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## Isang Yun and his selected cello works

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# ISANG YUN AND HIS SELECTED CELLO WORKS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

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With this paper, I would like to honor Isang Yun's memorable life. He enhanced my view of what it means to be a musician and also made me appreciate my heritage. I hope his soul found peace by finally being able to rest in his hometown, which he always longed for.

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## **Abstract**

Isang Yun was born in Duksan, in Korea, in 1917, and became one of the leading Korean composers in Germany in the twentieth-century. IsangYun's Music is frequently performed throughout the world even after his death. His name as a composer was recognized as a mediator of East Asian and Western musical traditions.

This thesis will discuss his involvement in political issues during the Japanese occupation in Korea in addition to the background of his controversial extreme penalty and the strong support he received from the North Korean government after his release. The discussion will also include the reconciliation between Isang Yun post humously and the recent Korean government in the 1990s.

In addition, this thesis will include the background of his deep love for cello and some of his prominent cello works.

## **Introduction**

Isang Yun is one of the greatest Korean composers of all time. He was born in Korea in 1917 but spent most of his career in Germany until his death in 1995. Isang Yun stood out among Asian composers because of his unique musical ideas related to his native country's music. His dramatic life suffered due to political relating to the division between South Korea and North Korea after the Korean War.

Isang Yun was one of the first composers to forge a link between European and Far Eastern music. His music is widely known for its use of contemporary Western techniques to express an Asian sensibility in his more than 150 musical works. He also employed techniques associated with traditional Korean music, such as glissandi, pizzicati and characteristically ranging vibrati. His life-long concern with his native country and culture was strongly expressed in several of his compositions.

Even though Isang Yun was already well known as a prominent composer in Korea, Japan, and Germany, he became even more widely known in 1967 when he was abducted in Berlin brought to Seoul by the Korean secret police, and tortured while being charged with high treason. After a farcical political trial, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was however released in 1969 after much international protest and intervention. In 1971, he became a German citizen and taught composition at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin from 1970 to 1985, earning the distinction of full professor in 1974.

Isang Yun is definitely one of the most influential contemporary composers of both South Korea and North Korea. His contribution as a composer, educator, and conscience as a socially,

politically aware human caught up in such a chaotic political situation make his name even more respected.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Biography**

#### **Yun's Life In Korea**

Isang Yun was born on September 17, 1917, in Duksan Li, a little village in the southern part of Korea as an eldest son of a Korean Poet, Ki Hyon Yun and a farmer, Soon Dal Kim. Precisely speaking, his father, Ki Hyon Yun was more like a scholar who studied Chinese classic literature and followed the Confucian tradition for his own well-being. In Korea, this vocation, being this kind of scholar, was known as “Sunbi” and existed until the early twentieth century. Sunbi belonged to the noble class regardless of their wealth and did not get involved in any family finances. Yun's father owned a little fishery but he never was an active provider for his household. In 1920, when Yun became 13 years old, Yun and his family moved to Tongyoung where he grew up most of the time.

Isang Yun started his musical education at the age of 13 by taking violin lessons from his neighbor and began to compose his own music as well. In order to study music in spite of his father's disapproval, Yun ran away from home and stayed in Seoul for two years. Isang Yun studied harmony with a Korean violinist of a military orchestra who was previously a student of a German musician, Frantz Eckert. Yun formally studied harmony for two years while exploring the music of the great Germanic composers R. Strauss and Hindemith on his own. After two years, his father allowed Yun to learn music in Japan as a hobby on the condition that he studies business as a major. In 1935, he went to Japan and entered Osaka Music Conservatory. There he studied composition, music theory and cello for two years.

In 1937, Yun returned to Korea and became music teacher at a private elementary school in Tongyoun. During this period, concurrent with his teaching job, he continued writing music and published his first work of songs for children. In 1939, Yun went to Japan again and studied



in Tokyo with the Japanese composer, Tomojiro Ikenouchi, the son of a leading Japanese poet and trained in French musical traditions.<sup>1</sup>

While studying music in Japan, he became aware of the discrimination and injustice against Koreans there. He returned home shortly before World War II began. After Japan entered World War II, Yun formed an underground group and actually fought against Japan for the freedom of his homeland. Isang Yun's participation in secret anti-Japanese activities in the war led to his first imprisonment for two months in 1943 and to a subsequent period in hiding.

After he was released, he still tried to work against Japan and secretly flew to Seoul avoiding Japanese police. When the liberation came in 1945, Yun was hospitalized due to tuberculosis. After the liberation, he returned to Tongyoung and established the Tongyoung Cultural Society there. During this period, he also became the director of an orphanage in Pusan for the victims of the war. He took care of them and also taught Korean to the orphans with the support of the American military.

In 1948, Yun taught music in Tongyoung and later in Pusan until 1952. In 1950, shortly before the Korean War, he married Suja Lee who taught Korean literature at Tongyeong Women's High School, the very same school where Yun had taught in 1948. In 1950, Yun also taught western music history in Pusan University and Pusan high school. Yun founded the Korean Composers' Society during the war in Pusan and in this period, he published his first songbook of five songs "*Dalmoori*".

In 1953, when the Korean War ended, Yun moved to Seoul with his family and taught composition and music theory at several universities. In 1954, he became the General Manager of the Korean Composers' Society and contributed to local cultural activities by organizing

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<sup>1</sup> Suja Lee, *Nae Nampyun, Isang Yun I* (Paju: Changbi, 1998), 114.

music programs and writing articles in the newspapers. In 1955, he was awarded the fifth "Seoul Culture Award" for his *String Quartet No. 1* and *Piano Trio*. He was the first composer to win this honor. This prize opened doors for him to continue his study in Europe. He was 39 years old.

### **Yun's Life In Europe**

In 1956, Yun went to Paris to study composition with Tony Aubin, and music theory with Pierre Revel from 1956 to 1957. In July 1957, he moved to Berlin and studied composition with Boris Blacher, twelve tone technique with Josef Rufer and music theory with Reinhard Schwarz-Schilling at the Berlin Musikhochschule.<sup>2</sup>

In 1959, his *Musik für Sieben Instrumente* was performed at the International Summer Courses of Contemporary Music in Darmstadt. The interaction with prominent musicians in Darmstadt provided him thoughtful concern about his future as a contemporary composer. In the same year, his *Fünf Klavierstücke* was chosen at a Dutch Composition Competition in Bilthoven. Those two premieres of his *Fünf Klavierstücke* and *Musik für Sieben Instrumente* marked the beginning of his career in Europe.

In 1963, Isang Yun visited North Korea with his wife for the first time, which caused a lot of trouble in his life a few years later when he was prosecuted for involvement in a North Korean espionage incident in East Berlin.

By 1964, at the invitation of the Ford Foundation, which gave him a scholarship award, he settled in Berlin, after living in Freiburg since 1960 and then in Cologne since 1963. In October 1966, one of his orchestral compositions *Reak* (named after Korean ritual music) was given its premiere at the Donaueschingen International Music Festival, a successful occasion securing Yun's international reputation.

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<sup>2</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., "Yun, Isang,"

In 1967, Yun became involved in the East Berlin Spy Incident. On June 17, along with many other Korean artists and students in West Berlin, he was kidnapped and brought to Seoul, Korea by the South Korean secret police, KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency). Yun's wife, Suja Lee was abducted a few days later and also arrested under the same suspicion of being a spy for North Korea. Yun received a life sentence at the first trial on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>; which was reduced to fifteen years at the second trial and then, ten years at the third trial in the following year.<sup>3</sup>

His abduction by agents of the South Korean regime of Park Chung-hee in 1967 led to international protest of his imprisonment. In February 1969, as the result of protests and efforts from over 161 world famous artists, as well as his colleagues, friends, and even the West German government, he was granted amnesty. In March, after his release, Yun returned to West Germany as a political refugee but was never allowed to visit South Korea again until his death. On June 23 of the same year, he received a cultural award from the city of Kiel in Germany.

In 1970, in West Germany, Yun taught composition at the Hanover Musikhochschule for one year as a lecturer and from 1972 to 1985, held a full professorship at the Hochschule der Künste in West Berlin. In 1971, he attained German citizenship.

In 1972, he was commissioned by the cultural events presenters for the Munich Olympics and composed an opera, *Sim Tjong*, which is based on a Korean fairy tale in Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist philosophy. Since his reputation had grown because of this opera and also his participation at the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado from 1973, he began joining organizations and conferences in Japan and the United States to call for the democratization of South Korea and the reunification of the country. In August 1977, he was appointed as the president of the Association of Korean Democratic Reunification for the European union.

