWSh63ZRIvU	Not yet published

[Table 3-6] Choral Pieces Composed and Arranged Based on Folk Songs by Byung-hee Oh

The most important philosophy Oh holds is to create works that touch the hearts of listeners. To do that, she must first be emotionally moved herself. Oh believes that only by moving herself can she convey that emotion to her listeners. This self-experienced emotional

depth is crucial. As a conductor, I also experience a profound sense of emotion when performing, both personally and through the choir. Especially when preparing for rehearsals, as I immerse myself in the music and gain a deeper understanding of the piece, my emotions and interpretation naturally guide the choir. However, if I remain uncertain or unclear about the work, the quality of the performance inevitably suffers. Therefore, not only the composer but also the performer must fully embrace the piece and grasp its message; in line with Oh's philosophy, this is what allows us to move the hearts of listeners.

III.3.2. Musical Analysis of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

In the summer of 2024, I began searching for Korean choral pieces based on traditional folk songs for my dissertation. Among several works by Byunghee Oh that aligned with my research focus, I selected *Sae-ya Sae-ya* for detailed analysis. This piece was also performed in April 2025 as part of my doctoral recital. During the preparation process, I studied the work closely.

The score is written for three choirs and appears complex at first glance. However, the individual vocal lines largely remain on single tones or move in stepwise motion. When sung together, these lines create a rich and intricate texture.

One of the most striking features of this piece is its use of quartal harmony, built on perfect fourths and whole-tone intervals. This approach contrasts sharply with traditional Western harmonic conventions, which emphasize thirds and major/minor tonal relationships. Because perfect fourths are rarely used in functional Western harmonic progressions, the harmony in *Sae-ya Sae-ya* feels non-functional in the traditional Western sense.
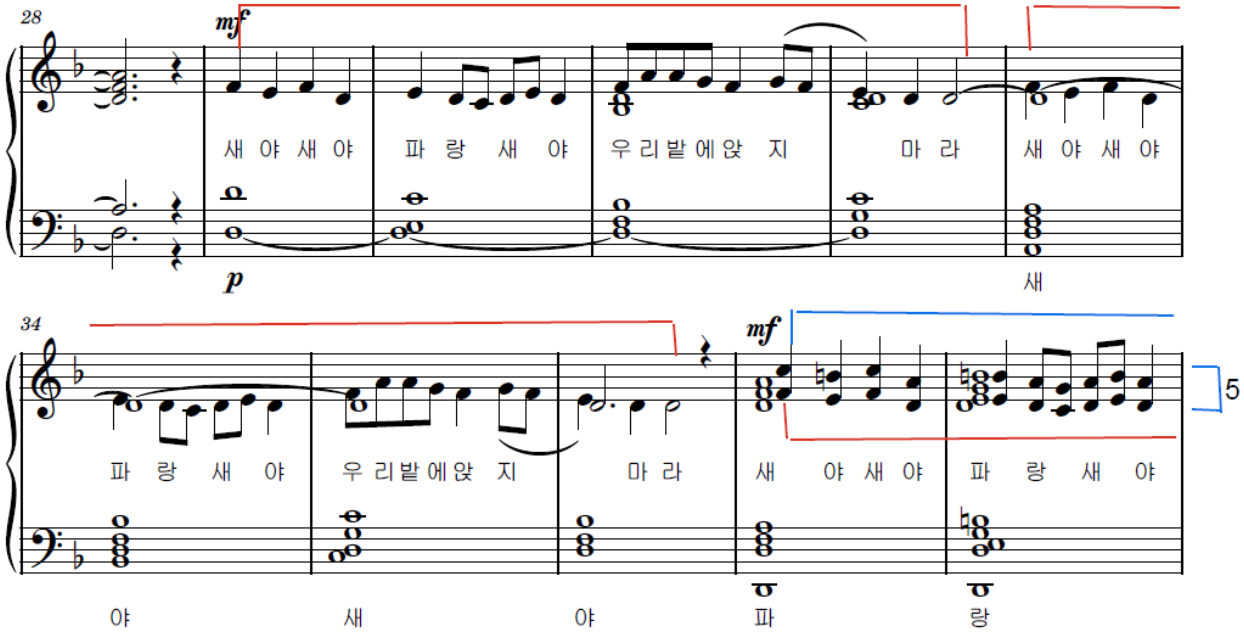
In this chapter, I use conventional Western music theory to analyze the scale and harmonic features of the piece. Furthermore, I identify the limitations of traditional Western theory in analyzing Oh's compositional language, which does not fully conform to Western tonality. I also examine whether Oh's compositional technique is connected to the Korean *Sae-ya* chord. Finally, the analysis shows how the original folk melody is transformed within Oh's choral setting.

D Aeolian Mode

Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya* centers around the pitches A and D, both of which function prominently as pedal points throughout the piece. While the recurrence of A initially suggests a possible A Phrygian context, the absence of characteristic Phrygian relationships (such as A–C–E) weakens this interpretation. Instead, A consistently supports D, positioning D as the modal center.

Chromatic alterations—particularly the occurrences of both B/Bb and E/Eb—indicate modal flexibility and point toward an Aeolian framework. Two possible interpretations arise: G Aeolian and D Aeolian. While G Aeolian may initially seem plausible, especially due to the Eb inflections, the fact that the bass both begins and ends on A (the supertonic of G Aeolian) makes this modal center unlikely. In tonal and modal practice, framing a piece with the second scale degree is atypical, prompting a shift in interpretation toward D Aeolian.

Within D Aeolian, the alternation between Bb/B and Eb/E appears purposeful rather than arbitrary. These accidentals often occur in pairs and coincide with chords moving in parallel motion. This suggests that melodic direction and voice leading take precedence over functional harmonic progressions (see Ex. 3-9).



[Ex. 3-9] 5th Parallels of Soprano and Alto in Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 28-38[307]

In measures 37-38 (Ex. 3-9), the main melody appears in the alto part, with the soprano above it, forming a fifth interval. The B natural in the soprano arises because of the parallel motion with the E in the alto. This change from Bb to B natural in the soprano reflects the priority of the melody and the fifth-parallel movement between the voices. Taken together, these observations support the conclusion that *Sae-ya Sae-ya* is composed in D Aeolian.

Melody

The piece features two distinct melodies: one in the A section (measures 13–17, 21–25, 29–32) and another in the B section (measures 60–75). The melody in the A section was

[307] A reduced version of the work, originally written for three choirs, is used so that all parts can be seen more clearly.

composed by the composer Byunghee Oh, as she described in our exchanged emails.[308] Oh mentioned that she aimed to make the melody resemble Gregorian chant, which is familiar to Western listeners.

The melody in the A section can be divided into three groups:

- The first melody (M1), found in measures 13–16, consists of five notes, with D serving as the central tone. Its modal character is highlighted by the absence of a semitone between C and D, and the melody resembles plainchant due to the smooth, stepwise motion. The largest interval is a minor third, which is typical for plainchant (see Appendix 3).
- The second melody (M2), found in measures 21–24, is an extension of M1, containing seven notes. Like M1, it has a stepwise motion and retains the same modal character, evoking the qualities of plainchant (see Appendix 3).
- The third melody (M3), found in measures 29–32, starts on F but resolves to D, creating a smooth, modal progression back to the tonic (see Appendix 3).

In the B section, the melody is directly derived from the Korean folk song *Sae-ya*, which is based on the Korean Sae-ya scale.

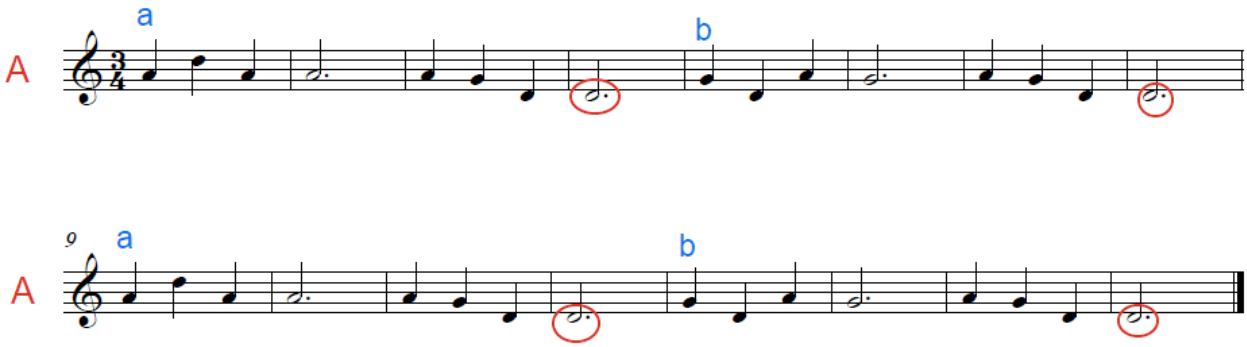
Korean Sae-ya Scale[309]

This section examines how the composer incorporates the *Sae-ya* scale in her choral piece *Sae-ya Sae-ya*. The melody of the tenor solo from measures 60 to 75 bears a resemblance to the folk melody of *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, yet there are notable differences.
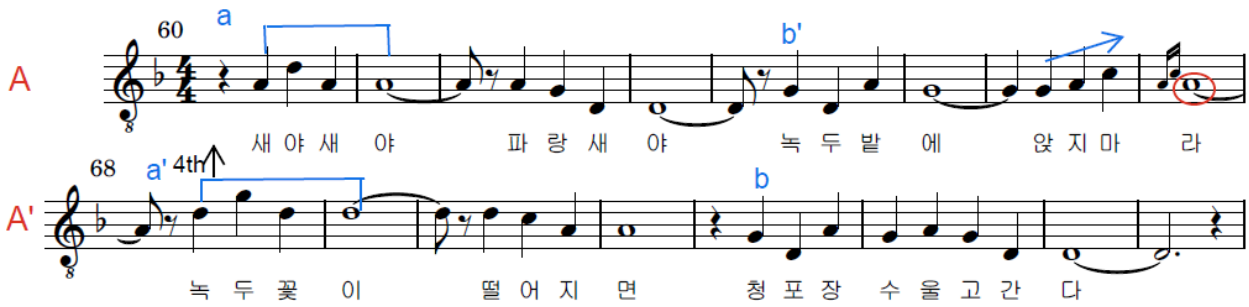
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[308] Byunghee Oh, email to author, June 22, 2024.

