



(LYRCD 7206)

KOREAN COURT MUSIC

Recorded by John Levy

Orchestra of The National Music Institute, Seoul

Kim Ki-su, Director

Singers: Mr. Hong Won-ki and Miss Chi Wa-Cha

MUSIC FOR THE CONFUCIAN SHRINE, MUN-MYO A, with dance, MUN-MU

The music played at the Confucian shrine is all that survives in Korea of A-ak, the ancient “refined” music of China. In China itself, though the Confucian rites are still performed (at least in Taiwan), many of the original instruments of the Confucian orchestra are no longer in use, and have probably not been for centuries, whereas they still used in Korea. This is therefore a unique survival.

The Confucian orchestra is said to have been introduced into Korea in the early 12th century, when a Chinese Emperor sent a number of instruments to the Korean King. In the reign of King Sejong (1393-1450), there was a revival of Confucianism as a reaction against the increasing influence of the Buddhists and an attempt was made to complete the orchestra and give the rites the original form, based on Chinese treatises of the Chou Dynasty (which ended in 249 B.C.).

With one of two exceptions, all the instruments described below are of Chinese origin, though made in Korea. Unfortunately, several were lost through bombardment in the Korean War of 1950, but the most important have survived, so that what we can now hear is essentially the same as before.

In each part of the rite, there is a hymn consisting of eight lines, each line containing four syllables. These hymns, in Chinese, are no longer sung, but the melodies remain, each not of which corresponds to a syllable. The scale is basically heptatonic. The Director told me that the bare melody, played on the bronze bells and the stone chimes, may be compared to the basic ingredients of a cooked dish, and the ornamentation provided by the wind instruments to the seasoning.

TRACKS

1. RECEIVING THE APPROACHING SPIRIT (of Confucious),

Ung-An Chi AK, played by the Orchestra “on the ground,” Hun-Ka (2:19)

These are the instruments: P’yon-jong, sixteen bronze bells; P’yon-gyong, sixteen stone slabs; Hun, a globular flute or ocarina; Chi, a cross flute with rased mouthpiece; Chok, a notched flute; Yak, a small notched flute; Chin-go, the largest of the barrel-drums; No-go, two drums, one on top of the other at right-angles, suspended from a frame; Nodo, a clapper drum, not heard in this recording; Pu, a small jar of baked clay, struck with a split bamboo; Ch’uk, the trough, also known as the starter; U, the tiger, known also as the stopper; Pak, the Director’s clapper.

The Director of Music, with a single clap, alerts the musicians, then, at the Confucian shrine, but not in this studio recording, the clapper drum is twirled three times. The trough is then struck thrice and the large drum and double drums simultaneously once: this is repeated three times. The Director gives a single clap to start the music. On the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th syllable of each line, the small jar of baked clay is beaten once, twice and four times respectively while, also on the fourth syllable, the two drums are struck twice. At the end of the eight lines, the Director’s clapper, along with the two drums, are struck several times and the tiger’s back is scraped thrice.

The melody is exactly as noted by A. Eckhardt (1930 and 1935), quoted in *Ancient and Oriental Music in the New Oxford History of Music*, article on Korea, by Dr. Laurence Picken. This melody, on C, is repeated three times during the rites, on F twice, in A twice, and in G# twice.

Nothing sounds quite in tune and one must enjoy these deliciously archaic sounds in the same way that both the Chinese (as I have seen in Taiwan) and the Koreans do, that is to say, with a sort of evergreen youthful gaiety.

2. FIRST WINE OFFERING, Song-An Chi Ak, played by the orchestra “on the Terrace, Dung-ka (2:41)

The instruments used by the orchestra “on the terrace” are the same as those used “on the ground,” less the chin-go, and with the addition of T’uk-chong. A single bronze bell; T’uk-kyong, a single stone chime; Kaya-gum, an ancient Korean long-zither with twelve strings, used instead of the traditional Chinese se, a large long-zither with twenty-five strings; Komun-go, an ancient Korean long-zither with six strings, used instead of the traditional Chinese ch’in, a seven string long-zither; choi-go, a medium-sized barrel drum.

The pattern is much the same as in the first piece, with the difference that after the Director's single clap to alert the musicians, the bronze bell is sounded once; instead of the simultaneous beat on the two drums after the three beats on the trough, the choi-go is sounded, and this drum serves also to make the end of each line. At the end, the stone chime is sounded once.

Everything is slightly out of tune, and with this reservation, the melody seems to be pentatonic. Originally, it must have been heptatonic.

3. SPRINGTIME IN LO-YANG, Nagyang-Ch'un (5:18)

Of all the Chinese lay music introduced into Korea in the 12th century, this piece is considered to have been the least modified by the passage of time and the inevitable adaptation to Korean taste and tradition. It is the most pure and beautiful example of Tang-ak. Originally, this was the music to which lyric poetry (Chinese, tz'u) was sung. Accompanied solely by string instruments. But the text has apparently long since dropped and it is played as an orchestral piece for mixed orchestra in which both Chinese and Korean instruments are used. These are; Tang-jok, a short membrane flute; Tang-p'iri, a cylindrical oboe; Hae-gum, a two stringed fiddle; Ajaeng, a bowed long zither; P'yon-jong and P'you-gyong, bronze bells and stone chimes, probably replacing pang-hyang sixteen iron slabs; Chwa-go, a short barrel drum, suspended face upwards.

