

# ***Korean Drumming & Creative Music*** ***A Virtual Performance***

**Wednesday, May 5, 2021**  
**World Music Hall, Wesleyan University**

## **Program**

Beginning and advanced students of the Korean Drumming Ensemble & Creative Music, directed by Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music Jin Hi Kim, play pieces derived from tradition in addition to new ideas, performed on the two-headed drums 장구(*janggu*), barrel drums 북(*buk*), hand gong 쥁과리(*kwenggari*), and a suspended gong 징(*jing*). The group plays a variety of mesmerizing *janggo* rhythmic patterns, which swing through innumerable repetitive cycles and get dramatically and vigorously developed. The ensemble also creates new work discovering new possible sounds and imaginative explorations on those instruments.

The ensemble has spent the past semester learning about the instruments, practices, and cultural implications that galvanize to shape the music and culture of Korean drumming. Throughout the course, students were asked to consider not only the music's sound, but also its physical forms. They learned to explore the historical context associated with each instrument. For example, the two-headed *janggu* drum symbolizes *yin* and *yang*, which is reflected in the characteristics of sound and energy.

Students focus on their individual drumming as a meditative practice, but they also learn to work collaboratively as a united and respectful group. They have cultivated calm and confident energy for three months. In the end they integrate their focused mind, physical body energy and breathing through a stream of repetitive rhythmic cycles. They are mesmerized by the repetition. Students have expressed that they learned joy, meditation, relaxation, creativity, social community, and the satisfaction of being one voice through a team effort. The ensemble has experienced a deep respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students developed from the efforts of teamwork and creating music together through Korean drumming.

Advanced students have focused on solo drumming and improvisations while playing in fast speed with skillful *janggu* techniques and vigorous drumming on the suspended *buk*.

*Beginning Class performs*

### **Lotus Play 범구놀이\***

This is an audience welcoming parade-band drumming. The group plays instruments carried on their shoulders as they walk throughout the stage. This type of performance is called **농악**(*nong-ak*), also known as **풍물놀이**(*p'ungmulnori*), which is a large percussion band of village farmers that has been practiced for over 2000 years on the Korean peninsula. The 'community band' performed locally to celebrate rice planting, a good harvest, village festivals, ancestor's worship, Shamanistic rituals as well as the celebration of life. It was an outdoor entertainment and celebration of drumming and dancing that also included a uniquely Korean hat with a long spinning ribbon attached to it. *Kwenggari* is a leading instrument of the percussion band. The students play newly arranged **Lotus Play** that is based on *Youngnam* southern province tradition. This piece serves as an entertainment for the audience and a joyous introduction to the remainder of their performance.

### **The Jungle 장글 숲**

Students created this new music themselves and developed it during the semester. The class has been encouraged to be open minded and creative with Korean percussion instruments. They are exploring new sounds on each instrument and experimenting unconventional ways of playing the instruments with a free, creative spirit and imagination. Sarah Ardhani wrote, "Our second piece resulted from our journey in exploring new possible sounds of the *janggu* and *buk*. First, we see the *janggu* played in duo collaborations, incorporating the idea of call and response heavily. Second, as the *janggu* gets quieter, the sound of *buk* gradually gets louder with the players' body motions shaping visuals of togetherness. We give its name because of its fast percussiveness in the first half and its deep sounds in the second. It is an auditory journey we call The Jungle."

### **Mediation for Equality 인간 평등을 위한 명상\***

This piece is a guided meditation where we work on cultivating our inner energy through focus and unison. Each student meditates on his/her *janggu* drum, with the amalgamation of individual sounds coming together to reach a state of mind that is unity and focus. Several students also play singing bowls and jing in this piece.

Jalen Lee said, "In lieu of past and recent injustices as well as the current increase in Asian hate we would like to dedicate our meditation to equality and the transfer of positive energy to others. You are encouraged to join us in the coming meditation by clearing your mind and focusing on steady breathing as we choose to focus our attention on this present moment."

## Star-Moon Walk 별거리 달거리\*

Imagine the farmer's percussion band playing together in the village under the stars with a bright full moon. For the farmers in the olden days rain was extremely important as they prayed for a successful harvest. The group sits on the floor for indoor concert performance of **사물놀이** (*samulnori*), an ensemble for four percussion instruments symbolizing rain (*janggu* hour-glass shaped drum), cloud (*buk* barrel drum), wind (*jing* suspending gong) and thunder (*kwenggari* hand gong). The *samulnori* ensemble established in 1978, was developed from the outdoor performance of *p'ungmulnori*. The students play new **Star-Moon Walk** created for the new ensemble. The piece is based on *Youngnam* southern province tradition. It is highly organized music of complex rhythmic patterns and cycles, and it also features selected soloists within the ensemble.