[309] Jeongsoo Hong (홍정수), "Sae-ya Hwajeon" (Sae-ya Scale) "새야화현" (새야음계), *Hong Jeongsoo Dictionary of Music (홍정수음악사전),* March 13, 2010, accessed May 20, 2025, http://www.umak.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=board01&wr_id=4599&sfl=wr_subject&stx=1&page=5&ckattempt=1.



[Ex. 3-10] The Original Folk Melody *Sae-ya Sae-ya*[310]



[Ex. 3-11] The Tenor Solo of Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 60-75

The folk melody is based on the Korean *Sae-ya* scale, which consists of only three notes per octave: D, G, and A.[311] In contrast, the composer Oh expands the pitch material in her choral composition. While the original folk melody uses just these three tones, the choral version introduces a fourth tone, C. This results in the set of tones D, G, A, and C, which are arranged in a pattern of perfect fourths. This tonal structure contrasts with the Western scale, which is typically based on triads and the harmonic function of thirds. The tone C, which appears between

[310] "Blue Bird (새야 새야 파랑새야) | Sejong Prize," *Sejong Cultural Society*, accessed May 20, 2025, https://www.sejongculturalsociety.org/composition/current/music/parangsae.php.

[311] Jeongsoo Hong, "Sae-ya Hwajeon," *Hong Jeongsoo Dictionary of Music.*

two A's (A–C–A) in measure 67, functions as an embellishing tone (see Ex. 3-11). It does not serve a harmonic function in the traditional sense but decorates the A by leaping away and returning. Since it does not move stepwise, it is best described as a leap-based upper neighbor.

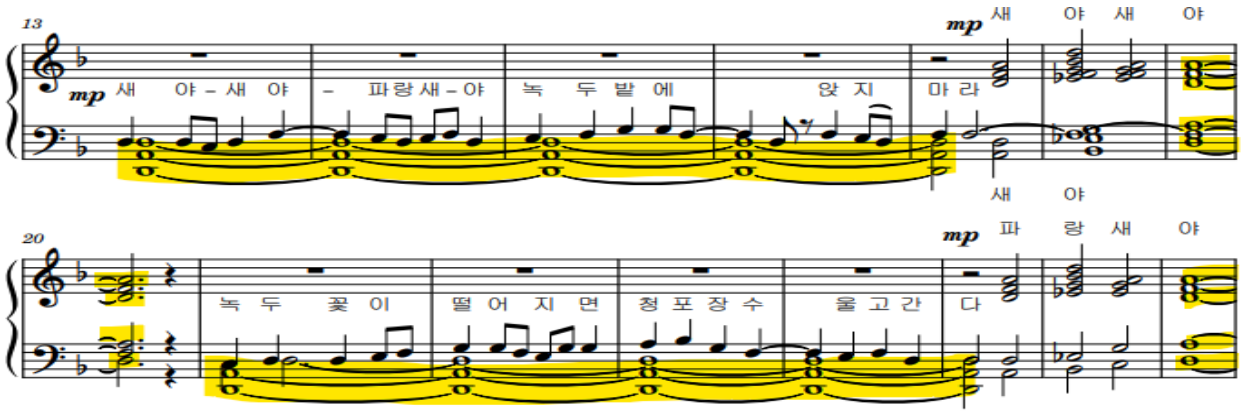
The original folk melody is in binary form (A A) and each divided into two motives: a and b. Both sections are identical and conclude on the tone D, reinforcing D as the tonal center (see Ex. 3-10, circled in red). In contrast, the choral composition modifies the melody in two significant ways (see Ex. 3-11):

- In the first b' motive of Ex. 3-11, the melody ascends and concludes on the tone A instead of D in measure 67. Since A is a perfect fifth above D, its placement at the end of the phrase creates a sense of lift and openness. Rather than providing closure, the ending on A functions as an open fifth above the original tonic, D, resulting in a feeling of instability and unresolved tension.
- This sense of instability is further emphasized in the repeated a motive of Ex. 3-11, which is transposed a fourth higher, shifting the tonal center to G in measure 68. The transposed motive also ends on A, reinforcing the unresolved quality. The return to the original b motive, now concluding on D, provides the eventual resolution, grounding the melody back to its tonic.

The Role of Sustained Tones as Pedal Points

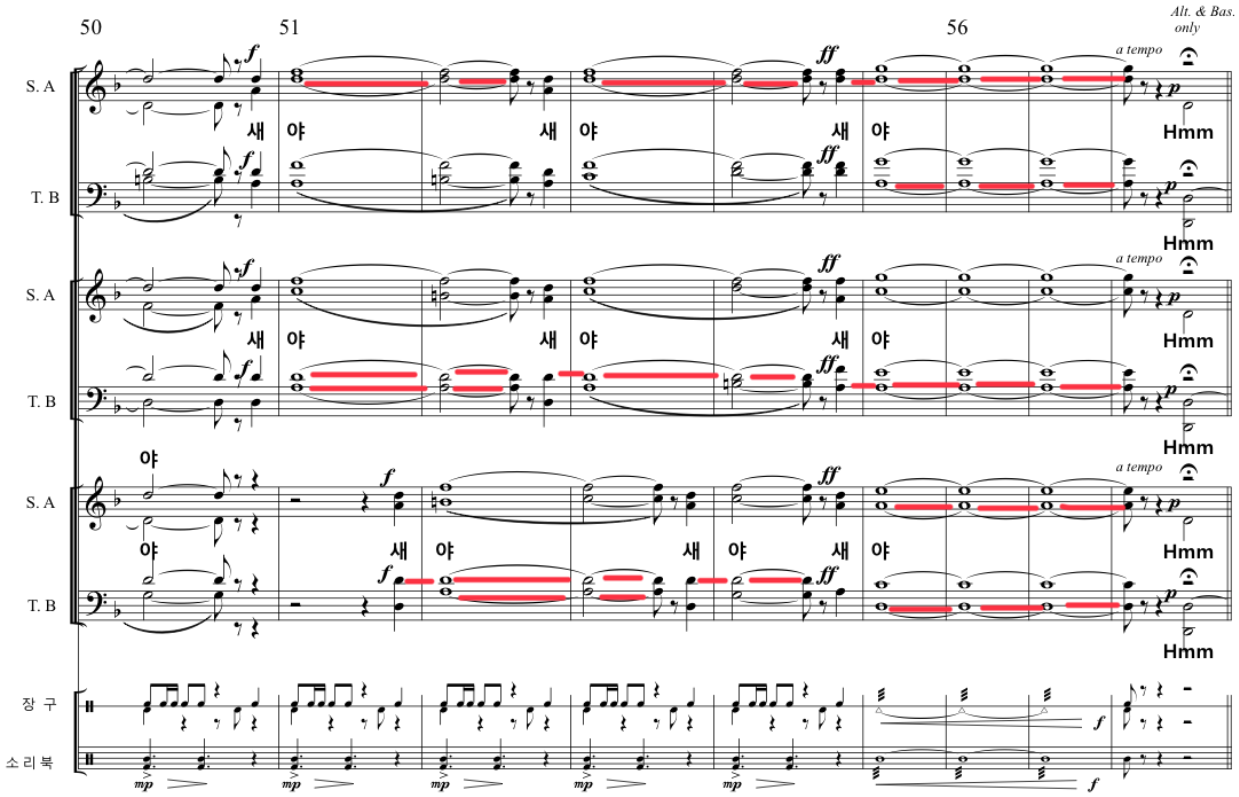
At first encounter, this piece may seem saturated with sound due to its scoring for three choirs. However, through closer study, it becomes clear that certain tones recur frequently and serve as a tonal center, forming a structural foundation for the work.

Notably, the (A)-D-A-(D) chord, which is first heard in the opening measure, reappears repeatedly throughout the composition. While pedal points are typically found in the bass, these tones frequently appear sustained in the bass or other vocal lines, serving a similar function. I will provide examples of this sustained chord and examine how it contributes to the harmonic framework of the piece.



[Ex. 3-12] D and A in Bass in Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 13-27 (A Reduced Version)

In Ex. 3-12, the sustained tones of D and A provide the fundamental harmonic support in the bass. This foundation is closely connected to the tenor melodies in all three choirs, which the composer shapes in a style reminiscent of Gregorian chant. The melody, consisting of D, E, F, G, A, Bb, and C, is based on the Aeolian mode. The composer employs pedal point to reinforce the modal character of the melody, while varying the harmonic color by assigning different harmonies to each syllable, as seen in measures 18 and 26 (see Ex. 3-12).



[Ex. 3-13] D and A in Bass, Tenor, and Soprano in Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 50-58[312]

Unlike Ex. 3-12, Ex. 3-13 features sustained tones not only in the bass but also in the tenor and soprano parts, creating double pedal points. These pedal tones are layered with other harmonies, resulting in polychordal textures. For instance, the B half-diminished seventh chord in measure 52 and the C major triad in measure 55 contrast sharply with the underlying D and A pedal tones.

In measure 54, the composer uses a G7 chord with an added fourth, which is similar to the IV-V-I cadential motion common in Western music because the fourth appears in the bass.