The melody, which is syllabic, is formed from the notes of the major diatonic scale. It is given out by the bells, the chimes, and the bowed instruments (which in Korean music are counted among the wind instruments, plucked stringed instruments alone being considered as stringed instruments), while the wind instruments proper elaborate the tune. A characteristic of the tz'u form is the irregular metre of the lines. This irregularity can be heard .

4. LONG LIFE IMMEASUREABLE AS THE SKY, Sujech'on, known also as Chong-up to accompany a masked dance, Ch'o-yong-mu, 1st movement. (10:22)

The instruments used are: Hyang-p'iri, a Korean cylindrical oboe, of which there are two: Tang-jok, a small membrane flute; Tae-gum, the long Korean membrane flute; Hae-gum, a two-stringed fiddle; Ajaeng, a bowed long-zither; Chang-go, a short barrel drum, suspended face upwards.

In this piece, the chang-go, is first struck on both sides, with the palm of the left hand and with a stick in the right hand, then on the left side alone; then rolls are made with the stick on the right side. The chwa-go is struck when the chang-go is played on both sides and on the left side.

Sujech'on is the finest example of Hyang-ak (pure Korean music) and is thought by some scholars to have its origin in the Silla Dynasty (668-935). This may be doubted, but certainly the melody bears a remarkable resemblance to the elaborate (Chissori) style of Buddhist chanting known as Pomp'ae, and the rhythm is not similar to any other Korean

Court Music. The oboes lead with the melody and are followed in a sort of canon by the flute, the fiddle and the bowed string-zither.

5. TWO INSTRUMENTAL PRELUDES, Komungo Tasurum, for T'ae-gum (the long Korean membrane flute) and Komun-go (long-zither), played by Kimm Song-jin and Ku Yun-kuk. (2:10)

These short preludes are played as an introduction to pieces for the full orchestra. The first is in the Ujo mode (B, C, Eb, F, G), the second in Kyemyonjo (Bb, Db, Eb, F, A). In principle, the Korean modes are pentatonic, but in practice, several chromatic intervals are added and in the case of Kyemyonjo (jo means "mode"), the minor third is usually omitted. Two other modes are in use, P'yongjo, which is Ujo on Eb, both of these giving a major effect, with the fourth very prominent and Ujokyemyonjo, which is Kyemyonjo on Eb. Characteristic of Kyemyonjo, is the downward movement C, Bbb and Ab, and upwards and downwards, the movement by fourths, A#, E#, and B#. In short, when the B** is heard and when there is a movement over a seventh by fourths, the mode will be Kyemyon or its derivative. The intervals of the Korean scale of similar neither to the Chinese nor the Western.

6. LYRIC SONG, Kagok, sung by Hong Wonki, accompanied by members of the National Institute. (4:14)

Although kagok is not strictly speaking a part of the Korean Court repertory, it has been preserved solely by the National Music Institute. Its history goes back to the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392), and was enjoyed by all the educated classes. Kagok is a song without a melody in our sense of the word; it has a marvelous beauty and is also known as the "Tune of Eternal Joy." In this form, the poem (sijo) is divided into five lines. Only about seventeen of these songs are sung nowadays. This song, interesting especially because it is in two modes U and Kyemyon, has this meaning:

"Like a hen pheasant chased by a hawk on a mountainside without bush or boulder to hide her, or like being in a boat off Taech'on, loaded with a thousand bags of grain, but with the oars lost, the said adrift, the rigging frayed, the mast broken, and the rudder gone, the wind blowing, the waves billowing, wandering in a mist with day swiftly dying and thousands of leagues still to go, darkness in every direction, and the waters a magpie of blackness and foam, when the boatman is overtaken by pirates, can I compare these things to my mood when I parted from him two days ago?"

(This, and the translations in Tracks 2 and 3, were kindly made for me by Father Richard Rutt, now the Anglican Bishop of Sudaemunm, Korea.)

The chamber orchestra that accompanies the singer consist of the following instruments: Komun-go; kaya-gum; se-p'iri, tae-gum; tanso; hae-gum; and chang-go, all of which have been previously described, excepting the se-p'iri, a small Korean cylindrical oboe and the tan-so, a small notched flute. As is usual, the song is preceded by an orchestral prelude.

7. LYRIC SONG, Kagok, sung by Hong Wonki, with the same accompaniment as in Track 1. (6:22)
8. SIJO, performed by Chi Whacha and the Orchestra of National Music Institute. (4:25)
9. CH'WIT'A KILKUNAK, (3:32)
10. P'YONG-GYONG/P'YONG –JONG, (:43)



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