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<sup>3</sup> Isang Yun Peace Foundation, "Isang Yun's Life," Isang Yun Peace Foundation, [http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04\\_02.asp#1960](http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04_02.asp#1960) (accessed December 12, 2007).

In 1979, Yun visited North Korea again which provided him an opportunity to form a close relationship with the North Korean government and musicians. Afterwards, he continued to gain support and attention as a remarkable composer and as an educator for contemporary music in North Korea.

In 1982, Yun's *Exemplum in Memoriam Kwangju* was performed in North Korea. Since then, the Isang Yun Festival supported by the North Korean Government has been held each year in Pyongyang. In September of the same year in South Korea, a couple of his orchestral works were performed during two days by one of Yun's close friends, conductor Francis Travis and by the KBS Symphony Orchestra in Seoul. It was the first performance of Yun's music in South Korea since his music had been forbidden after his imprisonment.

From 1983 to 1987, Yun composed a symphony each year in a series to reflect his strong political and social views. In May 1984, in the memory of the Berlin Philharmonic's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Berlin Philharmonic premiered his first symphony. In December, in Pyongyang, the "Isang Yun Music Research Institute" was established. In 1987, in the memory of Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Yun was commissioned to compose his Fifth Symphony, which was premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic in the memory of Yun's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>4</sup>

He held a position of some distinction, receiving a number of awards such as Goethe Medal of the Goethe Institut in Munich (1995), Grand Cross for Distinguished Service of the German Order of Merit (1988) from the German President Richard von Weizäcker of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1988, he was accepted as an honorary member of the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM).

In North Korea, he was honored by the establishment of an institute bearing his name, *Isang Yun Institute* in Pyongyang. On November 3, 1995, Isang Yun died of pneumonia at the

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<sup>4</sup> Isang Yun Peace Foundation, "Isang Yun's Life," Isang Yun Peace Foundation, [http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04\\_02.asp#1980](http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04_02.asp#1980) (accessed February 25, 2008).

age of 78 at the Wals-Hospital in Berlin and was interred at the public cemetery in a grave of honor provided by the Berlin City Senate.

He was a member of the Hamburg and Berlin Academies of the Arts and of the European Academy of the Arts and Sciences in Salzburg, and an honorary member of the International Society of Contemporary Music.

## Chapter 2

### The Political Issues In Isang Yun's Life

*"A politician can not be a musician but a musician can be a politician."*<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction and previous chapter, Isang Yun was well known for his political ideology as much as for his musical career. In this chapter, I would like to introduce his political disputes from his earlier years during the Japanese occupation of Korea as well as the more serious one with his homeland, South Korea.

Particularly, it is important to state the controversial extreme penalty on his activities, the strong support from the North Korean government after his imprisonment in South Korea, and the reconciliation and relationship between Isang Yun (and his family after his death) and the recent the Korean government from 1990s until now.

Isang Yun was a figure, who is considered as a very discreet person who felt responsible for the historical mission for his home country's future. Some of his repertoires such as *Exemplum in Memoriam Kwangju* (1981) fully represent his attitude. Through these works, he vowed to testify to the truth of the tragic history and to impeach its brutalities.

His first political controversy started out under the rule of Japanese imperialism. Since Japan occupied Korea in 1910, many Koreans were moved to Japan. They either moved by themselves to find a job avoiding plundering and oppression in Korea by Japanese soldiers or they were moved by the compulsory order to supply the lack of labor in Japan since Japan was throwing all young labor into its military power in both the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War.

While Isang Yun was studying in Japan, he himself experienced and witnessed injustices such as the discrimination and unfair treatment towards the Koreans. In Osaka, Yun lived in an

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<sup>5</sup> Suja Lee, *Nae Nampyun, Isang Yun II* (Paju: Changbi, 1998), 140.

area where many Koreans were forced to move to by the Japanese to make up for a deficiency of labor in Japan. It was here that he saw the oppressed Korean's lives. As a Korean, it was unfair and unjust enough to wake his patriotism. In the interview with Luise Rinser, he talked about his own experiences in Japan that brought him difficulties simply because he was a Korean.

At one point when Yun was studying music in Japan, his landlord discovered his nationality and forced him to move out the next day. In the interview, he also clearly recalled the shame that agonized his guilty conscience. Yun remembered the regretful moment he was forced to change his name to Japanese by the order of Japanese rule. Yun mentioned that the circumstance in Japan during this period did not allow the Koreans standard human rights such as freedom to travel, attendance of any national schools, change of residence, and marriage with Japanese and so on. Even later, the neglect by the Korean government in taking care of the people who were left in Japan after the war woke his political, social consciousness. All these experiences in Osaka opened his eyes to another mission as a Korean musician.

As with Yun's other cultural backgrounds such as an interest in literature and art, it seems his patriotism was strongly influenced by his father, Ki Hyun Yun. Yun's father also struggled financially with his small business in his hometown by not being supportive of the Japanese people.

In 1941, just when the Pacific War was about to break, Isang Yun returned home. At the beginning of the war, Yun was drafted to work at a warehouse. During this period, Yun formed an underground group working against Japan and participating in the production of weapons. In 1944, Yun was captured by the Japanese police, tortured and imprisoned for two months.

Isang Yun's misfortune as a patriotic musician did not stop there. When he started his musical career as an active composer in Europe, he was driven into a dangerous situation, which changed his and his family's life completely and unexpectedly. In 1967, the KCIA (Korean

Central Intelligence Agency) suspected that over 194 Koreans in Europe, mostly in West Germany and France, were being trained as spies or participating in anti-South Korean activities. They were mostly the intellectuals who were active in Europe including artists, professors, students, medical doctors and so on. Some of their names were well-known in South Korea such as artist Eunro Lee, poet Sangbyong Chun and Isang Yun as well. This case was called *Dongbaeklim Sagun* in Korean, otherwise known as the East Berlin Spy Incident. The KCIA suspected the North Korean Embassy in East Berlin as a base for their spying activities in order to maintain a better connection with North Korea. This is why the name of operation refers to East Berlin even though most of them were in West Germany.

The KCIA insisted that these suspects supported the North Korean government by spying on South Korea through the North Korean embassy in East Berlin. In addition, they were suspected of visiting North Korea illegally between 1958 and 1967. At that time, any private visits by non-governmental people were prohibited between South and North Korea. It was a very sensitive issue for both countries and considered as spying activities.

On July 8, 1967, the KCIA abducted these people and even their wives from Europe and returned them to Seoul. They were placed in a secret location in Seoul and tortured until their trial.

At the trial, on December 13, 1967, 34 out of 194 were found guilty and two of them even got the death sentence.<sup>6</sup> Most of them insisted that the charges were false. In the case of Isang Yun, he admitted his visit to North Korea but also persisted that his visit was purely for his

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<sup>6</sup> “Dongbaeklim Sagun Gaeyo,” *The Hankyoreh*, March 2, 2005, <http://www.hani.co.kr/section-005000000/2005/02/005000000200502030934299.html>



musical career. At this trial, Yun was issued life sentence, later, fifteen years and ten years at the second and third trials in following year.<sup>7</sup>

A worldwide petition led by Igor Stravinsky and Herbert von Karajan and other musical luminaries was presented to the South Korean government, signed by approximately 200 artists, including Luigi Dallapiccola, Hans Werner Henze, Heinz Holliger, Mauricio Kagel, Josef Keilbert, Otto Klemperer, György Ligeti, Arne Mellnas, Per Nørgård, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, among many others. Isang Yun was released and exiled in 1969, and returned to West Berlin.<sup>8</sup> After that, he was not allowed to visit South Korea again.

In 1969, as the result of the international protest against his imprisonment, Isang Yun was granted amnesty but the wound to his soul and body remained deep within him throughout the rest of his life. In the worse case of some of the accused, because of the torture in the prison, they endured life long mental and physical difficulties ultimately resulting in loss of their previous lives.

Over the years, there has been suspicion that KCIA exaggerated this incident to cover up the political situation in South Korea. Indeed, on January 26, 2006, the committee founded to examine the case of the past justification of this incident enacted by the KCIA officially announced that the East Berlin Spy Incident was overstated.<sup>9</sup>

In South Korea, the Constitution in 1963 banned a president from seeking a third consecutive term. However, later, in 1963, with the cooperation of the KCIA, the president Park

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<sup>7</sup> Isang Yun Peace Foundation, "Isang Yun's Life," Isang Yun Peace Foundation, [http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04\\_02.asp](http://www.isangyun.org/04yoon/04_02.asp) (accessed February 27, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, "Isang Yun," Wikipedia Foundation, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isang\\_Yun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isang_Yun) (accessed December 2, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> *The Hankyoreh*, February 17, 2005.