[312] The score used in this analysis is the original version composed for three choirs.
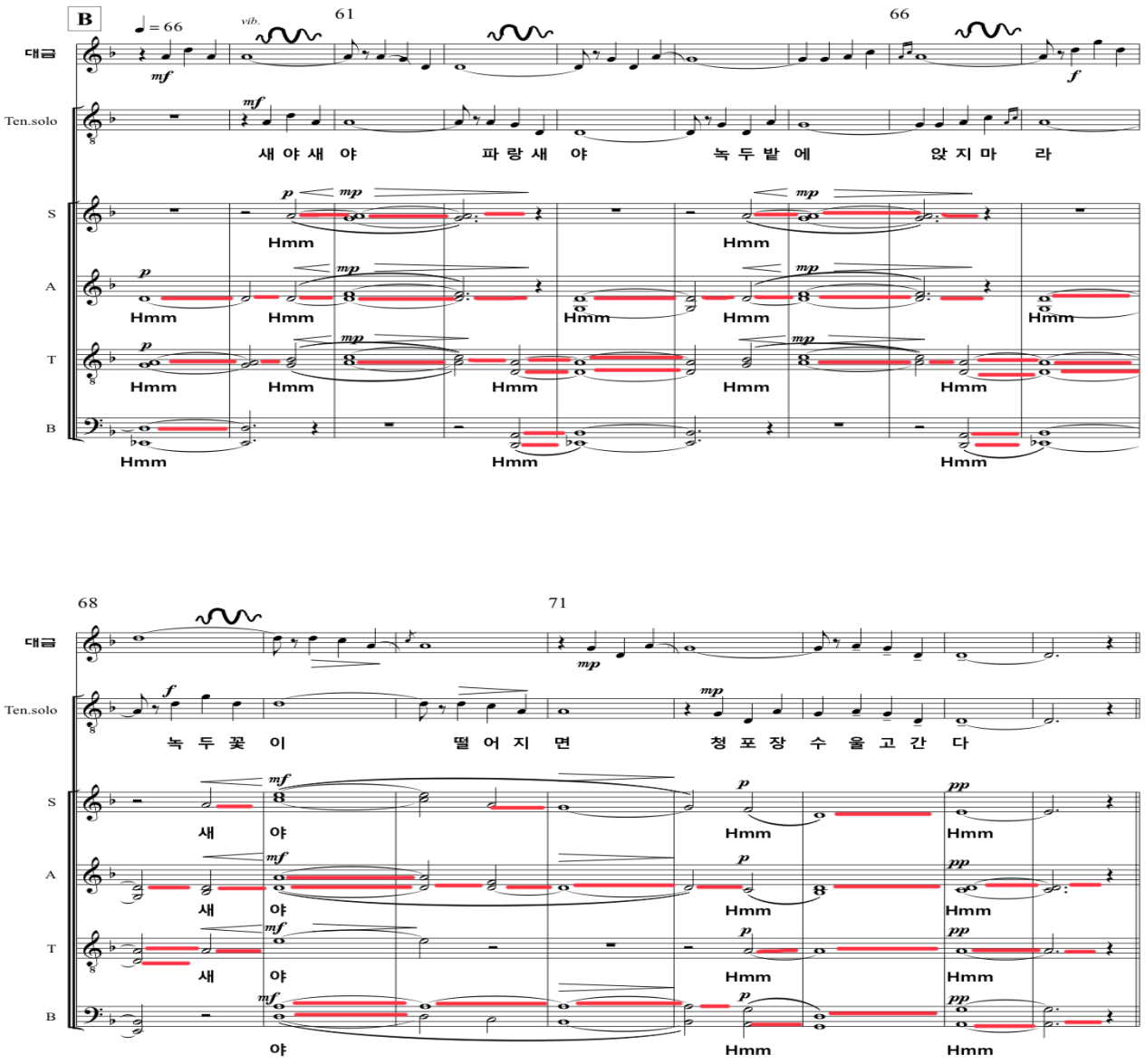
However, in measures 55-58, the C major triad coexists with the tonic D, which is missing its third, resulting in an ambiguous major-minor quality. The increasing dynamics and the use of tremolo in the percussion amplifies this tension. The tension created by this chord stretches across four measures instead of functioning as an atypical cadence that resolves the musical phrase.

Importantly, the final chord in measures 55-58 contains C, D, E, G, and A, all of which are in the pentatonic scale. Additionally, this sonority illustrates two key structural principles: quartal harmony (built on fourths) and whole-step relationships. By combining perfect fourths with whole-step intervals, the harmony attains an open yet ambiguous quality. This harmonic structure will be examined further in relation to the Korean Sae-ya chord, which highlights the Korean harmonic language present in the piece.

In measure 58, a sudden contrast occurs. The previous fortissimo intensity shifts to the dynamics of the piano (p) after a short rest (a dotted quarter note rest). Furthermore, the high voices (soprano and tenor) are not sung, and instead, the low voices (alto and bass) hum the note D. This abrupt change heightens the tension and signals a new beginning. In section B, the tempo changes, and instead of percussion, the daegeum, a traditional Korean bamboo flute,[313] dialogues with the tenor soloist, leading the music.

[313] The daegeum, a representative wind instrument widely used in Korean traditional music, produces a rough yet clear and elegant tone. This clear and elegant tone comes from the cheonggong (청공), a hole located just beneath the daegeum's opening (취공). This distinctive tone of the daegeum aligns with the aesthetics of traditional Korean art, such as sculpture, architecture, and painting, and thus demonstrates a distinctly Korean character. See "Daegeum," Traditional Encyclopedia, Traditional Culture Portal, accessed March 8, 2026, https://www.kculture.or.kr/brd/board/219/L/menu/456?brdType=R&thisPage=2&bbIdx=8414&rootCate=&searchField=&searchText=&recordCnt=10.

One can hear the daegeum performance at the following YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytbz0h3FawM&list=RDytbz0h3FawM&start_radio=1.



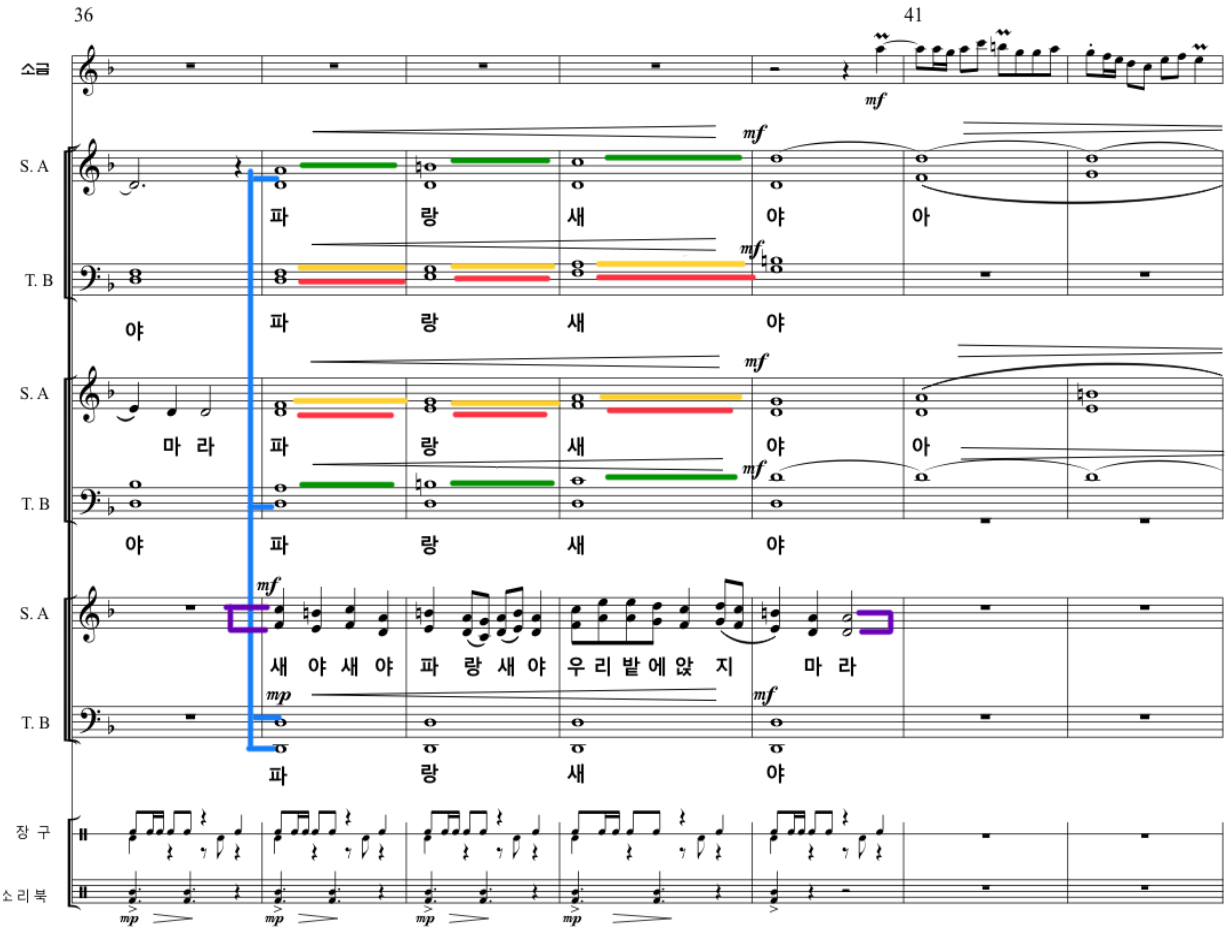
[Ex. 3-14] D and A in All Four Parts in Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 59-75

Like Ex. 3-13, Ex. 3-14 also features polychordal textures. In this case, the polychord is built over an Eb in the bass in measure 59, combining an Eb major chord without the fifth (Eb–G) with a D minor chord without the third (D–A), resulting in the tones Eb, G, D, and A.