### *Advanced Class Performs*

## **Suite of Three Pieces: *Seol-Janggu* 설장구\*, *Uttari Pungmul* 율타리 풍물\*\*, and *Buk Drumming Dance* 북춤\*\***

*Seol-Janggu* translates to solo *janggu*. However, they will be playing this piece as a unified ensemble performance. Much of Korean Traditional music involves the idea of *yin* and *yang*. The *janggu* itself produces a duality of sounds. In the right hand we hold a stick, the *yin*. The left hand holds a mallet, the *yang*. These two objects produce contrasting sounds in both texture and pitch. *Seol-Janggu* features cyclical motions in striking the *janggu*, but also many patterns that move back and forth between the two sides of the drum. It is a piece performed while seated, which brings about a much more centered energy and a focus on breathing. *Seol-Janggu* is also a fast moving piece with a forward pushing energy. There are many patterns that seem repetitive, but actually contain subtle differences, which require a lot of attention to detail. Students have learned this piece through repetition and by memory.

Three different groups play *Buk Drumming Dance* between two sections of the *Seol-Janggu*, and after *Uttari Pungmul*, which starts with 3 beats then moves to 5 beats. The style of *Buk Drumming Dance* originated from the Buddhist monks who drummed on the *buk* for enlightenment. The set-up of the *buk* allows them to stand when they play, which requires a different kind of energy from performing on the *janggu*. Although their backs will be against the audience, it increases their concentration and alleviates any distractions. The triplet feel is a crucial element in Korean drumming. Each time three people perform on two *buks* improvising in the middle of the piece, exploring sonic possibilities on the instrument's inner and outer surfaces, the rim, and clicking the mallets together. The drumming is very vigorous, and joyous facilitating the transference of idea from one player to the next. They learned this piece entirely by rote, memorizing all the subtle differences in the rhythmic patterns. As the name of the piece suggests, movement/dance is a vital

component. To move freely when they play, they must bend their knees and lean into every motion.

The students play newly arranged traditional music and improvise their solo parts. In the end they integrate their solos in the ensemble piece and create a new piece. The ensemble experiences a deeper level of drumming from contributing solo work to the ensemble and the efforts of teamwork.

Ainsleigh Caldicott said about her experience of playing the suspended *buk*, "In our performance on the *buk* drum, we have developed improvisational skills and synchronicity in our complex drumming patterns. I was challenged by the improvisation components, but have learned a lot from watching my peers perform. It has also been interesting using different parts of the rim of the drum and of the sticks. I was intrigued to see how we can produce so many sounds from one instrument on the *buk*, especially in contrast to the way we use the multiple pieces of a Western drumset. Lastly, I've really enjoyed maximizing our physical movement and "dancing" with the drum -- this really helps us and the audience to feel the "flow of energy" that is so important to Korean music and culture."

\* arranged by Jin Hi Kim

\*\* arranged by Jin Hi Kim and improvised by the performers

## **Performers**

Advanced Class:

Ainsleigh Caldicott, Daniel Goldelman, Joel Groves, Jiwan Lee, Ezra Levy, Kiona McCormick, Ji Yoon Park, Dabin Shin, and Ananya Vir

Beginning Class:

Arifa Abbas, Sarah Rizky Ardhani, Abe Bradley, Claire Glickman, Cole Harris, Jalen Lee, Kathy Ni, Thao Phan, and Daniel Yoon

## **Wesleyan Korean Drumming Ensemble**

The Wesleyan Korean Drumming Ensemble is among one of the few Korean drumming ensemble courses offered in U.S. colleges. In fall 2016, the course became the **Korean Drumming & Creative Music** as a culturally diverse students ensemble, directed by Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music Jin Hi Kim ([www.jinhikim.com](http://www.jinhikim.com)).

The Korean Drumming Ensemble course was initiated by Joo Im Moon, a Freeman Asian Scholar from South Korea. In the fall 2002, she formed the Samulnori Student Forum under the direction of Professor Su Zheng, then the Chair of the East Asian Studies Program, as faculty advisor, with support from the Mansfield Freeman Center for East Asian Studies. Professor Su Zheng obtained the important commitment of the Music Department (then chaired by Professor Sumarsam) in funding the Korean Drumming Ensemble as a regularly offered course beginning in the fall 2007.