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## **Traditional Music and the Work-Concept:**

### **The *Kayagŭm* Sanjo of Hwang Byungki**

by Andrew Killick

In most of the world, through most of history, music has been conceived as a set of practices and techniques, expressive or religious behaviours, and adaptable repertoire resources, or as an integral part of some larger phenomenon such as theatre or healing. Over the last two hundred years, however, music has increasingly been reconceived as consisting of autonomous musical works. This has surely been one of the most important developments in musical history worldwide; yet it has been relatively little studied.

To be sure, as Stephen Blum points out in his Grove Online article on “Composition” (2001), “pieces of music that remain recognizable in different performances” exist in all cultures; but a piece is not necessarily a work. I am using the term “work” in the sense articulated by Lydia Goehr in a passage from her book *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, which I will liberally italicize to highlight the identifying features:

Most of us tend ... to see works as objectified expressions of composers that prior to compositional activity did not exist. We do not treat works as objects just made or put together, like tables and chairs, but as original, unique products of a special, creative activity. We assume, further, that the tonal, rhythmic, and instrumental properties of works are constitutive of structurally integrated wholes that are symbolically represented by composers in scores. Once created, we treat works as existing after their creators have died, and whether or not they are performed or listened to at any given time. (Goehr 2007:2).

For typical examples of works, Goehr says, “we usually look to the tradition of western, European, classical, ‘opus’ music” (ibid.). Beyond the western classical tradition, a piece may be considered a work to the extent that it is seen as newly created, permanent, cohesive, distinct from other pieces, and inscribed in a physical form.

But even western classical music, Goehr argues, was not always governed by this concept of works; until the late eighteenth century, musical production was conceived and practised in quite a different way (2007:176–204). Composers did create new music in notated form, but their music usually was intended for particular purposes and occasions, with little expectation that it be either completely original or long-lasting. Composers did not, in general, see themselves as producing “original, unique products of a special, creative activity” that “did not exist” even in part “prior to compositional activity.” Composers might freely reuse their own and others’ music if it served the purpose at hand, and thus one piece might not be wholly distinct from another. Nor need a piece be a “structurally integrated whole” in terms of its musical style and material; its unity and meaning might derive primarily from the context in which it was performed or a verbal text that it accompanied. Pieces, admittedly, were “symbolically represented by composers in scores,” but usually in what seems today a rather sketchy form, such as a melody with figured bass. The process of composition was left to be completed in performance, and no clear line was drawn between the two activities. As Goehr puts it, “the idea that one first composed a work which then was publicly performed here and there hardly existed” (2007:179).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While musicologists have not been unanimous in accepting the idea that “works” were not composed before the late eighteenth century (see particularly Strohm 2000), I believe Goehr’s main argument,

Goehr maintains that the work-concept was not fully established until Beethoven's time, but that, once established in the western tradition, it soon came to be applied to other forms of music:

Since the work-concept began to regulate practice in the romantic era, it has been employed pervasively. Philosophers and musicians alike have assumed that it can be used to speak not only about classical music but about music of almost any sort. The work-concept has found its use extended into domains of early church music, jazz, folk, and popular music, and even into the musical domains of non-western cultures ... an example of conceptual imperialism. (2007:8)

Nowadays, no form of musical production is excluded a priori from being packaged in terms of works. (2007:244)

Goehr's point would appear to be substantiated, for instance, by the lists of "set works" assigned for study in the British secondary school music curriculum, which have recently included examples from Louis Armstrong, Howlin' Wolf, the Kinks, Cuban son, Balinese gamelan, and the North Indian raga Desh.

It is not only "philosophers and musicians" of western classical orientation who have extended the application of the work-concept in this way; Goehr points out that in many contexts, "non-classical musicians have come to think of their production as work-production" too (2007:8). She alludes to the way jazz musicians like Duke Ellington have taken to composing works for the concert hall (ibid.:251), and, one might add, that even improvised performances, once recorded, can take on the status of works inscribed in a permanent form. Thus, a scholarly essay on what is

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that the work-concept began to "regulate practice" around that time, is sufficiently well established for the purposes of this paper.

acknowledged to be a recording of an improvisatory performance can bear the title “Prelude (Part I) from ‘Agharta’: Modernism and Primitivism in the Fusion Works of Miles Davis” (Sanford 1998; emphasis added).

After recognizing the extension of the work-concept to popular and traditional musics, Goehr leaves the phenomenon largely unexplored, and even ethnomusicologists do not appear to have produced any systematic analysis of the transference of the work-concept to traditional music. Admittedly, studies of particular cases can be found. The literature on canon formation describes how traditions that once had a strong improvisational element have been converted into collections of fixed pieces (e.g., Harris 2008; Levin 1996:45–51), and Jonathan Stock’s (1996) book on Chinese musician Abing shows how the conservatory system effectively made works out of recorded performances that were probably quite improvisatory. But neither Stock’s own overview of “Western Impact on Other Musics” (2004) nor Bruno Nettl’s book *The Western Impact on World Music* (1985) problematizes the spread of the work-concept more generally as an aspect of “western impact.” That might be a choice made for reasons of limited space, but even the much longer and multi-authored *Cambridge History of World Music* (Bohlman 2013) tells us little about this crucial aspect of the world’s musical history.

The adoption of the work-concept, in many cases, has transformed ideas about the very nature of music and its role in human life. Moreover, by changing these ideas, it has frequently changed the way music sounds and functions. Clearly, these are core concerns of ethnomusicological inquiry, yet their relationship to the spread of the work-concept remains poorly understood. I therefore feel there is a need for further and deeper studies of this phenomenon, and in this paper I offer one such study—an

analysis of the operation of the work-concept in what I believe is a particularly telling context.

This paper focuses on a society that has been extraordinarily warm in its embrace of western classical music and, with it, the work-concept. Along with numerous classical performers of international standing, South Korea has produced renowned composers of what are unquestionably works—both for western and Korean instruments. Its traditional music has been converted into something very much like works through a government-sponsored system in which selected musical genres (together with other performing arts and handicraft techniques) are designated as “Intangible Cultural Properties” to be preserved and transmitted in a fixed “authentic form” (*wŏnhyŏng*). Traditional modes of musical creativity, such as improvisation and the reworking of existing pieces, have largely been lost as musical creation has come to mean the composition of original works.