This combination includes two perfect fourths and an augmented fourth between Eb and A, which spans four whole steps. The harmony reflects both quartal construction (built on fourths) and whole-step relationships[314], continuing the open and modern harmonic language introduced earlier.

Parallel Motion and Harmonic Color

Parallel passages are easy to identify in this piece, and I would like to demonstrate one of them.



[Ex. 3-15] Parallel Passages in Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*, mm. 36-42

[314] The augmented fourth consists of three whole steps.

In Ex. 3-15, a sustained D pedal tone underlies a series of ascending chords: D minor 7 (m. 37), E minor (m. 38), F major (m. 39), and G major (m. 40). This upward motion builds harmonic tension. Meanwhile, the soprano and alto parts of the third choir sing in parallel perfect fifths, reminiscent of medieval organum over a bass foundation. If heard alone, the third choir's texture would sound open and simple. However, when combined with the ascending parallel chords of the first and second choirs and the open fifths in the soprano and alto lines of the third choir, the result is a sonority with an exotic and unconventional color.

Traditional Tertian Structures and Harmonic Ambiguity

Chords such as D minor,[315] G major,[316] and Bb major[317] appear throughout the piece, with the D chord (D–A) recurring most frequently—often presented as an open fifth, omitting the third and thereby creating harmonic ambiguity. In traditional Western harmony, cadences play a crucial role in concluding phrases or sections, providing a clear sense of tension and release. However, in this piece, that expected cadential function is intentionally undermined.

For example, the chord resembling a dominant (A chord) lacks a third and instead includes a fourth, avoiding both major and minor tonal definitions. Many chords are built with intervals of perfect fourths and whole steps, contrasting with the traditional reliance on major or minor thirds in Western harmony. While the occasional use of tertian chords (built in thirds) suggests a link to conventional tonal relationships, the frequent emphasis on perfect fourths and major seconds represents a clear departure from traditional Western harmonic structures,

[315] The D minor chord appears in measures 17, 19-20, 25, 27-28, 29, 33, 37, 39 (with 7th), 41, 43 (with 7th), 49, 51 (with 7th), 53 (with 7th), 66 (with 7th), 70 (with 7th), 78, 82, 86 (with 7th), and 90.
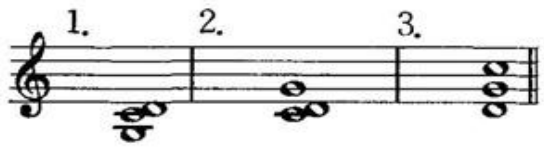
[316] The G major chord appears in measures 40, 48, 50 (with 7th), 54 (with 7th), and 89.

[317] The Bb major chord appears in measures 31, 34, 36, 80, 83 (with 7th), 85 (with 7th), 92 (with 7th), and 96.

contributing to the piece's unique harmonic language. In the following section, the unique harmonic language discussed above will be examined in relation to the Korean *Sae-ya* chord structure.

***Korean Sae-ya Chord*[318]**

As we examine this piece, we observe a diverse combination of perfect fourths and major seconds alongside other intervals. These characteristics can be linked to the Korean *Sae-ya* chord, which originates from the melody of the traditional Korean folk song *Sae-ya Sae-ya*. This melody is based on three tones related by a whole tone and a perfect fourth. When these intervals appear melodically, they are often referred to as the *Sae-ya* scale.[319] When the same three notes are presented harmonically—combining a perfect fourth and a major second—they form what is commonly known as the *Sae-ya* chord (see Ex. 3-16).



[Ex. 3-16] *Sae-ya* Chord[320]

Number 1 in Ex. 3-16 shows the root position of the chord, with the fundamental note in the lowest voice. This note is considered the root because, in the original folk song "Sae-ya Sae-

[318] Jeongsoo Hong, "Sae-ya Hwajeon," *Hong Jeongsoo Dictionary of Music*.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.

ya", the lowest tone functions as the final (tonic) of the melody.[321] Number 2 in Ex. 3-16 represents the first inversion, and Number 3 in Ex. 3-16 shows the second inversion. In Oh's piece, the chord appears in root position with the notes D, G, and A.[322]

Early Korean composers who studied Western music often used the *Sae-ya* chord to create a more Korean sound, instead of relying on traditional Western triads. However, the *Sae-ya* chord was not used by itself.[323] It was usually combined with other kinds of chords. These were not always triads—although sometimes triads were included, many composers chose to avoid them. Instead, they mixed the *Sae-ya* chord with different chords to create a unique Korean style that was different from Western music.[324]

Summary of the Musical Analysis of Byunghee Oh's Sae-ya Sae-ya

Analyzing this piece using conventional Western analytical methods proves to be limiting, despite its overall framework being rooted in Western harmonic structure. For example, no clear dominant chord (such as A major or A minor) can be identified; instead, several chords with A in the bass omit the third and include a fourth. This results in a noticeable absence of traditional cadences.

In addition, the use of quartal harmony—chords built on fourths and whole-tone intervals—creates a non-functional harmonic texture, rarely found in traditional Western progressions. These quartal chords are often combined with sustained tones, such as A and D, adding to the ambiguity.

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[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.

More complex chords that combine quartal harmony with sustained tones (D minor chords without a third) form polychords and further emphasize the quartal sonorities. At this point, a relationship to the Korean *Sae-ya* chord, built from perfect fourths and major seconds, becomes apparent. Like the harmony, the melody of Oh's work is based on the traditional Korean Sae-ya scale, consisting of three notes: D, G, and A. Furthermore, the composer expanded this triadic structure into four quartal cycles by adding the note C.

Although written in Aeolian mode, the piece utilizes chromatic alternations such as E/E♭ and B/B♭. This pattern, beyond the traditional major/minor structure of Western music, combines with modernized harmonies to broaden the boundaries between the Old Church Modes and Korean folk music. These harmonies have a deep relationship with the Korean *Sae-ya* chord, which is similar to quartal harmony. So, this work is a unique fusion of Western and Korean elements, combining modern and traditional elements.

Here, I have mainly discussed the aspect of harmony in Byung-hee Oh's composition. The importance of this discussion lies in the lack of an established harmonic model in melody-oriented Korean traditional music. Korean composers often consider how to create harmonies that sound distinctly Korean. The *Sae-ya* chord provides a more Korean sound because its tones are derived from melodic tones. This chord, which preserves Korean characteristics, aligns with the concept of *Sinto buri* ("the body and the land are one"), which emphasizes the nation's cultural roots. Byung-hee Oh combines the *Sae-ya* chord with different chords to create a unique Korean style. This compositional approach demonstrates a process of modernization: Byung-hee Oh not only retains the essence of the folk song through the *Sae-ya* chord but also incorporates additional harmonies, thereby preserving Korean identity while enriching the musical texture.

IV. CONCLUSION

At the end of the nineteenth century, Korea was ultimately compelled to open its doors to international trade and diplomacy. In 1882, Korea signed its first treaty with a Western nation, the United States, followed by agreements with other Western countries. Western culture, Christianity, advanced technology, and modern values, largely introduced by missionaries, brought many positive changes, including improvements in healthcare, education, and women's rights. Modern technology has made daily life more convenient and efficient.

However, despite these positive effects, modernization also posed significant threats to traditional culture and values. Ironically, while modernization has disrupted aspects of traditional life, modern society can no longer exist without it. For example, traditional agricultural life could not be preserved in its original form. Modern farming technologies have simplified agricultural tasks and reduced the need for manual labor, leading to a decline in the rural farming population as many moved to cities. As a result, farming songs, once passed down orally and sung during communal labor, lost their original function and place in daily life. Nevertheless, tradition and modernization do not have to exist in opposition. Instead, they can coexist and collaborate in meaningful ways, opening new possibilities for preserving cultural heritage within a modern context. Two examples of this coexistence, blending traditional folk song with Western musical elements, are New Folk Song and choral compositions based on folk songs, each examined in Chapters II and III.

It is noted that both New Folk Song and choral compositions express Korean identity through diverse interpretations of traditional Korean folk songs. While both genres borrow and transform folk song melodies within a Western musical framework, why are they perceived as inherently Korean? This is because the traditional Korean folk songs are deeply imbued with

Korean sentiment, language, and musical nuances. Through New Folk Song and choral compositions, traditional folk songs were able to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries and reach a broader, even global, audience. In this respect, New Folk Song and choral compositions have contributed to the popularization and spread of folk songs.

However, New Folk Song and choral compositions differ in their approaches to preserving and modernizing traditional Korean folk music. New Folk Song was intentionally produced by recording companies, often American, British, German, and Japanese, for commercial profit. As a result, New Folk Song became a foundational element of Korea's popular music. Ironically, while commercial and popular music are often viewed negatively in cultural discourse, this very popularity helped New Folk Song resonate with younger generations, going beyond mere entertainment. Contrary to the original commercial intentions, New Folk Song came to serve a unifying role, much like traditional folk songs, fostering a sense of national identity and resistance against Japanese oppression.

In comparison, choral compositions of the twenty-first century elevate traditional folk songs into the realm of art music, aiming to reach global audiences. Despite its relatively short history of just around 140 years, Korean choral music has achieved a high level of artistry and has gained international recognition. Notably, the Incheon City Chorale, under the direction of conductor Hak-won Yun, garnered widespread acclaim at the 2009 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference in the United States, earning admiration from American choral audiences and elevating Korea's reputation in the global choral scene. Guided by the slogan "authentically Korean, yet modern and universal,"[325] contemporary Korean composers strive to preserve national identity while appealing to international audiences.

[325] Hak-won Yun, *Youth Choir*, 146.