Chung-hee's allies in the legislature succeeded in amending the Constitution to allow the current president, himself, to run for the three consecutive terms.<sup>10</sup>

On June 8, 1967, shortly before the East Berlin Spy Incident occurred, during his current term as president, Park Chung-hee was reelected by legal intervention defeating the other candidate, Yoon Bo-seon, the previous president of South Korea from 1960 to 1962 by a narrow margin by illegal intervention. Right after president Park was reelected he initiated a reform.

The East Berlin Spy Incident in July of 1967 was issued right after the illegal election by Park Chung-hee. In those days, there were frequent demonstrations in South Korea, mainly by college students acting as the primary force resisting the injustice of the election.

Kim Hyung Wook, the head of KCIA at that time, denied that the spying incident was planned to divert people's anger from the election.<sup>11</sup> Kim insisted that the investigation into the espionage was not related to the result of the election but regardless of the truth, it was effective enough to threaten the mass of people who eventually shrank from danger. Suspiciously, in December 1970, all convicts of the East Berlin Spy Incident even including the prisoners who had received a death penalty were released. This occurred just shortly after the success of Park Chung-hee's allies in the legislature in amending the constitution allowing a president a third consecutive term.

In the interview with Luise Rinser, Isang Yun spoke about his false accusations and over charge. The fact was that Yun had visited North Korea in previous years but there was much evidence to support that his visits to North Korea were simply for his musical career. However, in the interview, he spoke about the real, true reason of his first trip to North Korea very clearly.

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<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, "Park Chung-hee," Wikipedia Foundation, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park\\_Chung-hee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_Chung-hee) (accessed December 28, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> *The Hankyoreh*, February 17, 2005.

Yun had a close friend, Choi, from his teenage time, who also studied music in Japan with Isang Yun. Choi was a big fan of communism and he simply went to North Korea after the Korean War and got a job as a bass player in the National Orchestra there. However, Choi left his wife and children in South Korea and they hadn't heard anything from him since he had left South Korea. As one of Choi's closest friends, Isang Yun tried to help Choi's family financially along with some of his friends hoping for any news from Choi in North Korea.

One day in Darmstadt, West Germany at that time, when Yun was participating in the Darmstadt Contemporary Music Festival, he had a chance to talk a lady from East Germany. Yun heard that there were many North Koreans who came to study in East Germany. Yun asked the lady for help creating connections with North Koreans in East Germany to find his friend, Choi. A little while later, Yun got a letter from Choi written for Choi's family in Seoul. As already stated, in those days, both visitation and correspondence between South Korea and North Korea were not allowed. Therefore, Choi wanted Yun's help to send the letter to his family he had left behind in South Korea. Isang Yun was willing to be a messenger between his friend Choi and the family. It also challenged Isang Yun to visit his old friend in North Korea and also to observe the divided other part of Korea.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, he mentioned another personal reason for his visit to North Korea. Yun always had a dream of seeing one of the most important cultural properties in North Korea, "Sasindo," a 1300 years old mound wall painting in an ancient tomb. Later in 1968, during his imprisonment, he was allowed to compose in prison and he wrote a piece inspired by "Sasindo".<sup>13</sup> In this work, *Image*, he describes the symbolic animals in the painting represented by the flute, oboe, violin, and cello. As an artist who was influenced by many cultural and traditional inheritances for his musical ideas and as a Korean who came from the time when his

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<sup>12</sup> Lee, I, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Lee, I, 224.

country was not divided, his actions were too naïve to not consider the sensitive situation between two countries.

Furthermore, Yun was charged with receiving financial aid from the North Korean government for his work as a spy but later he explained the sources of the money he received. He maintained that one of the sources of the money was his friend, Choi, to help his son to travel from Seoul to Germany for his study in Germany. In fact, Yun admitted the other source was actually the North Korean government, which provided all costs for his trip to North Korea but it was purely to support him as a musician. He insisted it would have been the same way in any other Asian countries if invited as a musician for any musical exchange activity.

Some of the 194 accused were undeservedly charged for merely borrowing a little bit of money from the other suspects accused. At that time, both governments were over sensitive with any political situation, especially in the chaotic political situation in South Korea, Yun's naïve decision to satisfy his humanity and artistic curiosity caused a misfortune, which would last for the rest of his life.

## Chapter 3

### Isang Yun's Reputation In North Korea

In this chapter, I would like to discuss Isang Yun's achievement and reputation as a contemporary composer in North Korea. It is interesting to observe his success as a Composer originally from South Korea, accused of being a North Korean spy and his relationship to the North Korean government.

Indeed, his name as a composer and educator in North Korea is very highly considered. Yun is recognized as one of the most important musicians in North Korea who introduced and encouraged contemporary music under barren circumstances for this kind of music. Since he had been released from jail in South Korea and exiled to West Germany, Yun had more chances to visit to North Korea. In the other part of his motherland, he and his family battled and attempted to console their incurable homesickness for their native hometown. Isang Yun built a close relationship with the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, his son Kim Jong Il and many musicians in North Korea.

Isang Yun, himself, thought at one point, it would not be possible for his music to be welcomed in North Korea because it was regarded as the music of their capitalist enemies, rather than the type or style of music suited for communism<sup>14</sup>. At that time, in North Korea as in other communist countries, the role of true music was serving a public duty such as inspiring their purpose of communism. As a matter of fact, even his friend, Choi who Yun finally met in North Korea again after a long search, denounced Yun's music merely as utility music only suitable for the capitalistic intellectuals.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Luise Rinser, *Der Verwundete Drache: Dialog über Leben und Werk des Komponisten* (Reutlingen: S. Fisher, 1977), 165.

<sup>15</sup> Lee, I, 230.

Nevertheless, Isang Yun and his music surprisingly received a warm reception in North Korea. The former North Korean president Kim Il Sung treated Isang Yun as a world-class national composer and supported Yun's musical activities in many ways. Kim Il Sung even asked Yun to remain in North Korea to educate the next generation of musicians in North Korea and to help cultivate a more developed musical environment there.

According to an interesting story, Isang Yun was invited to a concert on which one of his historically profound works was performed as a surprise, without his prior knowledge of the program.<sup>16</sup> That night, Yun's *Exemplum in Memoriam Kwangju* (1981), written to appease the souls of the victims of the Gwangju Democratization Movement and to protest against the suppression by the government of Jun Doo-Hwan, was performed in Pyongyang by the National Symphony Orchestra. It deeply touched Isang Yun because in this communistic country such a difficult contemporary piece had never been welcomed nor performed before. Since that historic concert in 1982, the Isang Yun Music Festival has been held each year in North Korea.

On December 5, 1984, under the direction of Kim Jong Il, Kim Il Sung's son and successor, the Isang Yun Music Institute was established in Pyongyang with six employees and about fifty members consisting of artists, educators, and critics.<sup>17</sup> Isang Yun gave lectures there and led their musical activities such as music appreciation classes and seminars to educate people in contemporary music all over the world. Yun also organized many concerts in North Korea as well as inviting some of his prominent musician colleagues from Europe.

On October 1, 1990, Kim Jong Il ordered the expansion of the Isang Yun Music Institute to become an independent institution. This increased the number of employees to one hundred fifty including its own chamber orchestra and a publisher. In the center of Pyongyang, they built a fifteen-story building with a six hundred seat concert hall. Kim Jong Il even dispatched a few

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<sup>16</sup> Lee, II, 112.

<sup>17</sup> Lee, II, 112.

architects to Europe to learn the designs of the concert halls there and according to their wish, Isang Yun got the plan of the Berlin Philharmonic Chamber Music Hall. This expansion of the Isang Yun Music Institute took over two years to complete and was re-opened in May 1993.<sup>18</sup>

After the success of the Unification Concert in 1990, Kim Il Sung showed his appreciation of Isang Yun's meritorious efforts for the concert by giving a house to Yun in a suburb of Pyongyang. Yun was even offered a personal medical doctor and in-house nurse when his health problems eventually got worse.

As a national musician, one of his significant contributions for both countries was his proposal and launching of the novel conception of a unification concert between South Korea and North Korea. In an interview at an international symposium in Japan in 1987, he suggested a concert co-hosted by North and South Korea.

The concept of this concert was to invite Korean musicians from all over the world (U.S.A, Germany, Russia, Canada, China, Japan...etc.) for a non-governmental cultural event between both countries as a gesture of a cultural reunification. In those days, both countries actually had a law, which allowed the cultural exchange between these two countries but it had not yet been applied. In an atmosphere in which both countries tried to have opportunities to discuss the solution of the separation, Isang Yun's progressive concept for the concert was enthusiastically accepted by both governments.