Yet some Korean musicians have attempted to reconstruct and revive older, improvisational, and collective ways of creating music (Clark 2009; Finchum-Sung 2014; Sutton 2010). By doing so, they have tried to operate outside the dominant categories of preserved and newly created works. I will be zooming in on one such effort: a personal version of a traditional instrumental genre, *sanjo*, developed by the *kayagŭm* zither player and composer Hwang Byungki (b. 1936).<sup>2</sup> Hwang’s dual identities—as a composer of original works and as an exponent of a tradition without

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<sup>2</sup> While the South Korean government’s Revised Romanization system is, increasingly, becoming the international standard, in this article I use the older McCune-Reischauer system for the sake of consistency with the majority of existing English-language publications on *sanjo* and on Hwang Byungki. Like those publications, I use Hwang’s preferred spelling of his name rather than the McCune-Reischauer romanization, Hwang Pyŏnggi, or the Revised Romanization spelling, Hwang Byeonggi.

a work-concept—interact with each other to afford a nuanced and multifaceted case study in both receptiveness and resistance to the “conceptual imperialism” of which Goehr (2007) speaks. His sanjo and its reception provides a lens that brings into focus some of the wider issues and implications in the application and contestation of the work-concept in traditional music.<sup>3</sup> My discussion begins with the broader background of the work-concept, and its introduction to traditional music in general and to Korean traditional music in particular.

### **The work-concept, traditional music, and Korea**

The work-concept is easily accommodated to commercially marketed popular music; in this domain there is a strong sense of the musical artefact as a product or commodity created by known individuals and preserved in a fixed and permanent form. Indeed, that model derives, historically, from the classical work-concept itself, which allows pieces of music to be treated as a composer’s intellectual property. A more complex negotiation is required when the work-concept is applied to forms of music classified as “traditional.”

While the category “traditional music” may be conceptualized in various ways, it usually implies that musical pieces are malleable and modified over time, and that, if there is a boundary between the roles of composer and performer, it is a permeable one. At least in western countries, traditional music is largely equated with folk music

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<sup>3</sup> I provide a general introduction to Hwang Byungki’s sanjo in an earlier study otherwise devoted to his original compositions (Killick 2013:35–48). That study, however, does not explore the relationship of Hwang’s sanjo to the work-concept as characterized by Goehr. Goehr’s ideas have previously been applied to sanjo, including Hwang Byungki’s sanjo, by Jocelyn Clark (2009, 2010), but Clark’s concern, more generally, is with the adoption of the values of western romanticism into Korean traditional music. The present study, in contrast, focuses more closely on the effects of the work-concept in a particular case.

and defined in contradistinction to classical and popular musics. In non-western countries, however, traditional music is typically defined in opposition to western music of all kinds, and may include both folk and elite traditions. In South Korea, for instance, while folk and elite traditions are distinguished, traditional music as a whole is known as kugak, literally “national music,” in contrast to yangak, western music.

Many non-western societies that have embraced western classical music have also tried to maintain indigenous traditional music. But the imported music tends to have higher prestige and to be associated with desired attributes like progress, cosmopolitanism, and prosperity. This often inspires efforts to extend that prestige to the traditional music by making it more like western classical music, regardless of whether its own origins lie in a classical or a folk tradition. Western models are followed in “reforms” to many aspects of the local music, including tuning, instrument construction, voice production, ensemble formation, performance settings, and programming. Incorporation of western ideals might also include transforming what were once improvisatory practices and flexible repertoires into a fixed canon of musical works.

At the same time, the practice of traditional music, especially in societies where western-style music has become dominant, is often motivated in part by feelings of local or national pride and a desire to remain distinct from the cosmopolitan culture. Thus, traditional musicians seldom entirely “buy in” to western musical values. In that sense, their practices become sites of contestation and negotiation over concepts that, in Goehr’s words, “[western] philosophers and musicians ... have assumed ... can be used to speak ... about music of almost any sort” (2007:8). Not the least influential of such concepts, nor yet the least contestable, is the work-concept.

The spread of western classical music around the world brought with it the work-concept, not just as a distinguishing peculiarity of that music, but as a normative model that could be applied to local musics as well. In Asia and Africa, as Nicholas Cook observes, “elements of traditional musical culture have been reconfigured in accordance with the values of Western concert music, that is to say, music that expresses an original compositional vision and is understood as inherently meaningful rather than grounded in social context” (2013:79). In other words, traditional music has been reconfigured into works.

Nowhere have western musical values been more influential than in South Korea, where, as Cook also notes, western classical music has been absorbed to the point where subway line announcements are preceded by snatches of Mozart or Vivaldi (2013:93)—and, I would add, where trucks play an electronic rendition of Beethoven’s *Für Elise* as a warning signal when reversing. Western classical music culture was introduced to Korea from Europe, America, and Japan around 1900, and further promoted under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. During the colonial period, Korea produced its first composers of musical “works” in Goehr’s sense, writing for western instruments in a western style (Howard 2013:335–41). These included Eaktay Ahn (1906–65), the composer of what has become the South Korean national anthem, and Isang Yun (1917–95), who incorporated elements of indigenous Korean music according to the western-derived tradition of musical nationalism. A composer of works for Korean instruments appeared in Kim Kisu (1917–86), who was also active in transcribing traditional Korean music into western staff notation, thus helping to convert the Korean repertoire into a collection of works.

This process of conversion was aided by the cultural policies of the Park Chung Hee government that seized power in 1961. In 1962, a government-funded

institution for traditional music, significantly named the National Classical Music Institute (Kungnip Kugagwŏn, now known in English as the National Gugak Center), organized a competition for newly composed works for traditional instruments. The same year, Park's government passed an Intangible Cultural Properties Protection Act that helped reconfigure existing traditional music into works as well (Howard 2006b). The Act called for experts to report on genres and traditions that might be deemed worthy of designation as Intangible Cultural Properties (Muhyŏng Munhwajae). Such a designation required establishing an "authentic form" (wŏnhyŏng) of the "property" in question. Leading exponents were appointed as "holders" (poyuja) and paid a stipend for teaching and regularly performing their "property" in its now fixed "authentic form." Musical properties were conceived as finished pieces that had to be performed note-for-note every time, like the works of western classical music. The preserved "authentic form" was often arbitrary both in the way it arrested an ongoing process of development and in its ad hoc synthesis of fragmentary sources and hazy memories. Once designated, however, as Keith Howard has written, "the appointed version becomes immutable, unchangeable and unchallengeable" (2006b:28). In other words, it becomes a work.

