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**Kaggok (Korean Art Songs)
Its Origin and Development**

by

Sang Jun Yoon

B.M., Manhattan School of Music

M.M., Manhattan School of Music

Lecture Recital Document

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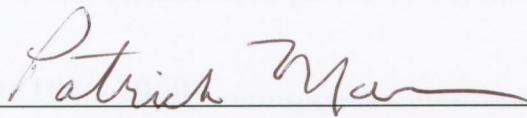
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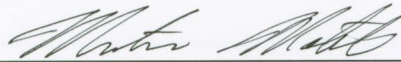
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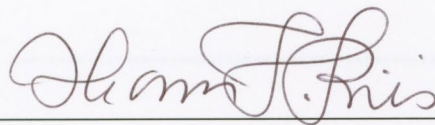
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May 1, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Today, I would like to discuss the various stages of Kaggok, which are Korean art songs written in western classical music style. Since Korea did not open its culture to the Western world until 1882, music in Korea was based on their own traditions. In other words, scales, rhythms, and harmony in Korean music were set up independently within its own tradition, the result of which meant that traditional Korean music sounds completely different and cannot be played properly using western instruments. The only exceptions to this were the influences from the various missionaries who brought western music to Korea, as well as the occupation of Japan in Korea (beginning in 1910). The western culture Japan had already encountered was unavoidably brought with them into Korea. As a result, western styles of singing began to replace traditional technique. Indeed even composition was influenced by western music conventions. People began to mix Korean text with melodies from westernized music. These are the origins of Kaggok.

Before Kaggok

Before Kaggok was born, there were two types of songs. One is Chang-ga and another is Min-yo. Chang-ga was essentially Korean lyrics set to the melodies and accompaniment of the Protestant Christian Hymns that the missionaries brought with them into the country. They have translated texts from Christian hymns into the Korean language and taught these songs to the Korean people. In addition to this, Korean people combined some famous melodies from hymns and folksongs with traditional Korean texts, and created new western style songs. This is how the Chang-ga was born. What is so unique for Chang-ga's texts is that they always have specific and predictable rhymes. During the beginning of Chang-ga, however, the total length of the texts was usually very long and repetitious, and it was often difficult to make a song. Having rhymes in songs is a traditional way that Korean has done for long time when they sing a song. The contents of Chang-ga were often religious since it is related to Christian hymns at the beginning. Many Chang-ga started to use secular texts later on. These Chang-ga texts became the basic foundation for Korean art song texts. Texts in Chang-ga had regular meter and rhymes that often made the flow of melody awkward. Here is an example of Chang-ga, and you will be able to see regular rhymes.

<Example 1 – Chang-ga>

Because the music of Chang-ga was based on hymns and western folk-style melodies, the levels of quality in composition and musical elements were not an

important matter. Unfortunately, there was a problematic issue in *singing* a Chang-ga song because the musical accents cannot be matched with the accents of texts in Korean language. However, borrowing a melody from hymns made people, especially musicians, familiar with western music, and at the same time made them realize needs of westernized music education.

Min-yo, in contrast, was a form of traditional folk song in Korea, and it used to be sung without any accompaniment or with un-pitched percussion instrument. Min-yo was typically sung in a very casual manner. However, patterns of rhythms, melodic decoration, and tempos varied region by region which makes the genre of Min-yo very rich and complex. In Korea we use noticeably different dialects. Different phrasings and speaking patterns according to each specific dialect were reflected in the singing of Min-yo. Since there was not a proper technique for printing music, only texts in Korean and groups of rhythmic patterns were marked in songbooks. Most of songs were transmitted orally and performed informally as opposed to performing professionally in public. Most Min-yo have a few verses with the same melodies, and vocal ranges were not wide. Min-yo, in general, was a popular song that people sang when working or playing. Min-yo continues to be a style representative of very traditional customs of Korean singing while avoiding any influences of western music.

<Example 2 - Min-yo>

1920-1930 “The Rise of Kaggok”

From 1920 to 1930, I would like to call this period “The rise of the Kaggok” since the first of most famous Kaggok was written in 1920: “Bongsunhwa” (“Garden Balsam”) by Nanpa Hong. The text expresses the suffering and sorrows of the Korean people during the time of Japan’s occupation of the country. This song has 3 verses with 4.4 regular rhymes. 4.4 Regular rhyme means that there are 4 long sentences that can be divided into 4 phrases, having 4 pronouncing syllables in a phrase. The most significant characteristic of this song was that the composer, Nanpa Hong, composed it far more artistically than had previously been done. First of all, the text of the song is not religious or even secular, but very poetic by being more spiritual and metaphorical. The tragic feeling of depression is described poetically through the text. Its melody was composed independently, not by borrowing melodies from western music. Although it employs the rhymes in the text and various musical techniques from Chang-ga, this song demonstrates an artistic correlation between the true meanings of the text and melody. It also leads the way of the Kaggok should be in advance.