In October 1990, for the concert held in Pyongyang, fourteen Korean folk musicians and three journalists from South Korea were invited to North Korea with a safety protocol for their ten days trip. This concert was very successful and as a succession of this concert, another concert between the two countries followed in South Korea in December of the same year.

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<sup>18</sup> Lee, II, 137.

This concert provided the first legal visit to each country by non-governmental persons. Isang Yun presided over the committee to organize this concert and was in charge of all the preparations using the personal contacts and fame he had previously earned internationally as a peacemaker. Yun and many musicians rallied support and trust from both countries to make this event a hopeful first step to reunification. This event enabled citizens of both countries to understand more about the others's culture and reduce the prejudice and cultural gaps that had widened between North and South Korea since their separation in 1950.

When the Reunification Concerts were performed successfully and both countries gained international attention, as a reward, Kim Il Sung gave Yun a house in recognition of his contributions.



## **Chapter 4**

### **After Isang Yun's Death**

In 2007, during this period spanning from his birthday September 17<sup>th</sup> to the anniversary of his death, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, there were festivals held in South Korea, North Korea and Germany to commemorate Isang Yun's ninetieth birthday. In total, twelve events were held including competitions and the inaugural concert of the Seoul Isang Yun Ensemble. Particularly, in South Korea, they were the biggest events ever since the lifting of a ban on his music in South Korea in 1982 and included premiers of his newer works.

In September 2007, forty years after Yun and his wife Lee Suja were banned from returning to their own homeland, and twelve years after Yun's death, Lee Suja visited South Korea to participate in the festivals. This occurred just one year after the findings of impropriety of the KCIA were officially announced in January 26, 2006 that the East Berlin Spy Incident was overstated. After Yun's death, his widow Lee revealed her strong wish to visit South Korea to console Isang Yun's spirit. She shared these feelings with the press from South Korea in April 2005 at the Isang Yun Music Festival in Keumgangsam, in North Korea.

Until Yun's death, Isang Yun and his family strongly wished and tried to return to South Korea. Along with a permit allowing Yun's return, Yun was demanding an apology first from the South Korean government for the pasts' false accusations but his request was not granted. For this visit, many musicians and people from a few religious organizations helped out Yun's family. They even found the "Association for Isang Yun's Exoneration" in 1998 and continually tried in many ways to elicit an official apology from the South Korean government for Isang Yun and his family. Even though his music was allowed to be played and heard again since 1982 in South Korea, unfortunately, his returning to South Korea did not happen until his death.

Back in 1994 Yun was trying to attend the Isang Yun Music Festival held in Seoul, Kwangju and Pusan. In June of the same year, he twice sent letters to the South Korean government to ask for exoneration and permission to return. He was asked by the minister of the Reunification Department to declare that he would concentrate only on his music (not any political action) during his visit to Korea. Isang Yun was very upset with the requested restriction and replied that he had a right and duty to love both countries stressing their shared original roots. The Korean consul in Berlin approached Yun with a proposal that he should mention that he would only visit for festivals and his hometown. This restriction hurt Yun's pride as an artist and rejected that terms. Yun's life-long wish would remain unfulfilled.

The visit of Isang Yun's widow, Suja Lee to South Korea happened with the assistance of the subsequent minister of the Unification Department, Lee Jae Jung. In June 2006, Suja Lee wrote a letter to President Roh Mu-hyun to ask for 'exoneration' Isang Yun posthumously and support for his memorial activities and her return to South Korea. In May of the following year, Lee Jae Jung expressed his regret sending a letter to Isang Yun's family to console their sorrow for his misfortune as a Korean musician. In addition, Lee Jae Jung asked Suja Lee to attend the 2007 Yun Isang Festival celebrating Yun's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday in Seoul.

On September 13, 2007, Roh Mu-hyun, the president of South Korea, invited Suja Lee and Yun's daughter, Chung Yun to the Blue House, the official residence of the Korean President. It became news that this eighty years old widow bowed down upon her knees to the president, Roh Mu-hyun to express her gratitude for the support from the present South Korean government to exonerate Isang Yun. It was at that reception that President Roh talked about the consideration to build a cultural center in honor of Isang Yun and to declare his Berlin house as a memorial site.

Suja Lee participated in the festivals and visited Yun's hometown, Tongyoung, something Yun had wished to do during his lifetime since his exile. Even though Isang Yun himself was not able to see his dream, his wife's visit was a significant event for Yun's family and for all Koreans. It was particularly meaningful as a reconciliatory gesture between Isang Yun and the South Korean government and finally showed respect and recognition of his achievements and contributions to South Korean culture.

## Chapter 5

### The Music Of Isang Yun

Yun's aspiration as a composer was to create a mixture of eastern and western music, based on Asian ideas through the use of Western instruments and avant-garde compositional techniques. Yun's compositions, incorporating two different cultures to produce his own characteristic style, were derived from Taoism, Confucian, Buddhism, and Shamanism. Above all, as he pointed out many times, Taoism was essentially the foundation of his view of life and music. He dealt with materials from mythology and nature as the theme or element of his works but they were not for the purpose of naturalism. They supported Yun's universal concept built on his Taoist thought and philosophy.

At a lecture Yun gave at a ceremony awarding him an honorary doctor at University Tübingen in Germany in 1985, Isang Yun explained his musical background influenced by reading about Taoism and Buddhism. Seventy percent out of his more than one hundred works written in Europe were based on Taoism and Buddhist mythology or from relative tales.<sup>19</sup>

In the book "*Nae Nampyun, Isang Yun*", Isang Yun's wife Suja Lee introduced Yun's explanation of Taoism and his music based on it. I will translate it directly to help your understanding of the Taoist ideas in his composition.

In terms of Taoism, there are four types of huge existences in the world, which are heaven, earth, human and universe. We, humans, are tiny beings but at the same time the biggest beings that know the power of the universe. Tao includes these four existences. In other words, Tao is fundamental truth penetrating heaven, earth and mighty nature and it flows every moment and causes vicissitude. It is the principle of creation and variation of all nature. Also, it means endless change, circulation and the flow itself.

We can think that all the cosmos rotate by Tao. As a first step, I start to listen to the tone of the universe by Tao. There is not a beginning or an end. There are only

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<sup>19</sup> Lee, II, 180.

countless tones. We are able to hear some of them and some of them not. I receive them with my sensitive antenna and arrange them to music and call it music.

In western culture, people think the composers make the works. However, in Asia, from long time ago, composer's name for most old music is not identified. In our tradition, art is not the possession of humans. I write music by Taoist philosophy. And yet, it is not about making something but about capturing what exists in nature. The important thing is how to make it sound by putting the tone sharply and deeply into your almighty inner depth and then, how to arrange the order on the basis of your aesthetic and so forth.<sup>20</sup>

Yun's music was introduced to the European music world in the late 1950s. Since the middle of the 1950s, in Europe, people were expecting a new compositional technique to replace serialism. Isang Yun was still looking for his own direction to connect to European's music. However, the declining of serialism and their open minds toward a new creation gave him a confidence to be accepted with his own musical roots based on his Asian background.

Yun learned traditional European music in Paris and in Berlin including twelve tone technique from Joseph Rufer, Schönberg's pupil.<sup>21</sup>

In 1958, at the first visit at the International Summer Courses of Contemporary Music in Darmstadt, he had a chance to meet many well-known composers such as Stockhausen, Nono, Boulez and John Cage.<sup>22</sup> He was especially shocked and fascinated with Cage's experimental ideas providing a broader spectrum of new possibility.<sup>23</sup> Yun asked himself if he should be a radical composer as other contemporaries to insure the position as an Avant-garde or if he should keep his approach to music connected to East Asian traditional music.

After the first visit to Darmstadt, his successes with the premier of *Fünf Stücke für Klavier* (1958) in Darmstadt and *Musik für Sieben Instrumente* (1959) in Bilthoven, Holland strengthened his confidence to keep his musical roots from Korean traditional music and

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<sup>20</sup> Lee, II, 180.

<sup>21</sup> Hanns-Wermer Heiser and Wolfgang Sparrer, ed. *Der Komponist Isang Yun* (Munich: edition Text + Kritik, 1987), 139.