One notable example is *Sae-ya Sae-ya* (새야 새야) by Byunghee Oh, rearranged as the title piece for the National Chorus of Korea's 2022 project *Voices of Solace*, which aimed to promote Korean arts on a global stage.[326] A defining feature of this work is its use of quartal harmony, chords built on intervals of fourths, as well as whole-tone scales. This creates a non-functional harmonic texture that departs from traditional Western tonal progressions, contributing to the piece's distinct and modern character while still evoking a uniquely Korean sensibility. *Sae-ya Sae-ya* achieves a unique fusion of traditional and contemporary musical language, one that feels more accessible to Western ears than purely traditional Korean music without Western elements.

To summarize, the link between New Folk Song and choral compositions lies in traditional Korean folk songs. Both reinterpreted these songs within different political, social, and cultural contexts. I understood this process through the concept of "modernization." Woon-gyu Na's *Arirang* and Byung-hee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya* are works that successfully capture the essence of folk songs within the framework of Western music. From their creative works, one can observe that Korean folk songs play an important role in uniting the Korean people and shaping their national identity. In respecting and preserving Korean values, the modernization of folk songs aligns with the concept of *Sinto buri* ("the body and the land are one"), which emerged in the 1990s. Efforts to modernize traditional folk music should continue today and in the future to preserve the connection with the past, since folk songs are an important reflection of Korean life. At the same time, the modernization of folk songs does not isolate Korea but allows its culture to engage more broadly with the world.

[326] Byunghee Oh, email to author, June 22, 2024.

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APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix 1: Interview with Composer Byunghee Oh (English and Korean)

Appendix 2: Graph/Table of Musical Analysis of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

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Appendix 1: Interview with Composer Byunghee Oh on the Analysis of Choral Works Related to the Artistic Modernization of Korean Folk Songs

1. **Interviewer**: When you compose or arrange folk songs, whether commissioned or voluntary, I am curious about your perspective on them. I'd also like to know if your approach differs compared to composing other genres (e.g., pure choral music, religious music, etc.). If so, what are the reasons?

Byunghee Oh: Before I begin composing or arranging a piece, I tend to research and study the material. For example, when I arrange *Sae-ya Sae-ya* (I label it "composition" because I believe my *Saeya Saeya* is more than just an arrangement; it falls into the category of original creation, but it draws inspiration from the original and even includes fragments of its melody), most composers only study the basics: that this folk song was popular in the late 1800s and became a representative Korean folk song during the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894. But I delve deeper, delving into the political and social climate of the late Joseon Dynasty and the lives of farmers. I examine the corruption of the ruling class, which forced farmers to endure persecution, the pressure of foreign powers, the background and process of the Donghak Peasant Revolution, and the impact it had on the anti-Japanese resistance movement and the independence movement. With this knowledge as a foundation, I approach the piece.

So, if I had to say what's different about my approach when composing songs of other genres, I'd say that because it's a Korean folk song, I do more research on the times and society of our country, and approach the piece with a broader perspective, such as the background and origin of the song's creation, and the circumstances in which it was sung.

2. **Interviewer:** When composing or arranging folk songs, you often combine traditional Korean elements with Western musical elements. Do you have your own unique compositional techniques or approach? Also, if there are any people or musicians who have influenced your compositions, please let me know.

Byunghee Oh: I strive for fusion music that's both Korean and Western. It's not music that's overly Korean or overly Western, but rather music that embraces both East and West. I strive to create music that feels both Korean and Western, resonating with both, yet also evokes a sense of mystery. I also strive to satisfy both traditional and modern tastes. The techniques and approaches used to achieve this are confidential, as they're part of my professional know-how. I strive to understand current trends as much as possible. I also deeply research tradition. So, I want to express this profound tradition through contemporary trends. I want to satisfy both artistry and popularity! That's my motto.

I'm not influenced by any particular compositional style or method, but I prefer program music and impressionistic music over absolute music. It's about expressing situations, themes, stories, scenes, and ideas through music. If I were in my twenties, I might have composed music for films or dramas. For this reason, as someone who works in pure choral music, I often end up working on works that are labeled as choral symphonies, choral epics, choral music dramas, and choral musicals.

A glance at my works from recent years shows that they are largely drama-centered stage productions, evident even from the titles alone: the choral symphonic poem *Korea Fantasy* (2020), the choral epic *Hunminjeongeum* (2021), *From Hanyang to Seoul* (2023), the choral music drama

Soheon Sillok (2024), *Rabbit, Let's Go to the Palace* (2025), and the musicals *Cheongju* (2025) and *Liberation Baby* (2025). Cantatas such as *Soul of the Fatherland* (2018), *Light of the East* (2019), *The Revolution* (2019), and *Struggle* (2022) are likewise works whose foundations lie in Korean history and its narrative traditions. Since I mainly work on works that deal with Korean history, I can't help but deal with Korean folk songs and Korean music.

3. **Interviewer:** I understand that *Sae-ya Sae-ya* <새야새야> was composed for the album. I'm curious if there was a particular message or musical element you wanted to emphasize through this song.

Byunghee Oh: *Saeya Saeya* wasn't written for the album. It is based on an earlier original work. In 2018, August 14th, the day before Liberation Day, was designated "Comfort Women Memorial Day," and to commemorate the occasion, I wrote a creative cantata called "Song of the Wilderness." It premiered at the Seoul Arts Center by the National Chorus of Korea. The piece includes the song *Saeya Saeya Blue Bird*, but at the time, it was accompanied by an orchestra, so the chorus was mostly unison or two-part. After that, the National Chorus of Korea began preparing for ACDA, and I rearranged it into an a cappella piece for that performance. When the 2022 album *Voices of Solace* was produced as a Hallyu project promoting Korean music globally, this song was chosen as the title track.

4. **Interviewer:** Do you have any philosophy or criteria that you consider important in composing music in general? And if there is a moment or memory that you found most rewarding among the works you composed, I would be grateful if you could share it with us.

Byunghee Oh: The most important philosophy I hold in my creative process is to create works that touch the hearts of listeners. To do that, I must first be emotionally moved. I believe that only by being moved myself can I convey that emotion to the listener. I create almost all of the compositions and lyrics of my works myself. In the process of creating a piece, well before it is performed, I myself first experience a range of emotions—wonder, poignancy, sadness, pain, humor, and comedy.

It's truly exciting. When I'm writing lyrics or composing, I often find myself slipping into a melancholy state—or bursting into laughter because the process is so fun. During those long hours of work, I tend to avoid meeting people. Time is limited, and if I want to fully immerse myself in a project, I need plenty of solitude. That's why time seems to fly for a composer.

As I looked back through my collection of works, I realized that ten years had passed while I completed only a handful of pieces. Creating something meaningful is wonderful, but time goes by so quickly that I sometimes miss being with my friends and family.

▶ List of choral pieces composed and arranged based on folk songs so far

Title		URL address	Publisher
Saeya Saeya (2021, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5YDEG8UDuQ	Under discussion for U.S. publication
Eorang (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5hqKOXGEYI	2025 Walton Music
Ganggangsullae (mixed, female, piano accompaniment)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAkKhKi-sjU	Final edits in progress at Walton
Boat Song (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhLZqT8vOvU	Korea Chorus Center (Korean

			Version)
Kwaijina Chingching (mixed, female, a cappella)	Composition	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFhxnF5qfm4	2025 Walton Music
Miryang Arirang (piano accompaniment, with assorted drums)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXH1htCZS18	Korea Chorus Center (Korean Version)
Gunbam Taryeong & Kkaturi Taryeong (piano accompaniment)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYFJQ9F8vWw	Korea Chorus Center (Korean Version)
Arirang (2018 Orchestra Version)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsfWUTRbsyk	Not yet published
Arirang (2021 mixed, female, a cappella)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFBovFqkqmg	Under discussion for U.S. publication
Taepyeongga (2022, female, piano accompaniment)	Arrangement	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWSh63ZRIvU	Not yet published

*Arirang (2018) and unaccompanied Arirang (2021) are both arrangements of Arirang; these are two completely different songs.

*It is organized into [Composition] and [Arrangement] based on folk songs, but the songs classified as [Composition] also contain fragments of original songs or are songs created with inspiration from original folk songs!

Brief Biography of Byunghee Oh (1975~)

• Graduated from Hanyang University's Department of Composition and its graduate school

• 10th Korea Hallyu Awards Pure Culture Grand Prize (2022, Classical)

• Served as a full-time composer for the National Chorus of Korea (2018-2021)

• Former composer of the Yun Hak-won Chorale (2007-2025)

• Composed over 600 pieces, including the musical ‘Cheongju,’ the choral epic ‘Hunminjeongeum,’ the choral symphonic poem ‘Korea Fantasy,’ ‘Light of the East,’ and cantatas for choir and orchestra, unaccompanied choral works, choral musicals, and songs.

• Current Director, Korean Choral Composers Association

• Current Director, Korean Church Music Association

• Current Editor-in-Chief, Bitnara Publishing

• Current CEO, OM COMPANY & PRODUCTION

오병희 작곡가 인터뷰: ‘민요의 예술적 현대화’와 관련된 합창곡 분석

1. **인터뷰어**: 민요를 작곡하시거나 편곡하실 때, 위촉을 받은 경우든 자발적인 경우든, 어떤 관점에서 민요를 대하시는지 궁금합니다. 또한, 다른 장르(예: 순수 합창곡, 종교음악 등)를 작곡하실 때와 비교했을 때 접근 방식에 차이가 있으신지도 알고 싶습니다. 만약 다르다면 그 이유는 무엇인가요?