<Example 3 – First Kaggok “Bongsunhwa”>

Critics have pointed out that the song “Bongsunhwa” had a few problematic issues to be considered as an art song format. First of all, the accompaniment of the song is very unsophisticated. The right hand of the accompaniment only repeats the melodic line, and the left hand just covers empty beats, sustaining the sound with a chord when

the right hand stops the melodic part. Therefore, the root note of the harmony is always placed in the bass part for plain harmonic progression. The accompaniment part can be explained as similar as 4- parts homophony harmony progression like a hymn.

Another issue is the accents, indeed accenting can be a big problem in general for Kaggok. In the beginning of Kaggok, the difference between accents in the Korean language and the natural musical accent created problematic text declamation. Korean language has different rules of versification from English. When translating hymns into Korean, the awkwardness of translated texts became a norm for Chang-ga. Therefore, Korean composers were ignoring proper accent (text declamation).

<Example 4 - The text of Bongsunghwa with two different ways of putting accent>

The song starts with 4th beat. If we consider the accent of the Korean language, it should start with a downbeat like No.2; however, the song's accents in music were written like No.1.

Beside the song "Bongsuhwa", quite a few Korean art songs began to be written. Between 1920 until 1930, Korean Art Songs developed new musical elements that were never used before. The characteristics of Kaggok in this period can be described as follows. Most songs in this period were still influenced by Christian hymns, using simple 4-parts harmonic progression as well as simple diatonic scales. The regular rhymes still exist, and the limit of the freedom in text disturbed true musical and poetic creativity,

musical attempts. Texts of songs were simple and non-poetic as opposed to the more expressive and emotional textual representations of later time periods.

Kazoku really began to expand as a style of music after 1930, and I would like to discuss this period as the development of the Kazoku. In this period, the musical values of the Choson lyrics had now disappeared from many musical dimensions of the old song style. Some more modern, Westernized compositional techniques began to be utilized during this time, the style of composition changed dramatically. While all composers tried to keep aspects of the traditional Korean style of music, they progressively incorporated new western compositional elements into their composing. The style of Kazoku style finally came along from the older style of Choson. For example, while most Choson era songs were written as simple songs like lyrics, now many of these Kazoku songs are through-composed. Using the through-composed form allows composers to play rhythmic schemes and provide more freedom in musically express the text. Vocal ranges that were never considered previously are now used, depending on the text's meanings. Essentially, composers were able to make musical expression their priority. Varied and colorful harmonies with chromaticism or dissonance began to be used in these songs, and melodic phrasing began to develop as the quality of the music advanced. In addition to these new western musical influences, composers started to mark specific dynamic changes to bring out the meanings of texts. The most significant change to Kazoku in this period is that the piano accompaniments began to stand out as independent, highlighting and supporting the melody, as well as generally making the song more interesting by itself. The next representative composers of this time are Donggwan Cha, Daejeon Cha, Sungjae Kim, and Daegun Kim.

1930-1940 Development of Kaggok

Kaggok really began to expand as a style of art song after 1930, and I would like to describe this period as the development of the Kaggok. In this period, the musical shadow of the Christian hymn had now disappeared from many musical dimensions of the art song style. Since more modern, westernized compositional techniques began to be utilized during this time, the style of composition changed dramatically. While all composers tried to keep aspects of the traditional Korean style of music, they purposefully incorporated new western compositional elements into their songwriting. This made the Kaggok style finally move away from the older style of Chang-ga. For example, while most Chang-ga art songs were written as strophic songs like hymns, now many of these Kaggok songs are through-composed. Using the through-composed form releases composers regular rhyme schemes and provides more freedom to musically express the text. Vocal ranges that were never considered previously are now used, depending on the text's meanings. Essentially, composers were able to make musical expression their priority. Varied and colorful harmonies with chromaticism or dissonance began to be used in these songs, and melodic phrasing began to develop as the quality of the music advanced. In addition to these new western musical influences, composers started to mark specific dynamic changes to bring out the meanings of texts. The most significant change to Kaggok in this period is that the piano accompaniments began to stand out as independent, highlighting and supporting the melody, as well as generally making the song more interesting to listen to. The most representative composers of this time are Dongsun Chae, Dunam Cho, Sungtae Kim, and Dongjin Kim.