<sup>22</sup> Rinser, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, I, 154.

primarily aspire to be a composer from a different culture; In the former work, he still experimented with twelve tone techniques he learned from Joseph Rufer while he introduced *Hauptklang* technique in the latter.<sup>24</sup>

Since the early 1960s, Isang Yun was interested in *Klangkomposition* (Sound Mass) developed by György Ligeti, Friedrich Cerha, and Krzysztof Penderecki, a compositional technique that minimizes the importance of individual pitches in preference for texture, timbre, and dynamics as primary shapers of gesture and impact.<sup>25</sup> In this trend, he simultaneously tried to build up his own style based on this idea. For instance, above all, he accepted the importance of individual tones to express his own musical personality from Asian musical backgrounds.<sup>26</sup>

His symphonic works from this period, such as *Orchesterstück Bara* (1960), *Symphonische Szene für grosses Orchester* (1961), and *Colloides Sonores* (1961) were written focusing on acoustical aspects. Especially, in *Colloides Sonores*, Yun used the names of Korean traditional string instruments such as *haegum* (a traditional Korean vertical bowed string instrument with two silk strings), *geomungo* (zither family instrument with six silk strings, bridges and frets, plucked with a short bamboo stick called *suldae*), and *yanggum* (a hammered dulcimer with metal strings, struck with a bamboo stick) as the title of each movement and tried to obtain the images and sonorities of each instrument. Also, in *Orchesterstück Bara*, in the title, Yun employs a Korean name of an instrument used for a temple dance at the Buddhist temple by monks to represent the mysterious, meditative Buddhist image.

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<sup>24</sup> Isang Yun, "Jungjungdong" in *Bewegtheit in der Unbewegtheit: Ueber meine kompositorische Entwicklung in Europa*, ed. Korea Forschungsgemeinschaft e.V., (Offenbach/Main: Korea Forschungsgemeinschaft e.V., 1985), 24.

<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia, "Sound Mass," Wikipedia Foundation, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound\\_mass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_mass) (accessed 5, December 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Isang Yun, 26.

From the 1960s, in works such as *Gasa für Violin und Klavier* (1963) and *Garak für Flöte und Klavier* (1963), Yun strongly developed his own idea, *Hauptton* (*Hauptklangtechnik*), an essentially linear approach, as he pointed out. He explains how traditionally in Korean music every tone starts with a grace note and when the note is established it gradually takes on vibrato, leading to an explosion of sound, a final ornament and a continuation on another level.<sup>27</sup>

*Hauptton*, the main material in his musical language, is a bundle of individual tones; he used *Hauptton* as a term for the small group of instrument and *Klanggruppe* for orchestra works. Every single tone integrated with each other for the whole *Klanggruppe* under the compositional principle.<sup>28</sup> His four operas composed between 1965 and 1972 belong to this period and deal with East Asian subjects as well.

Gradually, *Hauptton* became the ground for Isang Yun's musical language and his own compositional technique rooted in the Oriental concept of notes totally different from the western ones and Yun incorporated these in European contemporary compositional techniques.

Live and active note is a model for Yun's *Hauptton*. Two main essential elements for *Hauptton* are long lasting note as a center and surrounding notes, ornamental note, which makes a center lively act and corresponds to *sigimsae* (decorative notes) in Korean music. In *Hauptton*, these two elements form inseparable unified body. A long lasting note itself is moving vigorously experiencing changes such as dynamics, vibrato, glissando and so forth. Yun's *Hauptton*, which follows continuously flowing and changing the law of inheritance, is formed differently every time. *Hauptklangtechnik* is that this *Hauptton* heterophonically applies to different sound parts at the same time. Yun's *Hauptklangtechnik* admits particularity and at the same time pursues the balance and the harmony through the dynamic interaction of two extreme

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<sup>27</sup> Naxos, "Yun, Isang Biography," Naxos Digital Services Ltd., <http://www.naxos.com/composerinfo/bio21621.htm> (accessed October 5, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Isang Yun, 3.

contrasts like yin and yang, which itself is an expression of dynamic oneness as a small universe in a larger universe.<sup>29</sup> I introduce his own explanation about *Hauptton* that was often cited to clarify his concept of his musical language.

In European music, a note gained its life when connected to other notes and a single note remained relatively abstract, whereas a separate note is alive itself in Oriental music. Western note can be compared to a line drawn from a drawing pencil, while Oriental note can be compared to a line drawn from a brush. All the notes continuously change from appearance to disappearance, and decoration, syncopation, glissando, the change in volume, and over the top natural vibrato of every note is used purposefully as a tool of figuration. When there is a change in a note, this change is considered as ornamenting function and various partial expressions of a single note rather than pitches forming a melody.<sup>30</sup>

During this time, he directly used the Korean names as the titles to show the exotic characters and to appeal to certain images of each piece such as *Piri*-the name of a Korean flute-style instrument, *Bara*- an instrument used for temple-dance by monks, *Gagok*-a classic style song, *Nore*-a general form of song and so on. These titles give a mystic impression to the European audiences.

Since the 1970s, after his imprisonment in South Korea, there was a big change in his musical world. He started writing very narrative works reflecting his experience from jail which expressed his political views. During this period, Yun tried to communicate with the audience by using clear musical language to express his political ideology more understandably and easily. On the other hand, he was interested in European traditional musical genres as well.

The symbolism and the use of concerto form in his first concerto, *Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester* (1975-76) demonstrated his radical change in this period.

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<sup>29</sup> Tongyeong International Music Festival “Review Works: Isang Yun: Tendency of Work & compositional,” Tongyeong International Music Festival, [http://www.timf.org/eng/yunisang/product/period\\_01.jsp](http://www.timf.org/eng/yunisang/product/period_01.jsp) (accessed July 3, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Christian Martin Schmidt, “Gespräch mit Isang Yun,” *Berlin Confrontation Kuenstler in Berlin der Ford Foundation*, (Berlin: Mann, 1965), 68-9.



By writing the first symphony in 1983, Yun wrote a single symphony every year until he completed his fifth symphony in 1987. In these works, he tried to appeal to humanity. For example, in his first symphony, he describes the resistance and caution against nuclear war, as well as human rights in Asia and his desire for peace as expressed in the fifth symphony. These descriptive symphonies with the large-scale, dramatic structure express his internal maturity after suffering with the South Korean government as a socially, politically aware composer.

Starting from *Doppelkonzert für Oboe und Harfe mit kleinem Orchester* (1977) describing the sorrow of the separation of the Korean peninsula based on a Korean traditional fairy tale, he wrote many pieces reflecting Korean political situations until his death. For example, *Exemplum in memoriam Kwangju* (1981) is about Kwangju massacre, *Cantata Mein Land, Mein Volk* (1987) is about the separation of Korea, *Engel in Flammen, und Epilog* (1994) is about student demonstrations for democratization.

Sadly, his music was prohibited in South Korea for fifteen years since the East Berlin Spy Incident, but in September of 1982, eight pieces of his music were performed in Seoul as a gesture of the cultural opening by South Korean government. However, his physical entrance to South Korea was still not allowed and these concerts were performed without the composer's attendance.

## Chapter 6

### The Cello And Isang Yun

Isang Yun mentioned several times that the cello, particularly, is his most favorite instrument. Yun, himself played cello and also had close relationships with many prominent cellists in Europe such as Siegfried Palm and Walter Grimmer. These experiences helped him to compose many refined and demanding cello works. At the interview with Ruise Rinser, Yun described that he would have felt empty-handed without the cello, which was always his friend and partner.<sup>31</sup> His love of cello was so deep that he did not dare to write cello pieces for a long time.<sup>32</sup>

There was an interesting story, which tells his love for cello. Back, during the Japanese Occupation in Korea, right after his first imprisonment, he had to flee to avoid the Japanese police due to his participation in the rebellion against Japan. Even in that dangerous situation, he took his cello with him. Yun had a cheap cello he bought in Osaka while studying under a difficult financial means. One night, when he had been warned to flee, he tied up his cello with a rope and let it down through the window. He flew all the way to Seoul with his cello.

Yun's wife, Suja Lee, in her autobiography, sadly recalled the moment when she found out the history of her husband's cello. When times were monetarily difficult after the Korean War, Yun discovered that his wife sold even her wedding ring to help the family finances. Yun sold his cello of many years.<sup>33</sup>

Despite Yun's initial respect and reluctance to write for cello, he eventually left a great number of cello pieces representing his passion and deep love for this instrument. His cello works include the following as shown in Table 1.

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<sup>31</sup> Rinser, 52.

<sup>32</sup> Lee, II, 68.

<sup>33</sup> Lee, I, 116.