오병희 작곡가: 저는 작곡이든 편곡이든 일단 작업을 하기 전에 작품에 대한 자료 조사, 공부를 좀 많이 하는 편입니다. 예를 들어, ‘새야새야’ 곡을 편곡하려고 했을 때(저의 새야새야 곡은 편곡을 넘어 창작의 범주에 든다고 생각하여, ‘작곡’이라고 표기했습니다만, 원곡에서 영감을 받고, 또한 원곡의 선율 단편도 들어가 있습니다), 보통의 작곡가들은 이 민요가 1800년대 말에 유행했고, 1894년 동학농민혁명 때를 대표하는 우리나라의 민요가 되었다는 정도의 공부를 합니다. 저는 이보다 더 깊이 연구하여, 조선말기의 정치, 사회적인 분위기와 농민의 생활까지 깊이 들여다 봅니다. 조선말기 농민이 박해 가운데 있을 수밖에 없던 지배계층의 부패, 외세의 압력, 동학혁명의 배경, 과정, 이것이 항일 의병항쟁과 독립운동에 어떤 영향을 미쳤는지 등을 조사합니다. 이런 지식을 배경을 하고 저는 작품을 첫대면 합니다.

그러므로 다른 장르의 곡을 작곡할 때와 접근방식에서 차이점이라고 한다면, 우리나라의 민요이기 때문에 우리나라의 시대상, 사회상 등에 대해 더 많은 자료조사를 해서 이 곡이 만들어진 배경이나 유래, 불리던 상황 등 좀 더 넓은 시야를 가지고 작품을 대한다는 것을 차이점이라고 말씀드리고 싶네요.

2. **인터뷰어**: 민요를 작곡하시거나 편곡하실 때는 한국 전통성과 서양 음악 요소가 만나게 되는데, 선생님만

의 작곡 기법이나 접근 방식이 있으신지요? 또한, 작곡에 있어 영향을 받은 인물이나 음악가가 계시다면 소개해 주시면 감사하겠습니다.

오병희 작곡가: 저는 한국적이면서 동시에 서양적인.. 퓨전음악을 지향합니다. 지극히 한국적이기만 하거나, 너무 서양적이기만 한 음악이 아니라, 동서양의 아우르는 음악을 만들고 싶어요. 어떻게 들으면 한국적이고 또 어떻게 들으면 서양적인 작품, 그래서 양쪽의 공감도 얻고, 또 반대로 신비함도 느껴지는 작품을 만들고자 해요. 또한 전통적이면서 현대적인 이 두가지를 만족시키려고도 합니다. 그 퓨전의 기법이나 접근방식은 직업기밀이에요 하하. 노하우라면.. 최대한 요즘의 대중의 트랜드를 읽어내고자 노력하고 있어요. 전통도 깊이 있게 연구하구요. 그래서 깊이있는 전통을 요즘의 트랜드로 표현해내자. 예술성과 대중성을 둘 다 만족시키자! 이게 저의 모토입니다.

작곡 스타일이나 방식에 영향을 받은 것은 아니지만, 저는 절대음악보다는 표제음악, 인상주의 음악들을 좋아하는 편이에요. 어떤 상황이나, 표제, 이야기, 장면, 사상등을 음악으로 표현하는 것이요. 제가 20대로 돌아간다면 영화나 드라마 음악을 했을지도 모르겠어요.

이런 이유에서 순수 합창음악을 하고있는 저로서는 합창교향시, 합창서사시.. 합창음악극.. 합창뮤지컬. 이런 수식어가 붙는 작업을 많이 하게 되는 것 같아요. 최근 몇 년간 한 작품을 봐도, 합창교향시 '코리아 판타지(2020)', 합창서사시 '훈민정음(2021)', '한양에서 서울까지(2023)' 합창음악극 '소헌실록(2024)', '토끼야 수궁가자(2025)', 뮤지컬 '청주(2025)', '해방둥이(2025)' 등 제목만 봐도 드라마가 있는 극 위주의 작품이구요, 칸타타 '조국의 혼(2018)', '동방의 빛(2019)', 'The Revolution(2019)', '항쟁(2022)', 이런 작품들도 한국의 역사와 서사가 뼈대가 되는 작품들입니다. 이렇게 한국의 역사를 다루는 작품을 주로 하다보니, 한국의 민요

나 한국적인 음악을 다루지 않을 수가 없어요.

3. **인터뷰어**: 새야새야는 앨범을 위한 작품으로 알고 있습니다. 이 곡을 통해 특별히 강조하고자 하신 메시지나 음악적 요소가 있었는지 궁금합니다.

오병희 작곡가: 새야새야는 앨범을 위해 만들어진 것은 아니구요, 이 곡의 원곡이 되는 곡이 있습니다. 2018년, 광복절 하루 전인 8월 14일이 '위안부 기념의 날'로 정해지고 이것을 기념하는 공연으로 창작칸타타 '광야의 노래'라는 창작칸타타를 썼었어요. 예술의전당에서 국립합창단에 의해 초연되었습니다. 이 곡에 '새야새야 파랑새야' 곡이 들어가는데, 이때는 오케스트라 반주였어서, 합창은 주로 유니슨이나 2성부 정도의 형태였어요. 그 이후 국립합창단에서 ACDA를 준비하게 되었고, 그 무대를 위해서 아카펠라 곡으로 재편곡 작업한 결과입니다. 한류 프로젝트로 앨범을 제작하게 되면서 이 곡을 타이틀 곡으로 넣게 되었네요.

4. **인터뷰어**: 작곡 전반에 있어 선생님께서 중요하게 생각하시는 철학이나 기준이 있으신가요? 그리고 작곡하신 작품들 중 가장 보람을 느끼셨던 순간이나 기억에 남는 일이 있다면 함께 나눠주시면 감사하겠습니다.

오병희 작곡가: 창작활동을 하는데 있어 가장 중요하게 생각하는 철학은... 듣는 이들의 마음을 움직이는 작품을 만들자는 것입니다. 그러기 위해서는 제 스스로 가장 먼저 감정의 움직임이 있어야 하는데요. 스스로를 감동시켜야 듣는 이들에게도 그 감동을 전할 수 있지 않겠냐는 생각입니다. 저는 저의 작품들의 구성이나 가사까지 제가 거의 만드는데요, 저는 공연이 올려지기 전에 작품을 만들면서 감격이나 감동, 슬픔, 아픔, 유머와 코믹등 이런 감정들을 먼저 느끼게 됩니다. 정말 신나는 일이죠. 가사를 쓰거나 곡을 만들다가 혼자 슬픔

에 겨워 우울함에 빠져있거나, 너무 신나고 재밌어서 혼자 큭큭 웃어대거나 이런 일은 비일비재합니다. 대신 작업하는 긴 시간동안 사람 만나는걸 끊는 편이에요. 시간이 없기도 하고, 짧은 시간에 이 극 안에 몰입하려면 혼자의 시간이 많이 필요한데요, 이래서 작곡가에겐 시간이 화살과 같이 빠르네요. 작품목록 정리하면서 보니, 십년의 시간이 작품 몇 개 쓰면서 훌쩍 지나가 버렸어요. 좋은 작품을 남긴다는 건 멋진 일이지만 시간이 어느새 흘러버리니 저의 지인, 가족과의 시간을 함께하지 못해 좀 아쉽긴 해요.

▶ 지금까지 민요를 바탕으로 작곡과 편곡한 합창곡들의 목록

제 목		URL 주소	출판사
- 새야새야 (2021 아카펠라)	**작곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5YDEG8UDuQ	미국출판 논의중
- 어랑 (혼성, 여성, 아카펠라)	**작곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5hqKOXGEYI	월튼
- 강강술래 (혼성, 여성, 피아노반주)	**작곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAkKhKi-sjU	월튼에서 최종작업중
- 뱃노래 (혼성, 여성, 아카펠라)	**작곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhLZqT8vOvU	한국의 코러스센터 (한글버전)
- 쾌지나 칭칭 (혼성, 여성, 아카펠라)	**작곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFhxnF5qfm4	월튼
- 밀양 아리랑(피아노반주, 모듬북)	**편곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXH1htCZS18	한국의 코러스센터 (한글버전)
- 군밤타령 & 까투리타령 (피아노반주)	**편곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYFJQ9F8vWw	한국의 코러스센터 (한글버전)
- 아리랑(2018 오케버전)	**편곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsfWUTRbsyk	미출판
- 아리랑(2021 혼성, 여성, 아카펠라)	**편곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFBovFqkqmg	미국출판 논의중
- **태평가(2022 여성, 피아노반주)**	**편곡**	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWSh63ZRIvU	미출판

*민요에 기초한 [작곡]과 [편곡]으로 정리했는데, [작곡]으로 분류된 곡들도 원곡의 단편들이 들어가 있거나, 민요 원곡에서 영감을 받아 만든 곡들이랍니다!

오병희 약력 (1975~)

• 한양대학교 작곡과 및 동대학원 졸업

• 제 10회 대한민국한류대상 순수문화대상(2022,클래식)

• 국립합창단 전속작곡가 역임(2018~2021)

• 윤학원코랄 전임작곡가 역임(2007~2025)

• 뮤지컬 '청주', 합창서사시 '훈민정음', 합창교향시 '코리아판타지', '동방의 빛' 외에 합창과 오케스트라를 위한 칸타타, 무반주 합창곡, 합창뮤지컬, 가곡 등 600여곡 작곡

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• 현, 빛나라출판사 편집장

• 현, OM COMPANY & PRODUCTION 대표

Appendix 2: Graph/Table of Musical Analysis of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

I analyze the structure of the entire piece (Table 1), followed by the individual sections A (Table 2), B (Table 3), and A' (no table due to similarity to A). In the following tables, "**M**" refers to the melody created by the composer in a chant-like manner, while "**F**" denotes the melody of the folk song that the composer modified. "**F1**" (A–D), a two-tone motive from the folk melody in m. 60, appears in the introduction, coda, and the final part of section A.

Voice parts are abbreviated as **S** (soprano), **A** (alto), **T** (tenor), and **B** (bass). "**QH**" stands for quartal harmony, and "**Ch**" represents the choir. "**D**" refers to a single tone, not a D major chord. "**D/A**" indicates the two tones, D and A.