<Example 5 - Song, "Gagopa : I want to go" by Dongjin Kim>

As you can see, the harmonies are much more colorful and full than the song we have seen previously. In the accompaniment part there are changes of rhythmic patterns and the melody is hardly doubled by the piano. In the middle part of the song, listeners might imagine an echo between the vocal part and piano part. A musical technique like this emphasizes expressive emotions, as well as the emptiness and loneliness of the singer. The transitional middle part of the song acts as a stylish musical bridge between the beginning and ending. To incorporate a contrasting section was something composers began to do more often during this time as a way of avoiding simplicity.

1940-1960 Dark Period

Korea was been part of the empire of Japan during the Japanese occupation from 1910 to 1945. From 1940 to 1945, at the height of the occupation, Japanese policy restricted the use of the Korean language and attempted to prevent new cultural creations in an effort to suppress Korean culture as a whole. As a result of this dark era, not many songs were composed. One of the main problems in this period is that people were forced to use Japanese language instead of Korean. For composers and artists, it became impossible to express emotions in their artistic activities. Without using the Korean language, the texts of songs could not be written.

After regaining independence in 1945, politics in Korea were very unstable and chaotic because of the intense conflicts between different political principals. As a reflection of their insecure society's condition, some musicians used realism to comment on the situation with satire and criticism. Composers like Sunnam Kim and Gunwoo Lee had a tendency to be experimental and progressive, and their songs demonstrated their ideals. They were quite successful in their endeavors, and created unique art songs. A few years later in 1950, the Korean War began, causing a slowing effect in the development of art song composition.

After the Korean War ended in 1953, Kaggok began an industrious new stage of activity. I like to think of this period as being the "boom" of Kaggok. The Korean people were suffering from extreme poverty and an extreme sense of loss after the war.

Musicians, then, tried to encourage their society with diverse musical offerings. The art song, the great mixture of poetry and music, became more and more popular because of its intimate relationship with the human emotions. A few singers also came back to Korea at this time after completing their studies in singing and music in various western countries and actively chose to perform Kaggok instead of western opera. Along with economic development in Korea, people organized big performances for art song. Thanks to many performance opportunities and great support from the public, it became common for singers of Kaggok to even perform with orchestral accompaniment. Many composers at this time had been trained professionally by western music educators and were finally able to experiment with new western techniques of composition.

One of the reasons why Kaggok easily became so popular was the greatly improved music printing business. Before the Korean War, music-printing techniques were never developed professionally since most of Korean songs were transmitted orally. Playing traditional instruments prior to this time was also more improvisatory and did not rely on notation. They only had words and rhythmic patterns, which were hand written. During and immediately after the war, the Korean people realized that they had permanently lost much of these hand-written scores. Therefore, they felt it necessary that all music, including songs, should be printed for the benefit of the future. Several composers started to publish books of art songs, and some professional music organizations began to collect many kinds of musical works that were being performed in order to preserve them for posterity. As a result, music education in Korea benefitted by having printed music for textbooks in schools, even elementary schools. People were also

finally able to learn the Korean traditional music and western music heard during their childhood before notation and printing were emphasized.

Another aspect that increased the significance of Kaggok among Korean people was that mass media began to broadcast performances. Western popular music was not well-liked in this period because it relied on amplified sound. People felt more comfortable and intimate with the acoustic sound of art song performances. Due to the war, most people were suffering from financial difficulty, and there was not much cultural enjoyment. The texts of Kaggok and styles of music provided much comfort and encouragement for people, healing their broken hearts and balancing their unstable lives. At this time, mass media also used their broadcast of classical art songs in order to implement a cultural enlightenment. Korea realized that the only way not to have a repeat of either the occupation or the war was to educate its people and to incorporate western culture into many aspects of cultural life.

1960-Present Modern Kaggok

Most distinguishable point of this period (after 1960 ~present) with Kaggok was how to perform the style. When singers sing a Korean art song, they don't sing like a concert version; instead they perform it as a sort of monodrama by acting out the song's storyline. In fact, there are quite a few classical singers who are known for singing the same songs over and over, and some of them have gained much fame as the interpreters of certain Kaggok pieces.