### **Table 1: Yuns Cello Works**

*Musik für sieben Instrumente* (1959) fl.ob.cl.bn-hn-vln.vlc

*Nore für Violoncello und Klavier* (1964)

*Images für Flöte, Oboe, Violine, und Violoncello* (1968)

*Glissees für Violoncello Solo* (1970)

*Trio für Violine, Violoncello und Klavier* (1972/75)

*Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester* (1975/76)

*Concertino für Akkordeon und Streichquartet* (1983)

*Duo für Cello und Harfe* (1984)

*Rencontre für Klarinette, Harfe, und Cello* (1986)

*Quintett* (1986)

*Duetto Concertante für Oboe, Violoncello, und Streichers* (1987)

*Intermezzo für Violoncello und Akkordeon* (1988)

*Quartet for flute, violin, cello, and piano* (1988)

*Espace I für Violoncello und Klavier* (1992)

*Sieben Etüden für Violoncello Solo* (1993)

*Espace II für Violoncello, Harfe, und Oboe* (1993)

*Quintett II* (1994)

*Quartet for oboe, violin, viola, and cello* (1994)

*Quintett II for Clarinet und String Quartet* (1994)

*String Quartets* (1988, 1990, 1992)

In the following chapter, I would like to introduce five cello works including *Nore für Violoncello und Klavier* (1964), *Glissees für Violoncello Solo* (1970), *Konzert für Violoncello*

*und Orchester* (1975/76), *Espace I für Violoncello und Klavier* (1992), *Sieben Etüden für Violoncello Solo* (1993).

## Chapter 7

### Isang Yun's Cello Works

#### I. *Nore*

This work is Yun's first work for cello as the main instrument. He had already written some works before for small ensembles, which included cello such as the *string quartet* and *Musik für Sieben Instrumente*. However, using the cello, as a solo instrument accompanied by piano, *Nore* was his very first composition.

This piece is one of his duo series for a solo instrument and piano written with Korean titles in the early 1960's. In 1963, one year before he composed this piece, he wrote *Gasa* for violin and piano and *Garak* for flute and piano as this series. His intention to make this series with this instrumentation is shown by his use of Korean titles which are all about musical terms in Korean: *Gasa*=lyrics, *Garak*=melody. In addition, these pieces are relatively short.

Regarding this music, there is not much information found unlike his other cello works. However, Isang Yun left a short message regarding this piece when he mentioned President Park Chung-hee's visit in Federal Republic of Germany in 1964. To welcome Park Chung-hee, there was a party by the Korean Immigrants Association in Germany. At that time, Isang Yun was the leader of the association and he gathered Korean musicians from all over Europe to organize a concert for the president's visit. When a cellist studying in Colon came to Isang Yun one night before the welcome concert, Isang Yun wrote this piece for her in a hotel room in three hours.<sup>34</sup> Although he had previously stated that he was not relaxed about writing cello repertoire due to his deep love for cello, eventually, his first cello piece was ironically composed almost accidentally. However, this piece was not performed at that concert rather while he was in jail in

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, I, 259.

South Korea; the score was found in his desk drawer and published by his friends. In May of 1968, Isang Yun's very first cello work was premiered by Siegfried Palm in Bremen.

As Yun used the Korean titles in his many other works in 1960s and 1970s, he also used a pure Korean word for the title of this piece. "*Nore*" in Korean usually means or refers to a vocal piece. As the title implies, Yun was trying to make it sound very singing representing his idea that "A long lasting note itself is moving vigorously experiencing changes such as dynamics, vibrato, glissando and ...etc" as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Does *Nore* really remind us of Korean traditional music? If so, how did he assimilate the Korean style to this music? Surely, there are similarities between the writing of *Nore* and one of his later works, *Glissees*, a well-known piece using a mixture of both Korean and European musical styles. For example, a great deal of *vorschlages* and *pizzicatti* is found in *Nore* as well becoming one of the most obvious features in both pieces. Even though those techniques are not yet as varied nor abundant as in his later work, *Glissees*, his determined musical idea to connect Korean music to European music already exists in *Nore*.

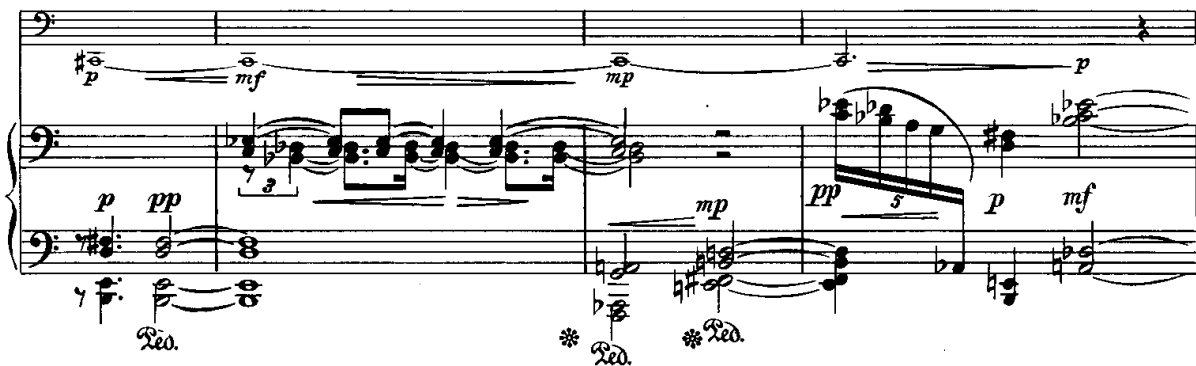
Also, the frequent use of trills, especially trills with bigger intervals than the usual major, or minor 2nds apart (Ex.1) explain his idea rooted in the Korean music.

In addition, the long valued single notes which are later clarified by his own musical idea "*Hauptton*" are often presented in this piece; sometimes spanning over four measures such as in the measure 51(Ex. 2), as he insisted the importance of long moving notes in Korean traditional music. In this case, the frequent dynamic changes throughout four measures make this long note moving and expressive. The dotted line found above the long notes such as from mm. 45 to mm. 47 (Ex. 3), shows his attempt to make a longer phrase in order to produce all moving sounds and smoother connections to the next notes with the bigger interval changes. It is one of his efforts to make this piece sound like the vocal piece that the Korean title indicates.

Example 1. *Nore* measure 62-65



Example 2. *Nore* measure 51-54



Since this piece belongs to his early period in Europe, the twelve tone technique he learned at the beginning of his studies in Europe was employed. He was at this time experimenting with the twelve tone technique in this piece, audible from the very beginning sonority, starting with B flat including the G # on the piano.

*Nore* is a relatively short and simple piece compared to other cello repertoire but in terms of his political background, it is a historically interesting piece for Yun himself and the audience. Yun certainly did not expect the confrontation with Park Chung-hee's party later when he was writing his first cello piece for the visit of this president.

Example 3. *Nore* measure 42-50

Example 3. *Nore* measure 42-50. The score is for a piano and features complex textures with multiple staves. Dynamics include *fff*, *p*, *dolce*, *sf*, *a tempo*, *rall.*, *pp*, and *ppp*. Measure numbers 45 and 50 are marked.

Example 4. *Nore* measure 1-11

Example 4. *Nore* measure 1-11. The score is for Violoncello and Klavier. The tempo is marked *Cantabile* with a quarter note equal to ca. 60. Dynamics include *f*, *sf*, *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *dolce*, *mf*, and *ppp*. Measure numbers 5 and 10 are marked.



## II. *Glissees*

*Glissees für Cello Solo* is Yun's only unaccompanied cello solo piece with the exception of the Etude for cello. It was written in 1970 and dedicated to Siegfried Palm, one of the prominent German contemporary cellists. The longtime friendship between these two musicians challenged Yun to write such a refined, virtuosic cello solo piece for his sincere friend. They met the first time in 1959 in Darmstadt when Palm played the cello part at Yun's *Musik für Sieben Instrumente*, the work, which brought Yun initial reputation in Germany. Later, when Yun was in prison in South Korea, Palm was formally interviewed in a newspaper in an effort to save Isang Yun's life and also participated in a demonstration organized by students in Bonn, Germany.<sup>35</sup>

After the instrumental duo works with piano in 1960s such as *Gasa* for Violin and Piano (1963), *Garak* for flute and piano (1963), *Nore* for cello and piano (1964), *Reul* for clarinet and piano by composing *Gliseses*, Yun started work on a series of the solo instrumental works followed by *Piri* for oboe solo (1971) and *Etude* for flute (1973) and so on. During this period, Yun was extremely interested in the voice of the solo instrument and composed over ten solo pieces for various solo instruments.

When Yun was writing this piece, he was inspired by the Korean traditional string instruments, especially *haegeum* and *geomungo*.<sup>36</sup> In this work, Yun strongly shows some characteristics of Korean traditional music.

Throughout this piece, Yun applied the three important essential elements in Korean traditional music to this western string instrument: *changdan* - literally, long and short-rhythmic

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<sup>35</sup> Sungman Choi and Eunmi Hong, *Yun Isang eu Eumak Saegae*, (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1991), 472.