Among the initial tranche of five Important Intangible Cultural Properties appointed in 1964 was p'ansori musical storytelling, once an art of oral improvisation (Pihl 1994) but now a feat of memory as much as artistry. Four years later came an instrumental genre that owes much to p'ansori, and that forms the subject of the rest of this article: *kayagŭm sanjo*.

### **From improvisation to work: *Kayagŭm sanjo***

*Kayagŭm sanjo* originally took shape as a genre in which faithfulness to an "authentic form" was valued less than the development of a personal version (see figure 1).

While different versions had much in common in their melodic content as well as in their overall style, there was also great scope for personal variation., and each of the famous players of the past played differently.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 1:** Hwang Byungki performing *kayagŭm sanjo* in October 2014, accompanied on changgu by Kim Ungsik. Photograph by An Ungch’ŏl. Used by permission.

A unifying factor was the accompaniment, which was played on the hourglass drum changgu (also spelled changgo). This was extemporized using similar patterns in all versions—a necessary feature since a given soloist did not always play with the same drummer. In sanjo, as in p’ansori, the rhythms of any given passage were structured by one of several rhythmic cycles (changdan), each of which involved a

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of *kayagŭm sanjo*, see Howard et al 2008.

specific tempo range as well as a pattern of beats and strokes using at least two contrasting sounds. Also shared with p'ansori was the practice of ch'uimsae, vocal calls of encouragement and appreciation given by the drummer and by knowledgeable audience members.

The variation between personal versions of sanjo lay with the melody instrument, the *kayagŭm*, a twelve-string half-tube zither with movable bridges. This is an instrument that lends itself readily to the creation of an individual style and sound. In contrast to its relatives, the Chinese zheng and Japanese koto, the *kayagŭm* is played without plectrums or artificial fingernails.. Its silk strings yield a variety of timbres depending, first, whether they are plucked with the bare fingertip or flicked with the fingernail, and, second, how far from the bridge the contact with the string takes place. The strings are relatively slack and thus permit wide pitch-bending by pressing with the left hand on the non-sounding portion beyond the movable bridges. These pitch-bends, along with various forms of vibrato and other inflections produced in the same way, allow the use of melodic modes (cho/jo) not limited to the pentatonic tuning of the strings. They also allow recognizable differences of personal style in the width, speed, and timing of the pitch-bending. Thus, a knowledgeable listener can often identify the playing of an individual *kayagŭm* sanjo player within seconds.

Personal variation appears not only in how the *kayagŭm* is played, but also in what is played on it: that is, the specific melodic content. The name sanjo, written in Chinese characters as 散調 and translatable as “scattered melodies” or “random tunes,” reflects the eclectic and originally extemporaneous nature of the genre (see Killick 2013:16–29). The melodies were drawn from, or modelled on, such diverse sources as the sinawi music accompanying shamanistic ceremonies, the p'ungnyu chamber music of the literati, folk songs in various regional styles, and p'ansori singing—itself

a heterogeneous mixture of folk and elite elements (Lee Bo-hyung 2009:4–8). In performance, originally at the literati's p'unngnyubang entertainment clubs in the late nineteenth century, these melodies were freely strung together into a kind of medley with improvised connecting passages and, perhaps, a fast climax made up to show the player's virtuosity (Kim Hee-sun 2008:35–38). Naturally, each performer, and to some extent each performance, did this in a different way.

As the emergent genre began to take on a distinct identity in relation to other forms of music, the melodic modes and rhythmic cycles came to be arranged in a relatively consistent way. At some point, it became standard to begin with a mode from the elite music (the pentatonic la mode *ujo*) before settling into the folk mode *kyemyŏnjo* (a mode with a tritonic core approximating the notes of a minor triad) as the predominant mode for the rest of the performance (Hwang Byunki 2002:917). The rhythmic cycles, meanwhile, were arranged in order of increasing rapidity, producing a series of three or more movements, each faster than the last.

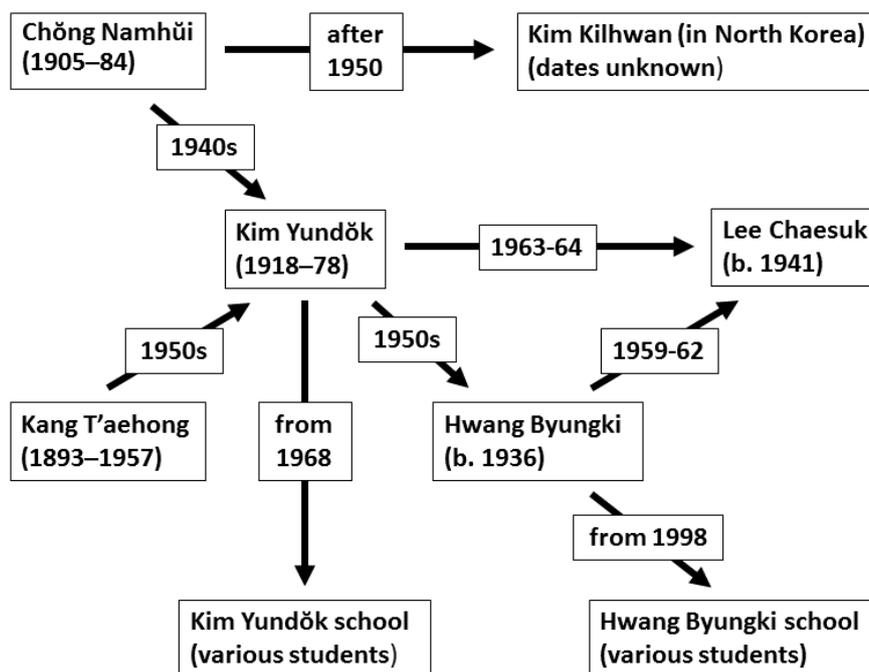
This generic musical structure, like the physical structure of the *kayagŭm*, accommodated the development of personal ways of playing. While the order of movements was fixed, there were no standard forms for individual movements (such as the western sonata, rondo, and variation forms) and melodies were rarely repeated. Unity came less from thematic or tonal relationships than from similarities between the various rhythmic cycles, which differed in tempo but shared the use of three-beat metrical units (except in the very fastest cycle, *tanmori*) and an accent two-thirds of the way through the cycle (Killick 2013:21–24). Thus, players had great freedom in the choice and sequencing of the melodies that would form their own personal versions of *sanjo*. These personal versions were transmitted to the next generation by

teaching, but it was always expected that both teacher and student would then go on to develop what was transmitted in their own way (Hwang Byungki 2002:915).