During this time, the styles of Kaggok were developed to be very modern and sophisticated: they were written with complicated tonality (and sometimes even atonality), complex rhythmic patterns, unconventional harmonic progressions, and unique coordination between the texts and music. Composers who studied in western countries never gave up writing in the modern styles they learned abroad. Simple and traditional ways of writing a song were no longer appropriate and musically not acceptable, and composers were fully motivated to apply all of modern songwriting techniques to their art songs. They did not, however, forget their folk music heritage completely. Folksong elements, as well as traditional choices of the texts, were kept in some songs in this period. Korean folksongs provide much excitement with their intricate and repeated rhythmic patterns, and have many advantages such as their simplicity and nostalgia as well as the fact that they also express strong emotions. Modern song composers do not disregard these obvious advantages of Korean Folk songs, indeed they often blend these traits seamlessly with very westernized and modern musical techniques. You will notice in the piece that I will play later that while the harmonies are audibly modern, the

composer has chosen to keep traditional, folk-inspired rhythmic patterns, although these are developed and are decorated throughout. The rhythmic pattern is inherently important in the continuation of these customs because the singer of traditional folksong would typically have only a non-pitched percussion instrument as his or her accompaniment.

After 1960, modern Kaggok developed with several distinctive characteristics, which created specific styles. In my opinion, they can be categorized in four styles: folk song style, realistic style, complex compositional style, and lyric style.

1. Folksong style

Influences from traditional folksong still remain in many Kaggok. In this style, the most distinguishable characteristic is to keep certain “Jang-Dan”, which are groups of pre-determined rhythmic patterns that are steady throughout. In most songs you can clearly hear the Jang-Dan in the accompaniments where they are presented by the addition of syncopated rhythms and the unexpected use of rests.

The songs with folksong influences are written with a block harmonic texture in the piano part combined with a simple melodic line in the vocal part. Unlike European art song traditions, the accompaniment in this style does not usually warrant any musical interpretation with regards to reflecting the meaning of the text. Its only job is to provide the harmony and to highlight the Jang-Dan.

This style requires singing with lots of decoration, such as grace notes, portamento, appoggiatura, and suspensions. These decorations emphasize the rhythmic excitement that traditional folksongs have.

2. Realistic style

Some composers were opposed to following the traditional ways of composing Kaggok. The texts of most Kaggok express emotions of Korean people and they touch sensitivity of the audience rather than communicating realistic stories or describing certain every-day subjects. A main musical idea of what these composers try to keep is to be accurate in the intonation of the Korean language and to highlight realistic description of the text. In order to bring out realism songs were often composed in a recitative style, with emphasis on the development of drama. Songs in this style includes more operatic elements or theatrical aspects. The music often sounds more humorous and tasteful, and brings out more excitement to listen to. Since texts control music, phrasing of melodic lines is not written artistically, and vocal ranges are wide.

3. Complex compositional style

With western education in music, some musicians attempted various modern compositional techniques. These can be explained such as complicated harmonies and its changes, different use of scales and frequent changes of meter or rhythms.

Since the songs before Kaggok tradition was made only depend on melody, not by harmonic progression, putting the harmonies into melodies could be very experimental to Korean composers. The songs with this style have mixture of harmonies and unexpected harmonic progressions and made song more colorful, decorative purposely. Using of scales is also unique. Pentatonic scales used be the only scales in Kaggok at the

beginning. Later on, diatonic scales and even hexatonic scales began to be used. By using abrupt changes of meters and rhythms, some composers tried to imitate traditional rhythms of Korean folksongs as close as possible. Although talented composers attempted various musical experiments and presented with highly artistic Kaggok by these ideas, people did not pay much attention to these songs due to their difficulties as well the awkward balance between music and lyric quality of what Kaggok have kept.

4. Lyric style

The most significant and popular element of Kaggok is to express beautiful lyricism from the beginning until now.

After 1960, composers for Kaggok have been divided into two groups: composers who try more avant-garde styles of writing music, and another group who insists mainly on lyricism in music and texts. Lyricism in Kaggok can be described as beautiful phrasing of melodic lines, familiar harmonies and scales, and music that is well-blended with the meanings of texts. Because Kaggok songs have kept their lyricism in music and texts, they became to broadcast in the mass media and to be performed frequently in public. The songs by this style have been arranged for orchestra and have been performed in big theaters.

These songs usually emphasize the climax with high notes, mostly with some exclamatory words. Musical form is usually in A-B-A form. A role of the accompaniment is not important since piano part supports harmony. Usage of harmony

and rhythms is simple and even predictable, and some songs could be sound like a tune in a popular song.

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