<sup>36</sup> Choi and Hong, 546.

pattern, *karak-* melody or melody pattern, *sigimsae-* ornaments).<sup>37</sup> In this piece *Glissees*, his deep understanding of the two different musical background is well apparent.

This work consists of four movements or four sections; however, Yun wrote in the instructions for this piece that all movements could be performed individually as separate pieces.

In this piece, Yun tried to combine Korean traditional expression through European contemporary technique such as the twelve tone technique he learned from his teacher, Josef Rufer, a student and assistant of Schönberg.<sup>38</sup> Through this experience, Yun was interested in the conflict between a specifically European way of composing with fixed tone pitches and the Korean flexibility of pitch. This comprised the meaning of that piece and opened to another possibility for his contemporaries.

For example, as already implied by the title "*Glissees*", the flexibility of the pitch is becoming absolutely the unifying idea of the whole piece. These labile uncertain sliding pitches caused by glissando are not the concept of twelve tone music which employs a clear pitch of every twelve tones.<sup>39</sup> This technique is very likely one of the most common Korean folk music characteristics. The glissando, which according to Isang Yun exists about "30 different kinds" in Korean traditional music, is almost omnipresent throughout the work.<sup>40</sup> This main idea brings an interesting contrast to the principle of the twelve tone technique used from the very beginning and throughout the remainder of the piece.

As in Ex.5, the glissandi occur between a small range of intervals or even between a bigger range (sometimes, more than an octave), and between a beginning note and an uncertain or undetermined ending pitch.

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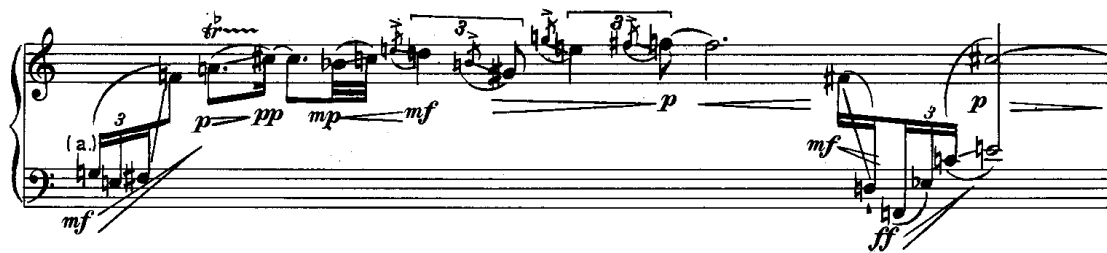
<sup>37</sup> Ae Kyung Choi, *Einheit und Mannigfaltigkeit: Eine Studie zu den fuenf Symphonien von Isang Yun* (Sinzig: Studio- Verl., 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Hanns-Wermer Heiser and Wolfgang Sparrer, 139.

<sup>39</sup> Hanns-Wermer Heiser and Wolfgang Sparrer, 139.

<sup>40</sup> Rinser, 71.

Example 5. *Glissees*



As I mentioned above, in this work, he shows strong influence from the technique of European music acquired during his studies there and his original musical language rooted in his national background.

At the beginning of this piece (Ex. 6), Yun introduces a twelve tone row starting from the first tone in the first bar *f#- d - f - e b - c - c# - e - g - g# - b - a - b b* until the important initial pitch *f#* shows up again in *p* with glissando in the fourth line.

This *f#* is strongly supporting his major idea, *Hauptton*, helping to express his musical language, rooted in oriental music and is applied to all his music from the 1960s. This pitch center *f#* is emphasized by pizzicato, vorschlag, long sustained notes, and accents placed on it.

In addition, Yun uses various techniques on this instrument such as pizzicato, vorschlag, trill, Bartok- Pizzicato, quartertone, and finger glissando. For example, the vorschlag is one of the most obvious features in Korean traditional music, especially in vocal pieces. Very often, the vorschlag was placed on the strong first beat rather than as an ornament in the entrance of many melodic lines.

As in his cello concerto, to help make effective foreign sounds from a far eastern country, he employed *pizzicato*, *col legno*, *glissando* to uncertain ending notes, *quasi Halb-Flageolett*. Through these effects, he brings the distant feeling and exotic image of this different world.








In the first page of this piece (Ex. 7), as with some other contemporary composers, Yun gave clear instructions to provide a precise explanation to the performer regarding the techniques he used for all effects in this piece.

Unlike his other cello works, he does not provide the concept of the bar line throughout the piece. It gives freedom and more expression opportunities with the idea of flexibility of time to the musicians. Yun took advantage of the freedom allowed in writing for a solo instrument. The flow of asymmetry of meter, flexibility of note length, and undetermined pitch in using *glissadi* all contribute to the sense of freedom in this work.

As he was renowned as a mediator between Asian style of music and European instruments, this work is the one of the best examples showing the marriage of two different kinds of musical worlds.

#### Example 6. *Glissees*

##### Notation:

-  = **Linken Finger nicht fest aufdrücken, quasi Halb-Flageolett**  
**Es könnte dabei auch ein leiser Flageolett-Ton zu hören sein**
  -  = **Bartok-Pizzicato**
  -  = **ungefähre Tonhöhe**
  -  = **Viertelton tiefer oder höher (gilt nur für bezeichnete Note)**
  -  = **Glissando zur angezeigten Richtung mit unbestimmtem Intervall**
  -  = **Nur mit einem Finger glissandieren**
  -  = **Kurze Glissando-Linien, die größere Intervalle erleichtern sollen**
- (a.) arco (p.) pizzicato (nur den betroffenen Ton)  
(c.l.) col legno tratto

### Example 7. *Glissees*

ca. 60  
pizz.

*p* tranquillo

(pizz.) *p*

Das F nur mit dem Nachklang vom D durch glissando zu erreichen.)

*f* *f* *ff* *ff* *fff* *pp*

*f* *ff* *mp* *ff* *f*

*ff* *p* *pp* *ppp* *p*

arco *ppp*

pizz. ca. 78

*f* *f* *f* (Vibr.) *ff*

(sul D) (Vibr.) *p* (Vibr.) *pp* (Vibr.)

arco *ppp* *p*

*pp* *ppp* *pp* *f* *pp* *ppp* *f* *ff* *f* *ppp* (non Vibr.)

*pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

### III. *Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester*

Yun's *Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester* is a biographical work as his first concerto and as his only cello concerto, it shows a radical change in his musical ideology. Yun's strong narrative intensity through the symbolism of certain pitches, instrumentation and dramatic structure in this concerto set a precedent for his following works such as in his symphonies composed later.

This cello concerto was composed between 1975 and 1976 at the request of cellist, Sigfried Palm for Festival International in Royan in 1976. When requested, Isang Yun determined that he would write a piece with all possible elements and techniques that the cello can express because he thought of the cello as a representation of himself. This work is thought of as Isang Yun's first work with political contents.<sup>41</sup> In this period big changes were occurring in his life and subsequently his musical world if compared to his earlier life. Since he had been released from jail in South Korea in 1969, he began calling internationally for peace and the reunion of the country and started writing very narrative works reflecting his experience in jail in South Korea.

Yun's cello concerto is one of the most descriptive works based on his unforgettable experiences during this period. His long time friend, writer, Luise Rinser attended the first performance of this cello concerto with Yun in Berlin, in September 1976. She relates in her book a conversation with Isang Yun in which she explains his intentions in composing this piece.

“ When you hear this piece, you must know that it says about me. As you already know, cello is my most favorite instrument. In this work, cello is my voice, the voice of my soul. You

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<sup>41</sup> Lee, II, 70

have to imagine: It is an evening after a long day in prison. Finally, an engaged prisoner blows the tattoo in the court.”<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned above, the background of this work is in the prison when he felt each single day to be extremely long, boring, and desperately frustrated. He was reminded of many unforgettable moments that are all sources for this cello concerto. For example, he engaged a brass instrument, which signaled the end of each day in the prison. After the sad, melancholic melody by the brass instrument, the dead still night in the prison begins. Also, a sound of wood block in the middle of the night from a temple evokes fear because he thinks it might be played during execution of the death sentence for some people in an effort to console their last moments.<sup>43</sup>

In this work, he uses the cello representing an individual existence, himself, and the orchestra as the environment surrounding him, which possesses both sides of virtue and evil simultaneously. Throughout the whole piece, the cello makes desperate efforts to reach the note E, which is a symbol of a pure, perfect world. However, the cello can never reach the E but reaches a quarter tone below E while the orchestra ultimately reaches E at the end of this piece. With the use of the restriction of pitch for the soloist, Yun demonstrates the human limitations and the destiny contrasting the state of Mighty nature.