A case in point is Chǒng Namhŭi (1905–84), the originator of the sanjo that Hwang Byungki has made his own. We can get a sense of both the consistency and the variability of Chǒng’s sanjo playing by comparing sources dating from different times in his life. First, Chǒng’s playing was recorded on two sets of 78rpm disks, released in 1934 and 1939 respectively (re-released on CD, Chǒng Namhŭi 2004). Next, Chǒng taught his sanjo to a younger musician, Kim Yundŏk (1918–78), in the late 1940s; Kim then taught it to Hwang Byungki, who in turn taught it to (among other students) Lee Chaesuk (b. 1941), who went on to study it with Kim directly (see figure 2). Kim, Hwang, and Lee all made transcriptions of this sanjo in the early 1960s (Kim Yundŏk 1962; Hwang Byungki 1962; Lee Chaesuk 2008:389–432).<sup>5</sup> Chǒng had chosen to move to North Korea on the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, and two separate recordings that he made there, both in 1961, later found their way to the South, where they are now available on CD (Chǒng Namhŭi 2004). Finally, one of Chǒng’s students in North Korea, Kim Kilhwan, made transcriptions of Chǒng’s sanjo after his death, notating two or, in some cases, three distinct versions of each movement; these too have since become available in the South (Yang Sŭnghŭi 2004:149–271).

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<sup>5</sup> Kim’s transcription was written in *chǒngganbo*, a Korean notation system that is traditional for elite music but not for sanjo; the other two were in western staff notation with additional symbols for *kayagŭm* techniques.



**Figure 2:** Principal figures in the particular lineage of *kayagŭm sanjo* originating with Chŏng Namhŭi.

Comparing these sources reveals that, while certain key melodies recur in different versions, there is much material that seems to have formed a temporary rather than a permanent part of Chŏng’s *sanjo*. For instance, it appears that at some time after moving to North Korea, Chŏng added a movement in the ten-beat rhythmic cycle *ŏnmori* (an unusual feature in *kayagŭm sanjo*), and while *ŏnmori* movements appear in one of his 1961 recordings and in one of Kim Kilhwan’s transcriptions, the two are entirely different in melodic content (Chi Aeri 2010:101–09). In short, Chŏng never fixed his *sanjo* in a permanent form, but went on developing it, apparently to the end of his life.

The situation was different in South Korea, where a number of influences—perhaps chief among them the Intangible Cultural Properties system—led Kim

Yundök and other sanjo players to develop fixed and permanent personal versions of sanjo (Howard 2009). After Chǒng Namhŭi went to North Korea in 1950, Kim Yundök learned another version of sanjo from a senior musician who remained in the South, Kang T'aehong (1893–1957). According to Hwang Byungki (interview, 18 March 2016), Kim was able to perform both these versions of sanjo, but kept them separate, teaching only the sanjo of Chǒng Namhŭi. In the 1960s, Kim began to form his own personal version of sanjo that was based on that of Chǒng Namhŭi but incorporated some melodies from Kang T'aehong's sanjo, along with some additions of his own. In 1968, when *kayagŭm* sanjo was designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property and Kim Yundök as a holder, Kim had to settle on a permanent form of his sanjo to preserve and transmit to his students. In a study that compares Kim Yundök's final sanjo with the version he learned from Chǒng Namhŭi, Ki Sukhŭi reveals that Kim's changes come mainly in the earlier movements (2015:193–4, 201–3). Could it be that Kim was only part-way through personalizing his sanjo when its development was arrested by the requirements of the Cultural Property appointment?

To some extent, the Intangible Cultural Properties system made works out of most forms of Korean traditional music, but especially so in the case of sanjo, where the various extant versions were credited to individual originators. Each recognized version of sanjo was identified as the *ryu* or “school” of an individual player, as in “Kim *Yundök-ryu kayagŭm* sanjo.” While it was acknowledged that each *ryu* had its antecedents and took some of its content from earlier sources, the attribution to an individual musician implied that in its designated form the music did not exist prior to the creative activity of that musician. In effect, each *ryu* was conceived as a work in the sanjo genre.

Thus far, *kayagŭm* sanjo seems to present a fairly complete example of the transference of the work-concept to traditional music. A musician who starts to modify this picture, while also contributing to it, is Hwang Byungki.

### **A structurally integrated sanjo: The Hwang Byungki school**

During the 1960s, when Kim Yundŏk began to develop his own sanjo based on those of Chŏng Namhŭi and Kang T'aehong (see figure 2), Hwang Byungki chose not to adopt Kim's changes in his own playing. Hwang was also familiar with Kang T'aehong's sanjo and disliked the effect of alternating between passages from Chŏng and Kang that he felt in Kim's new version (interview, 18 March 2016). As Kim's other students came to learn his own personal sanjo, Hwang and his students were left as the main exponents of Chŏng's sanjo in South Korea.

Like Kim Yundŏk, however, Hwang gradually modified the sanjo that he played, carrying on the tradition of personalizing the sanjo inherited from one's teacher. He was free to do this even after *kayagŭm* sanjo was designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property in 1968 because he was operating outside of the Intangible Cultural Properties system; he never sought an appointment as a holder. Eventually, Hwang reached the point where he felt he could establish his own ryu, although he recognized its affiliation to the Chŏng Namhŭi "lineage" (che/je). The advent of *Chŏng Namhŭi-je Hwang Byungki-ryu kayagŭm* sanjo was announced with a public performance by Hwang's student Chi Aeri in 1997 and the publication of a score in 1998 (later corrected in Hwang Byungki 2010). Hwang's own commercial recording followed in 2014. At first sight, this might look like the addition of one more work to the sanjo repertoire, but I will try to show that its real significance is more complex and far-reaching.

Hwang Byungki is unusual—perhaps unique—in being both an expert *kayagŭm* player and a celebrated composer. In the mid-to-late 1950s, he both won traditional music performance contests and came to know the works of western twentieth-century composers. These works inspired him to compose music of his own for the *kayagŭm* and other traditional Korean instruments beginning in 1962 with the first original “work” to be composed for *kayagŭm*, *Sup* (The Forest; Killick 2013:52–7, 68–90). Just as Hwang’s intimate knowledge of the *kayagŭm* helped him compose music that is idiomatic to the instrument and that lies naturally under the hand, his experience as a composer informed his approach to *sanjo*.

