



**Special Feature**

**Korean Music:  
Domestic and Foreign Perspectives**

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## Editor's Note

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In the last Special Feature section for the June 2021 issue, we have dealt with Goryeo porcelain, celadon, and earthenware under the title “Ceramic Culture of Goryeo.” It was a fascinating experience even for us editors, as it was an opportunity to have a detailed look into one of the most treasured cultural legacies of the Korean medieval period. From specific patterns to particular shapes, from artistic celadon to practical earthenware, and from the medieval period to the modern days, various works from specialists in Goryeo ceramics provided the readers with a comprehensive evaluation of the essence of Korean ceramic culture.

After that experience, we wanted to deliver yet another Special Feature section that would provide our readers with an opportunity to take a look into another important aspect of the Korean culture. We also figured that a nice companion to the visible nature of Goryeo ceramics would be a professional look into the essence of audible facets of the Korean culture, which was represented and manifested in the area of no other than music itself. That was why we decided to delve into the world of Korean music for this issue, and four specialists have graciously accepted our invitation to contribute to this special occasion.

Professor Lim Misun of Dankook University contributed an article entitled “The Symbols and Cultural Implications of the Court Music of the Joseon Dynasty.” According to her, the palace music of the Joseon dynasty was not only a form of entertainment but represented the philosophy of the government and ideology of the state. Leaders of Joseon wanted to govern the country not with strict orders and harsh punishments, but with courtesy, codes, culture, and compassion. She also reminds us that the music of Joseon inherited many aspects from the music of the Goryeo period, which had also been inspired by Chinese Dang and Song music. Through her article, readers will be able to understand what kind of aspirations the Joseon leaders had, and how

Korean music evolved from the past.

Dr. Choi Sun-a of Seoul National University contributed an article entitled “The Court Music, Private Music, and Notation System of the Joseon Dynasty during 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries Explored through the Korean *Goakbo* (Old Music Score).” Dealing with old music scores from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Choi informs us that there were music scores crafted by the government to be used in official functions like palace banquets or memorial services, and there were also private scores written by scholars and middle-class writers for creative and artistic activities. With these music scores, which are invaluable records to say the least, she observes what kind of purposes the music on these scores actually served, and what kind of artful creations the intellectuals of this period aspired to produce.

Professor Sung Kiryun of the Academy of Korean Studies provided an article entitled “*Gagok* (Lyric Songs) Performed and Enjoyed: A Synchronic View of Its Performance with a Focus on ‘Mandaeyeop,’ ‘Jungdaeyeop,’ and ‘Sakdaeyeop.’” Professor Sung tells us that each and every stage in Korean history featured characteristic musical forms. The Silla period presented us with the *hyangga* songs, while *Goryeo gayo* and *Gyeonggi chega* graced the Goryeo period. Then, during the Joseon period a new form of music named *gagok*, which shaped up in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with various paces through slow, moderate, and fast individual pieces, was developed. Ultimately, she examines the people who created these songs, and what these songs meant for them as well as the public.

Professor Ju-Yong Ha of University of Hartford provided an article entitled “Female Masculinity and Cultural Symbolism: A History of *Yoseong gukgeuk*, the All-Female Cast Theatrical Genre.” This particular genre he chose is a peculiar one in the Korean musical history, as the females had to, in a turbulent time for the Korean people—with the Japanese occupation and all—pick up the role and voices of the males, who had for a long time served as dominant performers in Korean musicals but were no longer able to. Mix casts with both male and female performers gradually turned into pieces with an all-female cast as another norm of the time, and while they eventually faded into history, he thinks it is important to examine the issue of female masculinity through this very phenomenon.

All these studies will provide the readers with a unique perspective to view Korean music of the Joseon period as well as the modern era. The *Review of*

*Korean Studies* pays respect and special thanks to the four scholars who offered their invaluable works without hesitation. The *Review of Korean Studies* will continue to host special studies dedicated to Korean art, so please stay tuned.