Yun maintained that he did not want to use this piece as a personal revenge for his painful experience with the South Korean Government but wanted to express to the whole world the suffering of political victims in general. He strongly wished for a political system that does not terrify the people. This idea of using the individuality and social background with the soloist and the whole orchestra is similar to one of Lutoslawski's ideas in his cello concerto.

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<sup>42</sup> Rinser, 187.

<sup>43</sup> Lee, II, 68.

#### IV. *Espace I Für Violoncello Und Klavier*

In the 1990s, Isang Yun's health problem got worse but he still was active in composing. In December 7, 1992, he received a merit prize, "*Plakette*" from Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg and was made an honorary member. This prize had previously been given to distinguished artists such as Witold Lutosławski and Olivier Messiaen before.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, at that time, Yun was under medical treatment in Pyongyang and was not able to attend the award ceremony. In the past, when he was in jail in South Korea, Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg helped to give Isang Yun freedom. Yun composed this piece to express his appreciation to them. His friends, cellist, Walter Grimmer and pianist, Peter Roggenkamp premiered in the award ceremony as Yun's valedictory.<sup>45</sup>

Departing in style from his previous cello works written from 1960s to 1970s such as *Nore* and *Glissees*, this work shows a change of his compositional style from his earlier works when he employed more extensive use of twelve-tone technique.

Isang Yun's *Espace I* for cello and piano demonstrates his strong rhythmic sense, concentrated harmonic language, and intense style juxtaposing intense activity with a sense of space and stasis. In order to portray the different feeling between two spaces, Yun employs a great deal of rhythmic and dynamic variety. For example, as in Ex.8a (mm 22- 27), and Ex. 8b (mm 41-44), by using striking dynamic contrasts between sections of the work, he gives a concept of space as he implies in the title. He generally used ample, strong sounds for fast sections and softer, gentler sounds for slower sections to create the contrast. Even though it is a ca. 11 minutes short piece, Yun showed his mature knowledge of cellistic sonority in techniques acquired from his previous experiments on this instrument. Here he is totally free from the earlier twelve tone technique and is both more intense, and refined with his *Hauptton* idea.

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<sup>44</sup> Lee, II, 282-283.

<sup>45</sup> Lee, II, 283.



Example 8a. *Espace I* measure 22-27

- (rit.) - - - -

ca. 68

The musical score for Example 8a, measures 22-27 of *Espace I*, is written in 12/8 time. It begins with a ritardando marking. The score is characterized by a high density of notes, including numerous trills and triplets. The dynamics are varied, starting with *ppp* and *pp* in the first system, then moving through *mf*, *ff*, and *fff* in the second system. The piece concludes with a *f* dynamic. The notation is complex, with many accidentals and slurs.

Example 8b. *Espace I* measure 41-44

ca. 60

(non arpegg.)

arco

The musical score for Example 8b, measures 41-44 of *Espace I*, is written in 12/8 time. It begins with a *(non arpegg.)* marking. The score is characterized by a high density of notes, including numerous trills and triplets. The dynamics are varied, starting with *fff* and *p* in the first system, then moving through *mp*, *p*, and *mf* in the second system. The piece concludes with a *p* dynamic. The notation is complex, with many accidentals and slurs. An *arco* marking is present in the first system.

Yun, through this piece, describes his transcendental attitude toward the concept of space coexisting in west and east and tried to combine the differences of these two worlds. By showing the contrast of these two worlds, he brought the beauty of mixture.

#### ***V. Sieben Etüden Für Violoncello Solo***

This work is designed to provide practice in the performance of contemporary works. Unlike other classical etudes, this Etude is composed for the purpose of attaining contemporary music skills and understanding. Yun found this approach more direct than training finger patterns or bowing techniques through standard etudes such as Popper and Piatti. For the same reason, Yun however does not provide the specific fingerings or bowings in this etude. He does suggest which strings should be played on for particular passages and specifies some bowings with the slurred marks. He prefers to give some flexibility to the performers in their decisions thus allowing their own practical ideas to make it a more personal performance.

These etudes were written in 1993 when Isang Yun was enjoying an active career and gained a firm reputation as a contemporary musician in North Korea. Since Yun was the first one to introduce contemporary music in this communist country and many people there were inspired by him to learn more contemporary music under the barren environment with that kind of music, he felt the responsibility and necessity to provide a concentrated study of contemporary techniques and styles.

Usually, in other standard etudes, the first theme comes back as a recapitulation but in these etudes the first figure does not appear again. It is a wide spread sketch without any repeated form involving frequent changes of tempi and dynamics much unlike traditional cello etudes. Besides, Yun provides the time duration for each etude, which requires accurate time management and solid time perception.

Again, all this is more for practice the techniques for contemporary pieces rather than as a performance piece. These etudes are not technically the most demanding one but the fidelity to the notation and prompt adjustment to the indicated words are important throughout the piece.

Yun's etudes show many aspects of his intention to challenge cellists with contemporary music practice suggestions. In general, even though it may not bring tremendous technical progress to the cellist, they are very helpful resources in contemporary writing and its style.

### 1. *Legato*

In this etude, he introduces the extreme dynamic ranges for contemporary music. The excessive indication of dynamics is used throughout this first etude. For instance, at measure 33 (Ex 9), regardless of noticing the difference of a decrescendo from *pp* to *ppp* shows his intention to discipline the cellist for the use of a sensitive dynamic range for his and other repertoire. At no. 1, the *Hauptton* idea, the importance of producing a certain tone color is sometimes more important than the virtuosic techniques practice.

Example 9. *Sieben Etüden* <Legato> measure 28-34



### 2. *Leggiero*

The practice of various rhythmic mixtures is introduced including trill, glissando, accents, pizzicato and so on. As shown in the first bar of Ex. 10, the combination of 8<sup>th</sup> note, 16<sup>th</sup> notes, triplet, and sextuplet appears within a measure.

### 3. *Parlando*

The metronome marking, ♩ = ca. 76 shows the gradual change from the first and second etudes. Even though there is no huge tempo change, the idea of technical practice in tempo is further more developed; even more complicated rhythmic figures, combinations of two different articulations such as first accented 16<sup>th</sup> note followed by spiccato 16<sup>th</sup> note (Ex. 11a, mm. 21), trill with three-note vorschlag (Ex. 11b mm. 31), double stops with trills (Ex 11b, mm. 30)...etc. are prevalent.

Example 10. *Sieben Etüden* <Leggiero> measure 36-41



Example 11a. *Sieben Etüden* <Parlando> measure 21-22



Example 11b. *Sieben Etüden* <Parlando> measure 30-31



#### 4. *Burlesque*

This one has an even faster metronome marking than the third etude. The basic technical idea is continued, however, the general feeling of 3/4 is light and humorous as the title indicates. As skillful, easy as possible without showing the effort to reach the techniques despite of its hardness is important for the purpose of learning style and characteristics.

#### 5. *Dolce*

The metronome markings divide this etude into three sections. As the title suggests, Isang Yun tries to encourage the quietest, softest sounds possible. Even though this etude is played with a mute throughout the piece, Yun still demands the slightly differentiation in dynamic changes again in the *pp* and *ppp* for the long held notes (Ex. 12, mm. 8-10).

In addition, each section has a different range of dynamics. The first section has *mp*, *p* on average and in the second section by speeding up with tempo, the dynamic level is risen to a *f* level. In the third section, the tempo comes back to the previous metronome marking and the dynamic range descends to the level of the first section except for the final four measures.

#### 6. *Triller*

As the title indicates, this etude is written truly for the trill practice. This technique uses trills on the long notes, short notes, during glissando, with *vorschlags* and *nachschlags*, on slurred notes and so forth.

#### 7. *Doppelgriffe*

Yun introduces many kinds of doublestopping combinations, for example, with *vorschlag*, trill, glissando and so on. These are played in 5/4 and in various dynamic ranges.

Example 12. *Sieben Etüden* <Dolce> measure 1-33

♩ ca. 56, Lento  
con sord.

*p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

*p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mf* *p*

10 *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p*

*ppp* *pp* *p* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p* *mp*

*mf* *f* *mp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

20 *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *pp* *p* *poco accel. (ca. 60)*

*pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *mf* *mp*

*mf* *f* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

30 *mp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

*mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

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## **Vita**

Jee Yeoun Ko was born in Seoul, Korea, in June 1972, as the daughter of Lee Youngja and Ko Bangnam. She did her undergraduate program at the Chung-Ang University in Seoul, Korea, from 1992 to 1996. After that she went to Germany, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Mannheim, and graduated with Künstlerisches Aufbaustudium, in 2001. Ms. Ko joined the graduate school of Louisiana State University in 2004, pursuing her doctoral degree with Dennis Parker. She will earn the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at the May 2008 commencement.