In some ways Hwang was involved in the process of converting *sanjo* into works. As an aid to his *kayagŭm* teaching at Seoul National University from 1959 to 1962, he completed a transcription of the *sanjo* that he learned from Kim Yundŏk. This was essentially the *sanjo* that Kim learned from Chŏng Namhŭi, but as it was taboo in South Korea to acknowledge an artist who had moved to the North, the transcription was printed under the title *Kayagŭm sanjo* (Kim Yundŏk-ryu)(Hwang Byungki 1962). This was the first use of the term *ryu* in reference to *sanjo*; Hwang himself borrowed the term from the Japanese *iemoto* system as a way of distinguishing the different personal versions of *sanjo* that were starting to be transmitted as schools. Hwang’s transcription was reprinted in a widely-used *kayagŭm* teaching workbook (Hwang Pyŏngju 1973) and also became the basis of his student Lee Chaesuk’s notation (first published 1971; reprinted 2008:389–432). Lee’s notation was completed after studying with Kim directly infrom 1963 to 1964 and has come to be treated as an authoritative score of Chŏng Namhŭi’s *sanjo* for teaching and analytical purposes (e.g., Ki Sukhŭi 2015). Hwang, then, played an important role

both in the production of sanjo scores and in the adoption of a terminology that recognized individual creators of the music represented in those scores.

In addition, the work-concept may appear to underlie some aspects of Hwang's approach to developing his own sanjo. Comparing his 1962 transcription with his recorded performances (e.g., Hwang Byungki 2001, 2014) and his 1998 score (Hwang Byungki 2010) gives some hints of his process and his aims. His first published recording, made at the University of Hawaii in 1965, includes a nineteen-minute version of sanjo which already shows some departures from the 1962 score (not limited to omissions for reasons of time). The opening of the fast hwimori movement, for instance, is one passage that Kim Yundök already played differently from Chöng Namhüi when he was teaching Hwang in the 1950s.<sup>6</sup> In his own playing, Kim omits four cycles (as shown in figure 3), but by 1965 Hwang was already playing this passage in the manner of Chöng—as, indeed, he would do in his final sanjo of 1998. He felt that Chöng's version better expressed the logic by which the opening figure developed into the subsequent passage (Hwang Byungki, interview, 7 March 2016). As Goehr (2007) might say, Chöng's version was more “structurally integrated,” a quality that naturally appealed to a musician who had become a composer of works.

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<sup>6</sup> Hwang told me that Kim used to demonstrate to his students how Chöng had played this passage. Chöng's version can be heard in one of his own early recordings (re-released in Chöng Namhüi 2004, track 6), which Hwang was given by singer Kim Sohüi (Hwang Byungki, interview, 7 March 2016).



**Figure 3:** Opening of the hwimori movement as played by Hwang Byungki in 1965.

See Audio Examples 1 and 2.

The pursuit of structural integration is also apparent in the sense of proportion that Hwang maintains in sanjo performances of different lengths. In a climactic passage of the hwimori movement featuring continuous eighth-notes in groups of three repeated notes, Hwang's 1965 performance inserts two more cycles, enhancing the sense of climax by bending the pitch of the highest string upward by a semitone with left-hand pressure to a written B-flat<sup>7</sup> (see figure 4). In an unpublished recording of a 40-minute performance at the Durham Oriental Music Festival in 1979, Hwang expands this climactic passage further, replacing two cycles of his 1962 score with eleven new cycles that rise to a high C before descending microtonally as the left-hand pressure is gradually released. In his 1998 score and 2014 recording (which lasts a full 68 minutes), a further three cycles are inserted shortly before this point, and the high C becomes a D. This is the highest pitch used in Hwang's sanjo and probably the highest that is feasible on the instrument. It results in a bigger climax to suit the bigger scale of Hwang's final sanjo. The ensuing descent, in keeping with its wider

<sup>7</sup> Most sanjo musicians today are familiar with western notation and pitch names. To accommodate the full pitch range of the *kayagŭm* on a treble staff with the minimum of leger lines, Hwang's notation is written approximately a perfect fifth higher than the actual sound. His special notational symbols are explained in Killick (2013:204–7).

span, becomes one cycle longer. The sense of temporal and melodic proportion evident in these changes might again be seen to reflect a composer's interest in creating a "structurally integrated whole" rather than a medley of "scattered melodies."

$\text{♩} = 132$

All versions

1998 only

All versions

1965

1979

1998

1979 and 1998

1998 only

1962 and 1965

1979 and 1998

All versions

**Figure 4:** Climactic passage of the hwimori movement, comparing Hwang’s notations of 1962 and 1998 and his recorded performances of 1965 and 1979. Notation simplified to save space. For any given version, read the parts marked as contained in that version and omit all others. See Audio Examples 3, 4, and 5.

Whenever Hwang added something to his sanjo, he took care to integrate it into the whole. One important addition was an unmetred introduction, *tasŭrŭm*, which was included in some versions of sanjo but not in that of Chŏng Namhŭi or Kim Yundŏk. In his final sanjo, Hwang constructs a *tasŭrŭm* following the same melodic outline and sequence of modes as the first part of the ensuing chinyangjo movement. With this addition, the chinyangjo movement takes on an added grandeur and inevitability because its contours are foreshadowed in the structurally integrated *tasŭrŭm*. For other additions, Hwang sought musical unity by using passages that were recorded by Chŏng Namhŭi himself (though not included in the sanjo that Chŏng transmitted to Kim Yundŏk). Even these were carefully integrated to ensure smooth transitions. For instance, after acquiring a North Korean recording of Chŏng’s later playing, Hwang incorporated its unusual ŏnmori movement into his sanjo.<sup>8</sup> He was careful to add an introduction of his own so that the rhythmic cycle and melodic mode did not both change at the same moment.

Just as the addition of *tasŭrŭm* and ŏnmori expanded the rhythmic range of Hwang’s sanjo, some of his additions extended its modal palette. Borrowings from

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<sup>8</sup> Hwang acquired this recording when he led the South Korean contingent to the 1990 Pan-Korean Unification Concerts (*Pŏmminjok t’ongil ŭmakhoe*) in Pyongyang. It appears to be the same as one of the two recordings of Chŏng’s playing from 1961 that were later released on CD in South Korea (Chŏng Namhŭi 2004, CD 1, tracks 7–13).

the North Korean tape resulted in passages using two forms of transposed *p'yŏngjo* mode and an upward-transposed *kyŏngjo* mode. In the predominantly minor modal context of sanjo, the bright major-pentatonic sound out of the upward-transposed *kyŏngjo* makes a striking contrast. The playing of another veteran sanjo artist, Sim Sanggŏn, inspired Hwang to include a passage in a downward-transposed *kyemyŏnjo* mode that was not previously used in Chŏng's sanjo. A comparative study of the use of modes in various schools of *kayagŭm* sanjo concluded that Hwang's was, by far, the most modally diverse sanjo, using both a wider variety of modes and more frequent changes of mode than any other school (Chi Aeri 2010:162). The increased diversity of modes presented a challenge, not just for the overall unity of Hwang's sanjo, but also for its clarity in bringing out the identity of each mode.

