

PACIFIC RIM MUSIC FESTIVAL

UC Santa Cruz's Pacific Rim Music Festival: A History

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The high-profile Pacific Rim Music Festival, sponsored by the Music Department of the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) and led by composer and professor Hi Kyung Kim, has taken place six times since 1996. During its twenty-year history, the festival has presented the works of 131 composers, introduced more than a hundred world premieres, brought well-known contemporary performance groups to campus, and promoted the creation of compositions that bridge culturally diverse musical expressions and unite performers and composers from around the world.

The Pacific Rim Music Festival arose as an outgrowth and, ultimately, an extension of the UCSC Music Department's annual salute to new music, called April in Santa Cruz (AISC). Dating back to the mid-1980s and continuing to the present day, AISC typically presents four concerts of contemporary music each spring. Responsibility for organizing its events rotates among the UCSC composition faculty and the concert schedule has often included guest ensembles from around the country. A consistent component of AISC has been the presentation of new works by UCSC faculty members and graduate students. Financing for the concerts has traditionally come from the Music Department, the Arts Division, and various campus granting agencies, such as the Arts Research Institute.

The 1996 Festival

In 1996, when it was her turn to run the AISC festival, Professor Kim envisioned focusing the annual event around a unified theme. Kim had grown up in Korea and had come to the United States for doctoral study at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) in 1982. Her music often brings together elements from her birth culture and her adopted one. In an attempt to feature this type of syncretic process in the works of many other composers, Kim decided to specifically feature on AISC that year music from California and East Asia, launching in the process the department's first Pacific Rim Music Festival.

This first festival followed the program model of AISC: four concerts, one each week during the month of April, with several guest ensembles from northern California, including the new music ensemble Earplay, the Francesco [piano] Trio, and the Sun [string] Quartet. Much of their chosen repertoire offered audiences a window into

contemporary works linked to East Asia. In a foreshadowing of future festivals, this first one also included expert performers on Asian instruments, specifically highlighting the Korean gayageum and the Chinese guzheng. As in previous AISC programs, local performers also played a crucial role by augmenting the offerings of these guests. For example, the UCSC Percussion Ensemble—a group of about a half dozen players including both faculty and students run by percussion teacher William Winant—appeared on the last concert.

Music on the four concerts included compositions by UCSC faculty members, some of them long associated with AISC such as David Cope (its founder), David Evan Jones, emeritus Gordon Mumma, and Kim herself, as well as lecturers John Sackett and Eric Sawyer. Music by other California university faculty members also appeared on the programs: Richard Festinger and Wayne Peterson from San Francisco State, William Kraft from UC Santa Barbara (UCSB), Olly Wilson and Andrew Imbrie (Kim's primary mentor) from UCB, Elinor Armer from the San Francisco Conservatory, and Chinary Ung from UC San Diego (UCSD).

Also included were works by renowned composer and local icon Lou Harrison and a number of prominent Asian and Asian-American composers. In addition to Ung (a Cambodian-American heavily inspired by his native culture), audiences enjoyed compositions by Chinese-American Chen Yi, who at the time was composer-in-residence with the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic and the male vocal ensemble Chanticleer; by Kyungsun Suh from Hanyang University of Seoul and Sung Jae Lee from Seoul National University; and most importantly perhaps, by the renowned emeritus professor from Columbia University, Chou Wen-Chung. In 1972 Chou had established the U.S.-China Arts Exchange program, through which he brought a host of young Chinese Third Wave composers to the United States. Chou had long advocated for the creative blending of musical traditions and encouraged his students to explore intercultural links of the type Kim herself embraced. Chou would return to UCSC for future Pacific Rim Music festivals, as would some of the other composers featured on the 1996 concerts, such as Chinary Ung, and UCB faculty members Olly Wilson and Andrew Imbrie. The festival that year also included music by several deceased composers who pursued this same inclusive goal, notably Toru Takemitsu.

Hosting the international visitors proved to be one of the most challenging tasks for Kim and her assistants, but it was a vital contribution to the reputation of the endeavor and would become a high priority for all future festivals. Kim's small staff of assistants at UCSC needed to manage complex logistics, and Kim herself needed to find funding for transportation, housing, and meals. For this first festival, she obtained a grant from UC's Intercampus Arts Program, which reviewed 107 applications and therefore was highly competitive.

The 1996 festival also included an outreach component that would be replicated in later festivals in the form of the repetition of some concerts outside of UCSC. In this first case, selected works from the UCSC performances were repeated at UCB and UC Davis (UCD) on April 22 and 28.

2003 Festival: New and Traditional

The second festival took place in 2003 and showed a significant expansion from the first one: seven concerts instead of four, and five outreach performances in which entire concerts were repeated in San Francisco, Berkeley, and Davis. The festival opened with two performances honoring Chou Wen-chung. On April 2, UCSC faculty conductor Nicole Paiement, who also directed the new music ensemble at the San Francisco Conservatory, presented a celebration for Chou's eightieth birthday, featuring works by Hi Kyung Kim, Joji Yuasa, Chinariy Ung, Isang Yun, Chou himself, and Edgard Varèse—Chou's own mentor. The second concert, two days later, featured works by Chou's "distinguished disciples," including three Chinese Third Wave composers—Chen Yi (now on the faculty of the University of Missouri, Kansas City); her husband, Pulitzer Prize winner Zhou Long; and Bright Sheng (University of Michigan)—as well as James Tenney, Edmund Campion from UCB, and Pablo Ortiz from UCD. The concert was performed by the Empyrean Ensemble, a contemporary group comprised of faculty from UCD, conducted by Karla Lemon. A concert of chamber music for violin, cello, clarinet, and piano followed on April 9, including several premieres. Works by David Evan Jones and Andrew Imbrie were presented along with pieces by Evan Ziporyn (known widely for his work with gamelan), Byung-Dong Paik from Korea, Kui Dong from Dartmouth, Tristan Murail from Columbia, and Terry Riley, who had been for many years a revered fixture of the San Francisco Bay Area new music scene.

On April 11, the festival acknowledged the contributions by local artists to new music through a concert presented by Santa Cruz's independent contemporary ensemble, New Music Works. This group, founded by composer Philip Collins, has been offering about a half dozen concerts each year since 1979. For the 2003 festival, Collins included an eclectic array of living and dead composers, including Henry Brant, Lou Harrison, Jack Body, Eun-Kyung Kim, and UCSC composers Paul Nauert and Peter Elsea. On April 16 the UCSC Percussion ensemble performed with other UCSC faculty members in a concert that included works by Harrison, Tenney, Sackett, and Cope, as well as two newcomers to the Pacific Rim performances but well-known in the contemporary music world: Alvin Curran and Marian Borkowski.

On April 23 Paiement reappeared to conduct her independent Ensemble Parallèle in a salute to "World Women in Music Today, arranged in cooperation with the Korean Women Composers' