

From My Childhood to Yours

Piano Works by Korean Female Composers

By Dr. Ka-Young Lee, NCTM; and Dr. Sunjoo Lee

Lullabies and children's songs are inherited from our mothers and passed on to the next generation. They play vital roles in the emotional bonding between mother and child and in cultural development, shaping values and traditions from a young age. This poster introduces three Korean classical piano pieces by Korean women composers, Soonmee Kahang and Wonhee Shin, deeply inspired by beloved Korean lullabies and children's songs. These works were awarded through a composition contest by the Korean Composers Association (KCOA) in 2015. They were recognized as inspirations from composers' childhoods and

simultaneously as representations of Koreans' common sentiments.

The first two works are piano duets arranged by Soonmee Kahang. The original versions of Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road) and Sumgip Agie (A Baby in the Cottage House of the Island) feature affectionate lyrics and easy-to-sing-along melodies, making them so famous that they are often called national nursery rhymes in Korea. The last piece, Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Blue Bird), is arranged as a piano solo by Wonhee Shin. The original Saeya Saeya is a folk song using only three tones, with lyrics containing metaphors of freedom, including a story about General Jeon Bong-jun (1855–1895), the leader of the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894. This song also served to appease the souls of General Jeon, his wives and the bereaved families of those who perished in the revolution.

The poster includes:

1. Brief bios of each composer who arranged these songs to piano music, 2
2. Translated lyrics of the original songs,
3. The background of compositions and
4. Musical examples of original songs and each piano work.

By showcasing the works of Korean female composers, this poster presentation contributes to not only enriching your piano repertoire but also promoting the diversity of musical heritage in the classical music community. ◀◀

Ka-Young Lee, NCTM, is originally from Seoul, Korea. Currently, she serves as an assistant professor at South Carolina State University. She holds a DMA in piano pedagogy from the University of South Carolina.



Sunjoo Lee is a lecturer of piano at the University of Louisville. Her research interests include piano pedagogy, special education for neurodiverse students and an interdisciplinary approach to teaching music.



From My Childhood to Yours: Piano Works by Korean Female Composers

Dr. Ka-Young Lee, South Carolina State University
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Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road) arr. by Soonmee Kahang

Original Song



Original Text Translated

On the orchard road outside the village,
acacia flowers are in full bloom.

White flower leaves fly like snowflakes.

The fragrant flower smell rides in the
wind.

The two of us are silent, looking at each
other face to face.

Acacia flowers bloomed in white, the
old orchard road.

Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road)



Composer's Bio

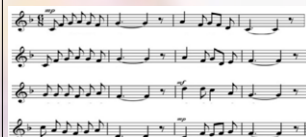
- Emeritus professor at Sungshin Woman's University, Seoul, Korea
- Awarded Grand Prize at the 35th Korea Composition Competition, 2017
- Michigan State University (Ph. D)
- Manhattan School of Music (MM)
- Works: 14 orchestral pieces, 5 pieces for Korean traditional instrumental orchestra, 20 chamber music, and more than 30 works for solo instrumental and vocal music.

About the work

- The first piece of Piano Duet for Four Hands, *Four Songs* (2013).
- The main melody is quoted from the Korean Children's song, *Gwasuwon-gil*, composed in 1972.
- Free and easygoing style with some technical challenges of left-hand arpeggios and repetitive figures in triplets.
- Length: 3' 36"
- Suggested level: Late Intermediate to Early Advanced.

Sumjip Agie (A Baby in the Cottage of the Island) arr. by Soonmee Kahang

Original Song



Original Text Translated

While the mother's out in the sea diving
for the oyster
The baby falls asleep in a cottage on an isle
With a lullaby sung by the sea
The baby puts her little head
on her own arm

While the baby fell in deep sleep
The gulls play a song that hurries the
mother home

The mom sets her half-full basket
on her head

The mom runs swiftly home
along the sandy beach

Sumjip Agie (A Cottage House in the Island)

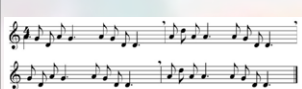


About the work

- The second piece of Piano Duet for Four Hands, *Four Songs* (2013).
- The main melody is quoted from the Korean Children's song, *Sumjip Agie*, composed in 1950, but the text was written in 1946.
- Direct description of the sound of seagulls and the gentle breeze of the sea.
- Length: 2' 45"
- Suggested Level: Intermediate

Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Bluebird) arr. by Won-Hee Shin, Folk Song

Original Song



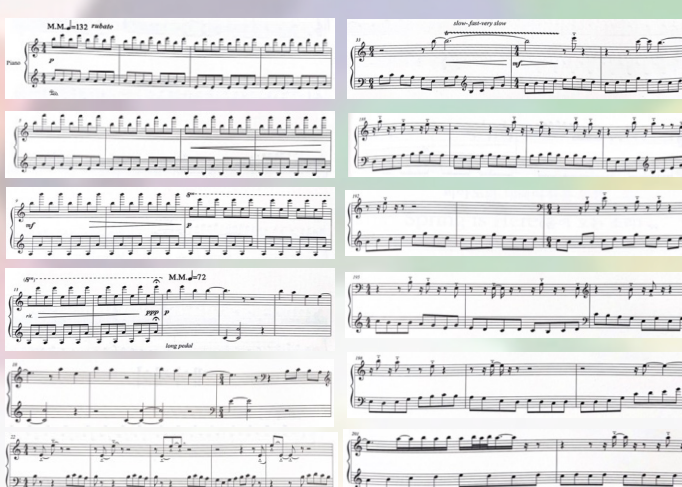
Original Text Translated

Bird, bird, bluebird.
Don't sit in the green bean field.
When the mung bean flowers fall
A tradesman of mung bean is crying and
leaving.

* The original text contains the following
metaphors:

Bluebird- Japanese army
Mung bean field- peasant army
Mung bean flower-General Jeon
Tradesman of mung bean- Korean people

Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Bluebird)



Composer's Bio

- Teaches several universities in Seoul, Korea
- University of Cincinnati (MM and Ph. D)
- Former Adjunct Professor at Northern Kentucky University
- Awarded several competitions in the U.S.
- Commissioned from Aspen Summer Music Festival, Music X Festival, and Hvar International Summer Music Festival

About the work

- A solo piano piece (2011).
- Originated from a Korean folk song about General Jeon Bong-jun (1855~1895), the leader of the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894.
- The original song was to honor General Jeon and the wives and bereaved families who were called to appease the souls of their dead husbands and family members.
- Prevalence of tremolo-like passages and long trills to depict birds' sounds.
- Length: 10' 19"
- Suggested Level: Advanced