



REDCAT

P'ANSORI: KOREAN OPERA AND IMPROVISATION

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presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CaLARTS

P'ANSORI: KOREAN OPERA AND IMPROVISATION

Tuesday, November 13, 2012, 8:30 pm

Bae Il-Dong, p'ansori singer

Kim Dong-Won, Korean traditional percussion and vocal improvisation

Jim Santi Owen, percussion

PROGRAM

Dan-ga

Chunhyang-ga

The separation of Chunhyang and Mongryong

Dodang

Shaman rhythm improvisation

Simcheong-ga

Funeral song for Simcheong's mother

Simcheong-ga

Simcheong sacrifices herself to the sea so that her father may regain his eyesight

Simcheong-ga

Mr. Sim opens his eyes

Music from "The Opera Project", A San Francisco World Music Festival Production

Emerging during the mid-Chosŏn era (1392–1910), *p'ansori* is a style of epic story singing performed by a vocalist and drummer (*kosu*). The vocalist narrates long dramatic tales through speech, song, and action, while the drummer accompanies the singer and gives calls of encouragement (*ch'ŭimsae*) such as *ŏlssigu* (right on!) at the end of vocal phrases.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Bae Il-Dong is highly regarded as one of Korea's finest p'ansori singers. He has performed numerous concerts both internationally and within Korea and his extraordinary life story is featured in Emma Franz's documentary feature *Intangible Asset Number 82*. Bae Il-Dong's renowned interpretation of the epic song Shimch'ongga (The Song of the Filial Daughter) has recently been documented in a unique outdoor performance setting and (featuring Kim Dong-Won) released as a Super Audio CD in late 2010. His work as a contemporary improviser can be heard in his performances with the collaborative ensemble Daorum, and more recently in the work of Chiri.

Traditionally, in order to master the various elements of P'ansori, singers would spend long periods (100 days) in isolation, singing into waterfalls in order to "break" the voice and reveal the "true" tone. Bae Il-Dong, a performer steeped in the eastern school (tongp'yŏnje) of p'ansori, is one of the few contemporary singers to follow this harsh tradition. While still a student, he traveled to Mount Chiri on the southern end of the Sobaek Mountain Range and spent seven years living by a waterfall, practicing up to 18 hours a day in order to reveal his voices. One of the most powerful musical memories I have is listening to Bae Il-Dong perform p'ansori on a waterfall at Chiri Mountain. Hearing Il-Dong sing on the waterfall where he'd spent many years in isolation was an exhilarating experience that inspired the formation of this collaborative ensemble.

In Emma Franz's feature film *Intangible Asset Number 82*, Bae Il-Dong recalls his time spent practicing on the waterfall at Mount Chiri: "In Korea, we say that energy is very important. Yin is the valley, yang is the mountain, and the waterfall is where they meet. Being here one can draw on that energy. The first couple of years I would sleep only one or two hours a day and I still can't understand how I did it. The best season for study was the winter because it is so cold your body becomes more tense and the environment demonstrates clearly that you are alone. I burst my eardrum because the waterfall is so loud, and because I was singing so hard. Traditionally, singers would practice in nature, in a wild and open place. They sang with a speaking voice. It is a very simple, soulful and inartistic way of singing, but it is also very difficult to sing like that. The notes and sounds are not refined, but have rough edges, and are even torn into pieces. P'ansori reveals the natural voice, naked and unpolished."

Since 1984 **Kim Dong-Won** has learned various traditional percussion musical styles, such as farmers' drumming and dance, shaman music, p'ansori accompanying, and music theory. In 1987, he was a political prisoner, sentenced for playing music at the funeral ceremony of Lee Seok-Gyu, who was killed by policemen in a pro-democracy protest against the Korean military dictatorship. From this experience, he thought more deeply about society and art. That was the turning point of his life; he began to study traditional music more profoundly as a search for the truest

methods of communication. During his work for the Samulnori Hanullim Organization as director of Research & Education (1994–2004), he wrote teaching material about Korean traditional music, as well as children’s books, e.g., *The Story of Samulnori* (a creative story about the origins of Samulnori). He has performed in Europe, the U.S.A., Japan, and many other countries, especially as a member of The Silk Road Ensemble, led by cellist Yo-Yo Ma. He has been helped forge new possibilities for Korean music and performed with western classical, jazz, and international musicians. He wants to create new artistic languages with music from all over the world as it encounters traditional Korean music. He is a practitioner in Taepyeongmu (the 97th Korean “intangible cultural asset”). At present he is a visiting lecturer at the Basel Musik Akademie, Switzerland, and a professor at Wonkwang Digital University.

“Every pore of his being is devoted to expressing the deep emotion he feels for traditional Korean culture. Its philosophy, physicality and spirituality are organic to Dong-Won’s art. It is an inspiration to make music with him.”

—Yo-Yo Ma, cellist, Artistic Director of Silk Road Project

“His drumming brought gasps from listeners.” —*Seattle Times*

Jim Santi Owen is an American percussionist, educator, producer, composer and performer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Drumming since the age of eight, Owen began an intensive training in the North Indian percussion instrument, *tabla*, in 1991, studying under Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri at the Ali Akbar College of Music, at the California Institute of the Arts, and in India. In 1995, Owen began studying South Indian percussion instruments including *mrdangam*, *ghatam*, *kanjira* and *morsing* with master percussionist T.H. Subash Chandran, along with *tavil* taught by K. Sekar. At CalArts, Owen studied jazz with Charlie Haden, James Newton, and Tootie Heath in addition to African drumming and dance with the Ladzekpo brothers. Owen has a Master’s Degree in World Music from California Institute of the Arts.

Since 2009, Jim Santi Owen has served as the Music Director for the San Francisco World Music Festival and the Director of the Festival’s Youth World Music Orchestra. In this capacity he has collaborated with artists ranging from epic storytelling shamans from Kyrgyzstan, to Native American tribal elders, to Tibetan Buddhist yoginis, to Korean opera artists, to Chinese Nanguan masters. Owen works year-round with San Francisco World Music Festival researching and studying traditional music from around the world and facilitating inter-cultural musical collaborations between master musicians and their students.

Jim Santi Owen has performed with a wide array of musicians including: Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, Subash Chandran, Pharoah Sanders, Hamza el Din, Pandit Chitresh Das, Alam Khan, Abbos Kosimov, Imamyar Hasanov, Kartik Seshadri, Sharam Nazeri, Steve Smith, Terry Riley, Joseph Jarman, Yair Dalal, Bikram Ghosh, Ganesh Kumar, Stephen Kent, Jai Uttal, Myra Melford, Alessandra Belloni, Techung, Gamelan Sekar Jaya, Kyaw Kyaw Naing, Rova Saxophone Quartet, Omar Sosa and Steve Gorn.