Table 1. Structure of the Whole Piece

Section	Introduction (mm. 1-8)		A (mm. 9-58)						B (mm. 59-75)		A' (mm. 76-97)						Coda (mm. 97-102) =Introduction
Tempo	♩=66		♩=120						♩=66		♩=120						♩=120
Key	D-Aeolian mode		D-Aeolian mode D-E-F-G-A-Bb-C						D-Aeolian mode		D-Aeolian mode						D-Aeolian mode
Performance Force	3Ch.		3Ch., percussion, Korean bamboo flute[1]						United One Ch., Tenor solo, Korean bamboo flute		United One Ch., Percussion, Korean bamboo flute						United One Ch., Percussion
Structure	4	4	4	8	8	12	4	14	9(1/2)	8	2	4	4	4	4	4	4
	F1	F1'		M1	M2	M3	M1 in flute	F1	F	F'		M3	M3	M3	M1 in flute		F1 (=Intro.)
Harmony	D/A (mm.1, 3-5) Bb-Eb+A-D (mm. 2, 6) QH[2](mm. 2, 6) D79 (-3) (mm. 7-8)		See Table 2 below.						See Table 3 below.		{Dm,Am,Bb,C}/D (mm. 78-81) Dm, Bb, Am7, Bb7 (mm.82-85) {Dm,Em,F,G,Dm}/D (mm.86-90) Dm,Am7,Bb,Am7/E (mm. 90-93) {D,C(-5),Bb,QH[3]}/D (mm. 94-97)						See the harmony of the Intro.

[1]Percussion and flute alternate throughout the piece, never playing simultaneously. Section A′ repeats the same pattern.

[2] Measure 2, beat 3: C–G–(D)–A as three quarter notes; measure 6, beat 3: C–G–D–A as four quarter notes.

[3] Measure 97: C-G-D as three quarter notes.

Table 2. A Section

Measure	9-12 (4)	13-20 (8)		21-28 (8)		29-40 (12)			41-44 (4)	45-58 (14)			
Section	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4
Performance Force	B	T+B	S+A (T+B)	T+B	S+A (T+B)	S&A of Ch1	S&A of Ch2	S&A of Ch3	2C & Flute	Dialogue of Three Ch.			
Percussion	Yes								No	Yes			Tremolo
Melody		M1		M2		M3			M1 in flute[4]	F1			
Harmony	D/A	D/A	Eb9[5] QH/Eb	D/A	Eb7[6] QH/C	Dm (mm. 29, 33, 37,39) QH (mm. 32, 35) Bb (mm. 31, 34, 36) Em7 (m. 38) G46 (m. 40)			Dm, Em/D	{Dm, G, Am(-3), G}/D (mm. 45-48) {Dm, G}/D (mm. 49-52) Dm7/A, G7+4 (mm. 53-54) QH[7]/D (mm. 55-58)			
Pedal tone	A+D	D+A		D+A		D				D + (A)			

[4] M1 appears transposed up a fifth and rhythmically diminished.

[5] In measure 18, an E♭9 chord occurs on beat 1, and a quartal harmony over E♭ (QH/E♭) follows on beat 3.

[6] In measure 26, an E♭7 chord occurs on beat 1, and a quartal harmony over C (QH/C) follows on beat 3.

[7] The pitches C, D, E, G, and A form a pentatonic collection presented as four quarter notes.

Table 3. B Section

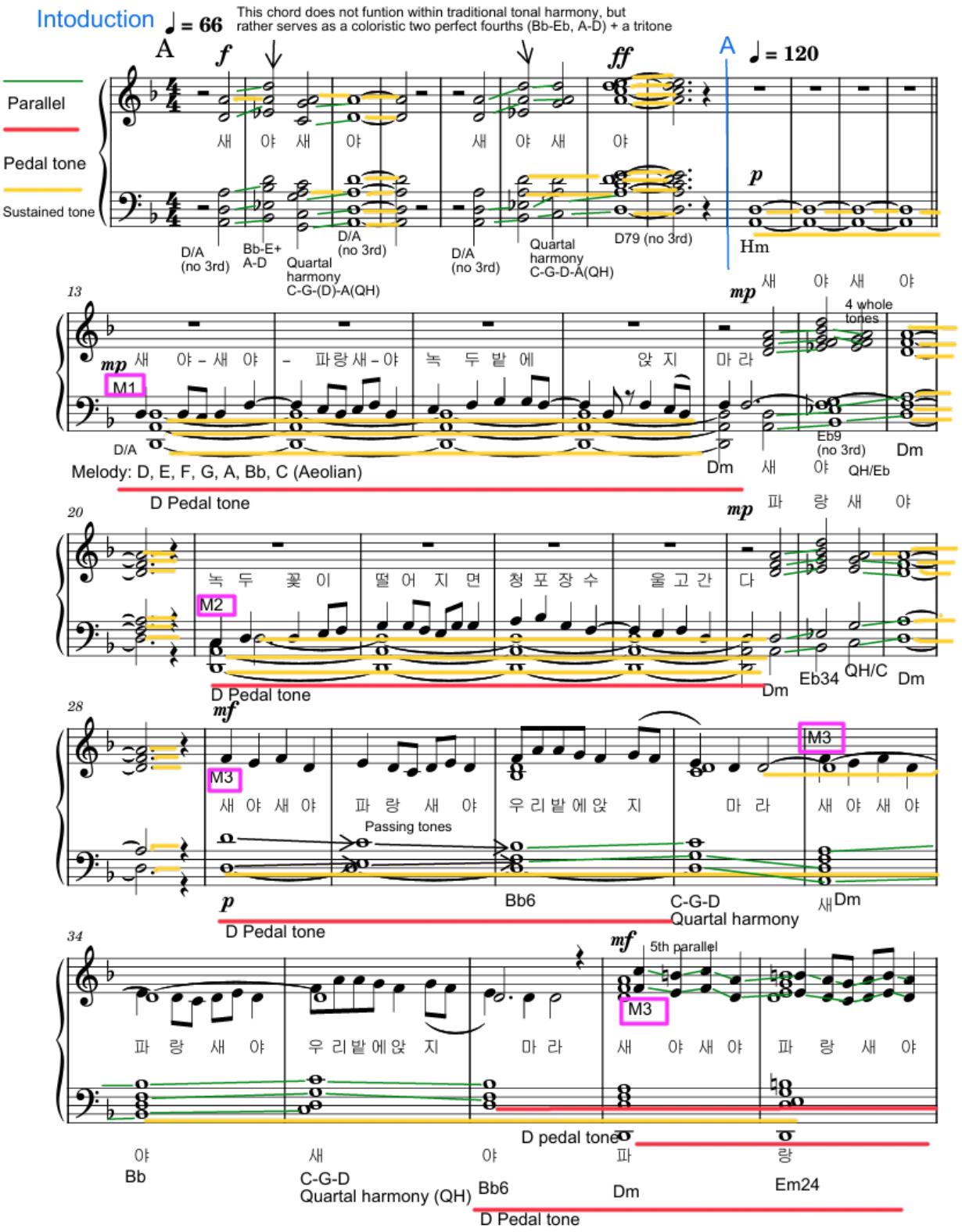
Measure	58 (1/2) -67										68-75						
Section	9 (1/2)										8						
Voices	The tenor solo and United One Ch.																
Flute	Yes, the original folk melody alternates between the flute and tenor solo, with a one-measure offset																
Percussion	No																
Melody		F (Folk melody)									F'						
		a					**b'** (is an ascending line that ends on A, unlike **b**, which ends on D.)				**a'** (repeats **a**, up a fourth)				**b**		
Measure	58 (1/2)	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74-75
Harmony	D (unison)	QH/Eb[8]	Gm9	Dm7+4/A	D/A	Eb7+4	Gm9	Dm7/G	Dm7	Eb7+4	Gm9	Am/D	Dm7	Gm9(-7)	F9(-7)	Gm9(-7)	QH/A[9]
Pedal tone												The bass moves in descending diatonic steps from D to G (mm. 69-73).					
	D + A appear not in B, but in S, A, and T.																