Hwang shows a keen interest in distinguishing the modes by marking the name of the mode and its tonic for each section in his score. He also makes changes in the melodies themselves to heighten their modal characteristics. The most instructive example occurs in the moderate-paced chungmori movement, which (as in many schools of *kayagŭm* sanjo) includes a section near the beginning in the *kyŏngjo* mode. In his notes to the score, Hwang states that the special bright and fresh character of *kyŏngjo* appears most clearly in the descending outline C–A–G–E–D (with G as tonic), as exemplified by the boxed phrase at the end of figure 5a (2010:15). This phrase was already present in Chŏng Namhŭi's sanjo as transcribed by both Hwang Byungki and Kim Yundŏk in 1962, and in both of Chŏng Namhŭi's recordings from the 1930s (Ki Sukhŭi 2015:264). But in all of those versions of Chŏng's sanjo, the characteristic descent appears in that form only once. In Hwang's final sanjo, this memorable phrase becomes a kind of refrain that recurs three more times (a departure from

sanjo’s usual avoidance of repetition), rounding off melodic strains with a reminder of their modal identity (see figure 5b).



**Figure 5a:** Chungmori movement, opening of section 2, as notated by Hwang Byungki in 1998 (2010:47). Box indicates “refrain” phrase. See Audio Example 6.



**Figure 5b:** Chungmori movement, section 3 cycles 3-6, as notated by Hwang Byungki in 1998 (2010:47-8). Box indicates “refrain” phrase. See Audio Example 7.

Hwang’s handling of the *kyōngjo* mode has a rhythmic aspect too. *Kyōngjo* takes its name from Kyōnggi Province, the region around Seoul, and the mode is typical of the folk songs of that region. Also typical of that regional style is the

rhythmic cycle *semach'i*, which has three main beats each subdivided into three, as in western 9/8 metre. The well-known song “Arirang” (see figure 6) exemplifies both the *semach'i* cycle and the *kyŏngjo* mode: note the descent at the end of the first phrase, which matches Hwang’s characteristic *kyŏngjo* descent except that B takes the place of C.<sup>9</sup> The main beats of *semach'i* usually move at approximately the same tempo as the beats of *chungmori*, which are also grouped in threes, with four such groups making a complete cycle of twelve beats. Thus, one line of “Arirang” could be accompanied by a drummer playing either four cycles of *semach'i* or one cycle of *chungmori*. Hwang told me that he has sometimes heard drummers accompanying “Arirang” and metrically similar songs with a mixture of the two patterns: two cycles of *semach'i* followed by the second half of *chungmori* (interview, 18 March 2016). He seems to have evoked this effect in the *kyŏngjo* section of the *chungmori* movement (see figure 5b above).

**Figure 6:** First line of the song “Arirang,” shown with drum accompaniments in the *semach'i* cycle, in *chungmori*, and in a mixture of both.

<sup>9</sup> This is not a great change since in *kyŏngjo* the major third and perfect fourth appear to function as alternative versions of the same scale degree (Hwang Junyon 2005:18–20, 208–9); on the *kayagŭm* they are played on the same string, using left-hand pressure to produce the higher pitch.

To understand how Hwang incorporates *semach'i* within chungmori, we need to grasp the relationship between the two rhythmic cycles. In chungmori, each beat is normally subdivided into two, rather than three as in *semach'i*. Because the tempo of the two cycles is about the same, an effect of *semach'i* can be produced within chungmori by dividing the beats into three instead of two, a procedure that appears in staff notation as triplets. It is probably the association with *semach'i*, via the Kyōnggi Province folk song style, that has inspired the inclusion of triplets in the *kyōngjo* section of chungmori, both in Hwang's sanjo and in the Chōng Namhŭi sanjo that he learned from Kim Yundōk.

The only other section where triplets occur in either sanjo is one that Hwang marks *ch'uch'ōnmok*, identifying it as a melody that occurs in the p'ansori "Song of Chunhyang" at the point when the heroine rides on a swing (Hwang Byungki 2010:15). The triplets evidently evoke the swinging motion. In Hwang's 1962 transcription of Chōng Namhŭi's sanjo as transmitted by Kim Yundōk, the triplets in the *kyōngjo* section continue through nearly two whole cycles of chungmori (see figure 7). In Hwang's final version, however, they are restricted to the first half of the cycle (see figure 5b), like the *semach'i* pattern in the metrically mixed accompaniment to "Arirang" that Hwang described to me. For comparison, triplets also occur in the equivalent passage of Kang T'aehong's sanjo, where they may fall in any part of the chungmori rhythmic cycle (Lee Chaesuk 2008:305–7); it is only Hwang who restricts them to the first half. Here, Hwang's concern with highlighting the identity of a mode appears to have affected his management of rhythm as well, producing an allusion to rhythmic features associated with traditional music in that mode.



**Figure 7:** Chungmori movement, section 3 cycles 5-7, as notated by Hwang Byungki in 1962 (reprinted in Hwang Pyŏngju 1973:82). See Audio Example 8.

Through the above analysis, it may seem that we have been observing a composer shaping his material into something like a work. Hwang’s concern with structural integration and proportion, and his techniques of controlling tonal and metrical relationships to achieve maximum variety within overall unity, undoubtedly reflect his long experience as a composer in the western sense. Yet, as we shall now see, his perspective as a composer of original works appears to have given him a special sense of sanjo as something different from a work.

### **Contesting the work-concept through sanjo**

To what extent is Hwang’s sanjo a “work” in Goehr’s sense (2007:2)? Certainly it could be described as an “original, unique product of a special, creative activity.” It has been carefully crafted as a “structurally integrated whole.” It has been “symbolically represented in a score” notated by Hwang himself. Indeed, notation has served Hwang, not just as a medium for recording something already created, but as a tool of the creative process itself, as it does for western composers. Although it evolved over a period of more than thirty years and was performed in various earlier versions, Hwang’s sanjo has now been fixed: he has made no further changes to it

since publishing his score in 1998. Even abridged versions lasting, respectively, ten, fifteen, and twenty minutes are fixed and prescribed in the score. Like a western work, Hwang's sanjo is open to different interpretations on the part of performers without loss of fidelity to the score: he feels that when his sanjo is performed by two of his students, Chi Aeri and Park Hyunsook, the two performances sound "entirely different" though both are valid (interview, 18 March 2016). Such differences lie in the personal variations to which the *kayagŭm* lends itself in such matters as the width, speed, and timing of pitch-bending and vibrato.

Hwang's sanjo conforms to the work-concept in yet another way: it is intended to exist beyond the lifetime of its creator. Besides perpetuating his sanjo in a definitive score and recording, Hwang has taught it to numerous students, some of whom have gone on to teach it to students of their own. Borrowing an idea from Japan, he has light-heartedly formed a "preservation society" (pojonhoe) and issued certificates to members who have performed his complete sanjo in public; so far about ten players have achieved that honour. At first, the name of the society was Hwang Byungki Kayagŭm Sanjo Pojonhoe, but recently, at the suggestion of one of its members, it was renamed Hwang Byungki Chakp'um Pojonhoe: Society for the Preservation of Hwang Byungki's Works. The reasoning was that all of the members played Hwang's original compositions as well as his sanjo, and that Hwang's sanjo could also be included under this broader rubric as one of his works (Ki Sukhŭi, interview, 17 March 2016). But Hwang's original compositions have no need of a preservation society: they are played by virtually all *kayagŭm* players, widely available in printed and recorded form, and frequently heard on the radio and as background music in restaurants and tea rooms. It is his sanjo, as will be discussed shortly, that may require special efforts for its continuance in live performance. Thus,

the primary purpose of the preservation society remains the perpetuation of Hwang's sanjo, and the change of name suggests a view of this sanjo as a work.

When I asked Hwang whether that view was his, he replied: “No, my sanjo is not my chakp'um (work). It's just, as a traditional musician, my style” (interview, 18 March 2016). The creative activity of composing a work is designated in Korean by the verb *chakkok hada*—literally, “creating a piece”—but Hwang does not apply this verb to his creative activity in sanjo, even when referring to his creation of new melodies (e.g., 2010:12–22). Instead, he applies the verb used by other sanjo musicians, *tchada*—“weaving”—which suggests fashioning something out of existing material. Although these melodies could be described as newly composed, their purpose is not to express what Cook would call “an original compositional vision” (2013:79); rather, they provide music that lies squarely within a tradition and that is appropriate to its context. Hwang achieves this in the traditional way, by drawing on melodic and rhythmic patterns that are seen as shared and time-honoured rather than individually created. Kim Yongok, in his preface to Hwang's sanjo score, goes so far as to say that “the concept of ‘composition’ cannot exist in our [Korean] traditional music” (2010:7). Hwang himself has written that “in traditional music there was no concept of composition or composers in the modern sense”—that is, as creators of works (1979:234). In becoming a composer, Hwang was consciously departing from Korean tradition; in his sanjo, he was aiming to work within it.

Sanjo, according to Hwang, is “basically not something that you compose” (interview in Na Hyo-shin 2001:170). This view is also apparent in the way Hwang refers to his sanjo: *Chŏng Namhŭi-je Hwang Byungki-ryu kayagŭm sanjo*. The term *che/je* (lineage) was previously used in p'ansori practice in much the same way as *ryu* was used in sanjo: to refer to distinct schools often associated with an individual

originator. Hwang adopted this term for sanjo to indicate an earlier stage in a lineage, an older and broader division than ryu. Although he studied several other schools, Hwang kept coming back to that of Chǒng Namhŭi, and always tried to keep his own sanjo true to the character of Chǒng's.

Paradoxically, this may have been because Chǒng's sanjo was the most compatible with Hwang's impulse as a composer to seek a "structurally integrated whole." Hwang recalls that his teacher, Kim Yundŏk, attached less importance to surface beauty than to a clear "bone structure" (*ppyŏdae*) in sanjo. Kim described Chǒng Namhŭi's sanjo as being less like a pretty flower than like a tree in which "the branches were stronger than the leaves, the trunk stronger than the branches, and the roots stronger than the trunk" (Hwang Byungki 2010:5). Even in his modifications to the sanjo he learned from Kim, Hwang worked to make its "bone structure" (for instance, its modal system) still stronger and thus able to support a wider range of modes and rhythmic cycles and a greater overall length. In that respect, faithfulness to the character of Chǒng's sanjo was consistent with modifications informed by experience in composition. Yet in modelling his sanjo on the style of another musician and in highlighting his debt to that musician through the unconventional suffix *che/je*, Hwang takes a definite step away from the western work-concept with its emphasis on the originality of an individual composer.

The ontological status of Hwang's sanjo is, in fact, difficult to determine. While not exactly a work, it is hardly a traditional sanjo. Hwang told me that he would like it to be regarded as "a serious sanjo, but different from the others" (interview, 18 March 2016). The most obviously audible difference is the deliberate exclusion of the drummer's traditional *ch'uimsae* vocal calls. When he recorded his complete sanjo in 2014, Hwang asked the *changgu* player, Kim Ungsik, not to use

any ch 'uimsae because that is a practice specific to folk traditions. Hwang's intention was to present sanjo as art music: an object of detached aesthetic contemplation, not participatory involvement (ibid.). This conception of art music is clearly informed by the western concert hall, yet in contrast to the situation in western art music, the object to be contemplated in this way is still not presented as a work.

Perhaps because Hwang's sanjo does not fit easily into the established categories of preserved and newly created music, its reception has been equivocal and its future seems uncertain.<sup>10</sup> Because it is not quite a work, the western means of preserving musical works—notation and sound recording—are not sufficient. When I asked Hwang whether a good *kayagŭm* player could learn his sanjo from these sources alone, he replied that his sanjo, like any other, requires a teacher (interview, 18 March 2016). But because it is not quite a traditional sanjo, it has not readily found a home in Korea's traditional music teaching institutions, which favour the longer-established sanjo schools recognized in the 1960s and 1970s (Chi Aeri, interview, 8 March 2016). Even the members of Hwang's preservation society have other versions of sanjo that they play and teach, sometimes more regularly than they do his.