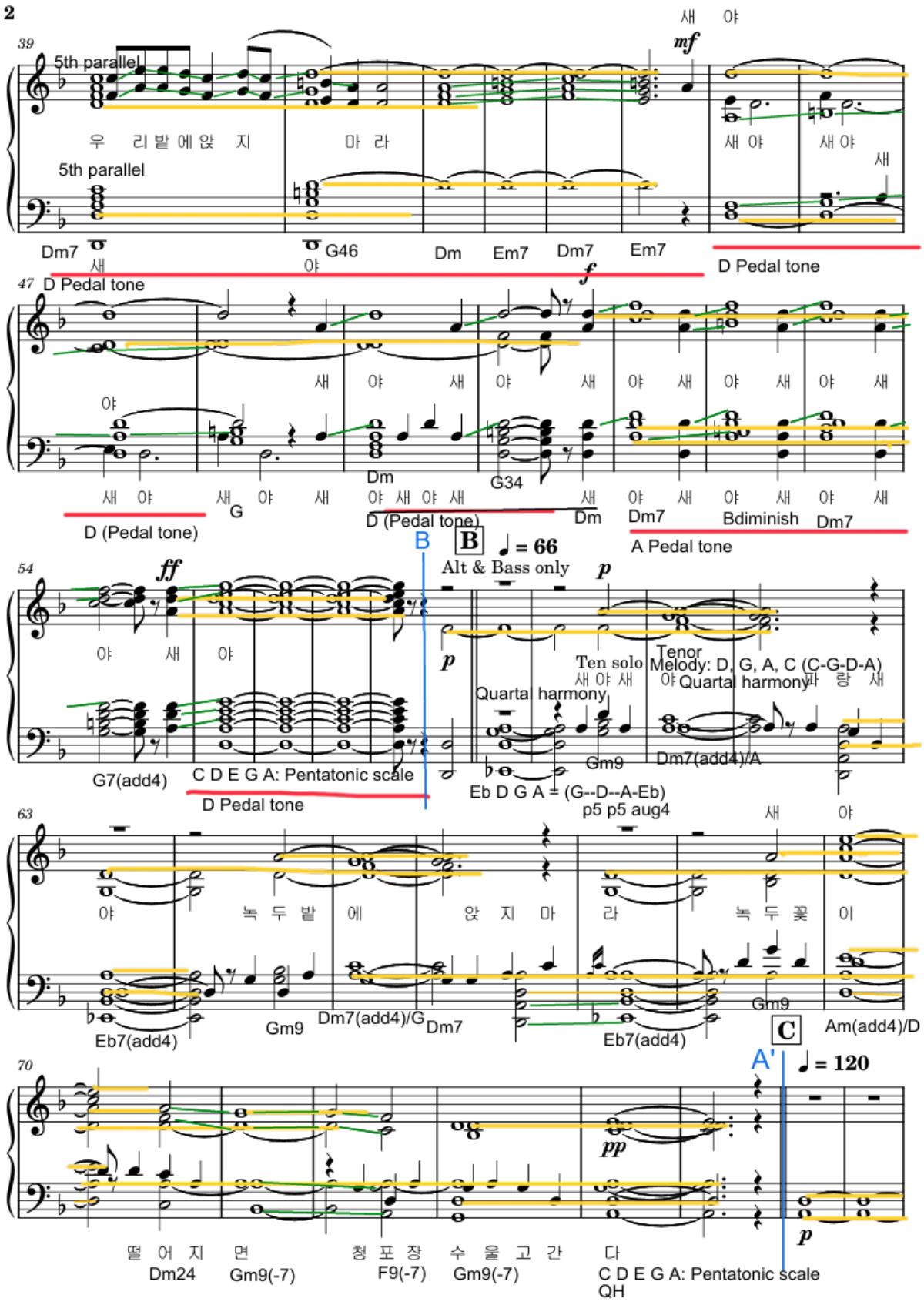
[8] In m. 59, the pitches Eb, D, G, A span two quarters (G-D-A) and an augmented interval of four whole tones.

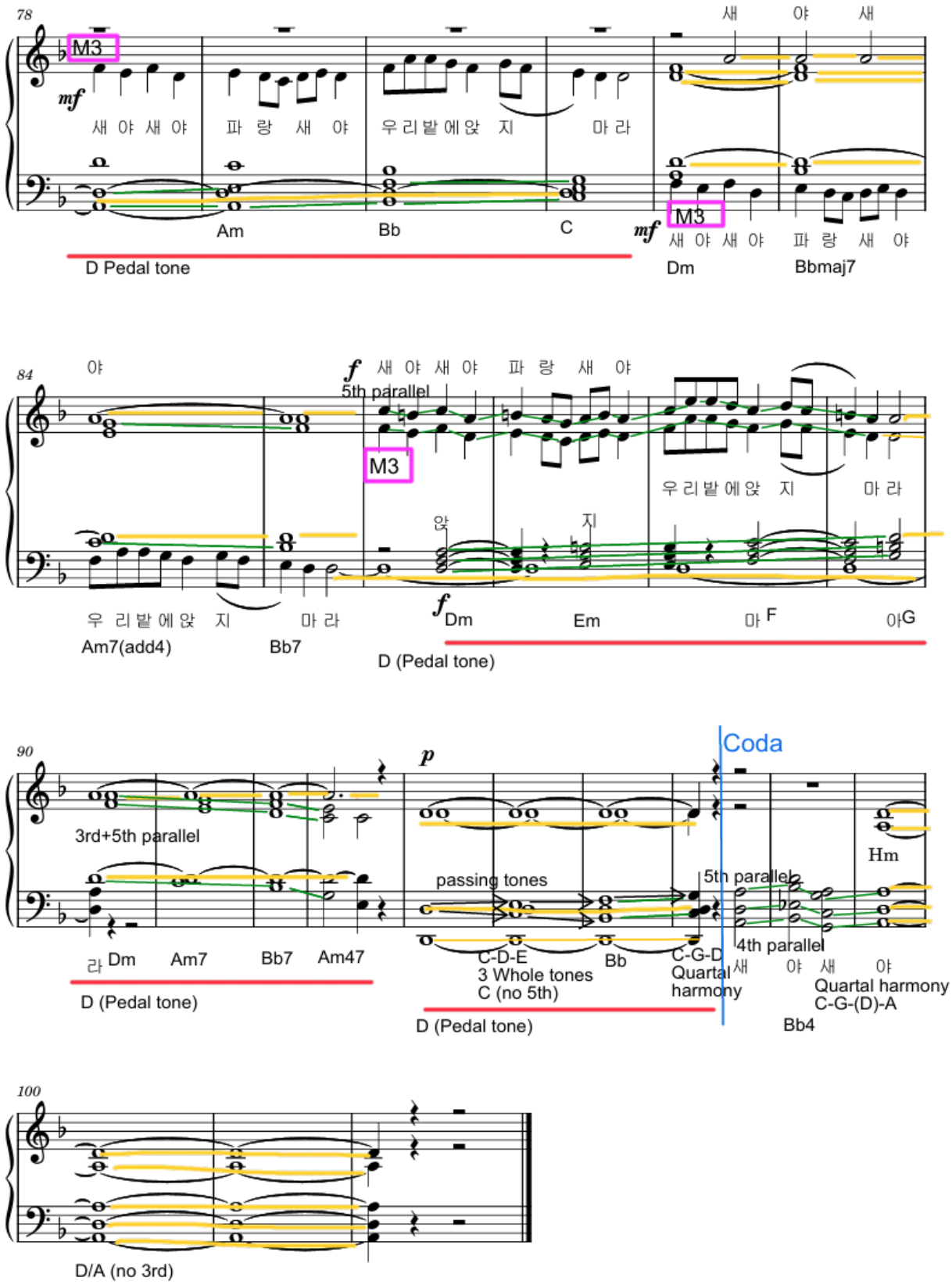
[9] In m. 75, the pitches C, D, E, G, A span four quarters, forming a pentatonic scale.

Appendix 3: Annotated Score of Byunghee Oh's *Sae-ya Sae-ya*

새야 새야


Intoduction
♩ = 66
This chord does not funtion within traditional tonal harmony, but rather serves as a coloristic two perfect fourths (Bb-Eb, A-D) + a tritone
A
f
ff
A
♩ = 120
Parallel
Pedal tone
Sustained tone
새 야 새 야
새 야 새 야
D/A (no 3rd)
Bb-E+ A-D
D/A (no 3rd)
Quartal harmony C-G-(D)-A(QH)
D/A (no 3rd)
Quartal harmony C-G-D-A(QH)
D79 (no 3rd)
p
Hm
13
mp
새 야 – 새 야 – 파랑새 – 야 녹 두 밭 에 앉 지 마 라
새 야 새 야
4 whole tones
M1
D/A
Melody: D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C (Aeolian)
D Pedal tone
Dm
새 야
Eb9 (no 3rd)
QH/Eb
Dm
20
mp
녹 두 꽃 이 떨 어 지 면 청 포 장 수 울 고 간 다
파 랑 새 야
M2
D Pedal tone
Dm
Eb34
QH/C
Dm
28
mf
M3
새 야 새 야 파 랑 새 야 우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라 새 야 새 야
Passing tones
M3
p
D Pedal tone
Bb6
C-G-D
Quartal harmony
새 Dm
34
mf
5th parallel
M3
파 랑 새 야 우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라 새 야 새 야 파 랑 새 야
D pedal tone
야 새 야 파 랑
Bb
C-G-D
Quartal harmony (QH)
Bb6
Dm
Em24
D Pedal tone


2
39
5th parallel
우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라
5th parallel
새 야
mf
새 야 새 야 새
Dm7 G46 Dm Em7 Dm7 Em7
D Pedal tone
47
D Pedal tone
f
새 야 새 야 새 야 새 야 새 야 새
야
새 야 새 야 새 야 새 야 새 야 새
Dm G34
D (Pedal tone) G D (Pedal tone) Dm Dm7 Bdiminish Dm7
A Pedal tone
54
ff
야 새 야
B
B
♩ = 66
Alt & Bass only
p
p
Ten solo
새 야 새
Tenor
Melody: D, G, A, C (C-G-D-A)
야 Quartal harmony 파 랑 새
Quartal harmony
G7(add4) C D E G A: Pentatonic scale Gm9 Dm7(add4)/A
D Pedal tone
Eb D G A = (G--D--A-Eb)
p5 p5 aug4
63
새 야
야 녹 두 밭 에 앉 지 마 라 녹 두 꽃 이
Eb7(add4) Gm9 Dm7(add4)/G Dm7 Eb7(add4) Gm9 Am(add4)/D
C
A'
♩ = 120
70
pp
p
떨 어 지 면 청 포 장 수 울 고 간 다
Dm24 Gm9(-7) F9(-7) Gm9(-7) C D E G A: Pentatonic scale
QH


78
M3
mf
새 야 새 야 파 랑 새 야 우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라
새 야 새
Am
Bb
C
D Pedal tone
mf
M3
새 야 새 야 파 랑 새 야
Dm
Bbmaj7
84
야
f
새 야 새 야 파 랑 새 야
5th parallel
M3
우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라
앉
지
우 리 밭 에 앉 지 마 라
Am7(add4)
Bb7
f
Dm
Em
마 F
아G
D (Pedal tone)
90
3rd+5th parallel
p
Coda
passing tones
5th parallel
Hm
4th parallel
라 Dm Am7 Bb7 Am47
D (Pedal tone)
C-D-E
3 Whole tones
C (no 5th)
Bb
C-G-D
Quartal harmony
D (Pedal tone)
새 야 새 야
Quartal harmony
C-G-(D)-A
Bb4
100
D/A (no 3rd)