Nor has Hwang's use of the suffix *che/je* been adopted more generally. Hwang feels that this usage could appropriately indicate the lineage of other sanjo schools besides his own, as in “Han Sŏnggi-je Kim Chukp'a-ryu” or “Choe Oksam-je Ham Tongjŏngwŏl-ryu” (interview, 7 January 2012), and Lee Chaesuk follows his example in speaking of “Chŏng Namhŭi-je Kim Yundŏk-ryu” (2008:387). In most discussions of sanjo, however, the term *ryu* continues to be used without a *che/je* designation,

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<sup>10</sup> Here, in the light of more recent evidence, I must qualify the opinion I expressed in my 2013 book on Hwang Byungki—that his sanjo was showing signs of being “accepted into the sanjo canon” (Killick 2013:13, 35).

implicitly attributing each school of sanjo to a single individual as if it were newly created by that person. Each ryu then appears as a fixed work, and faithfulness to the school means performing the work note-for-note. Few sanjo players now try to develop their teachers' sanjo in their own way while remaining faithful to its overall character, as Hwang has tried to do.

The reception of Hwang's sanjo illustrates the mixed response that is often encountered when contesting and working outside of dominant, established categories. South Korea's traditional music world, while increasingly flexible and innovative in many respects, still has trouble accommodating what is, paradoxically, a rather traditional form of innovation: the development of one's own personal sanjo. This, I am arguing, is a consequence of the separation between preserved and newly composed music, and the equation of musical creation with the composition of original works—what Goehr calls the “conceptual imperialism” of the western work-concept (2007:8).

## **Conclusion**

In an article on sanjo published in English in 1974, Hwang wrote:

Since about 1960, it has become standard practice to learn sanjo with the aid of a written musical score ... This approach was developed because of the urgent demand for modernization in education of traditional music, and it has made it possible for younger students to learn several kinds of sanjo ... However, use of a score and modernization of education also means the end of a great tradition of devoting a long time to study and eventually creating a personal sanjo style. The ability to vary the melodies with improvisatory elements is also being lost. That is, as in the case of western music, performers have their boundaries defined by the constant reappearance of the musical

score; it will be hard to continue the tradition that performers are practically the same as composers.

In short, the modernization of the whole of Korean music is creating a distinction between performer and composer. On the one hand, it will be difficult for performers to gain sufficient compositional ability to create new sanjo; on the other hand, the composers of the new generation cannot develop the performance art of the great players. Together, these facts spell the end of the creation of sanjo in the great tradition. The future will see the composition of solo instrumental pieces in new forms, and sanjo will remain as a musical relic of a bygone age. (Hwang Byungki 1974:285)

On the whole, Hwang's prophecy has been fulfilled. There have, to be sure, been efforts to keep sanjo alive as something more than a "relic." From 1999 until 2004, traditional musician Pak Hŭngju ran an annual Sanjo Festival in Chŏnju, a city in the southern provinces where sanjo and p'ansori originated, with the aim of discovering a sanjo for the twenty-first century through collaborations with jazz, rock, and classical musicians (Clark 2009:73–5). New versions of sanjo have been created for piano or electric guitar, and contemporary composers, Korean and otherwise, have drawn on sanjo as a source of inspiration and musical material (*ibid.*, 79–80, 84–98). But such ventures have resulted, as Hwang predicted, in "instrumental pieces in new forms." These are usually presented as the work of an individual composer, while traditional sanjo no longer seems to function as it once did—as a medium in which an experienced musician can create a personal style that expresses his or her individual taste and character, while situating that style in relation to a lineage and a shared aesthetic. The main exception is Hwang himself, and even his sanjo has been fixed since 1998. When I asked him whether he thought it likely that any further new

schools of sanjo would be established, for instance by his students, he replied with a wry smile: “The era of sanjo has passed” (interview, 18 March 2016).

Readers with research specialisms in other areas will no doubt think of their own examples of traditional music being “modernized” through the introduction of the western work-concept and its associated musical notation. Time after time and in place after place, music both newly created and inherited from the past has come to be treated as an “imaginary museum of musical works”—works that are created once and for all and exhibited through live or recorded performances bound to a score or a memorized model. Increasingly, musical creation has come to mean the composition of such works, while efforts at maintaining traditional music have tended to be conceived in terms of preserving an authentic repertoire rather than transmitting the creative skills that sustained the tradition in the past. Creation of new music and preservation of old have at times become so bifurcated that an ethnomusicologist could discuss them in separate books (Howard 2006a, 2006b). In such cases, creative activity may be seen as a departure from tradition by definition, and traditional musicians may lack the ambition or the confidence to exercise creativity within traditional styles and in traditional ways. When they do attempt that, as Hwang Byungki has done in his *kayagŭm* sanjo, they may struggle to find a sympathetic audience.

Yet these increasingly rare cases of traditional creativity within traditions that have been largely reconfigured by the work-concept are, I would argue, especially worthy of the attention of researchers because they contest the “conceptual imperialism” of the work-concept and its widely assumed applicability to “music of almost any sort” (Goehr 2007:8). In doing so, they help to reveal the work-concept as a particular historically constructed way of thinking about music and not what it has

often been made to seem: a universal truth about what music is. They also help to reveal traditional music as the main realm in which other concepts than the work-concept may govern musical creativity. The other possible candidate for that role, popular music, emerged as a recognizable category contemporaneously with the work-concept and incorporated it to some degree from the beginning. Further studies on the extension of the work-concept to traditional music, and on its contestation by traditional musicians, might eventually allow a more comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon that has played a significant role in shaping our musical world and its enduring need for traditional music.

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### **Abstract in Korean**

전통 음악과 작품 개념: 황병기 가야금 산조를 중심으로

리디아 괴어 (Lydia Goehr)는 ‘음악 작품들의 상상 박물관’이라는 책에서 음악 작품에 대한 서구의 개념이 세계의 모든 음악에서 적용되고 있다고 주장한다. 이러한 현상은 세계 음악에 심오한 영향을 미쳤지만 아직 체계적으로 연구된 바가 없다. 이 논문에서는 서구의 음악과 더불어 소개된 ‘작품 개념’ (work-concept)이 어떻게 전통 음악에도 영향을 끼쳤는지를 한국의 경우를 통해

살펴본다. 또한 가야금 산조라는 전통 장르를 ‘작품’ ‘과는 다르다고 보는 음악가인 황병기를 중심으로 전통 음악이 ‘작품 개념’의 ‘개념 제국주의’에서 어떻게 벗어나려고 하는지를 알아본다.

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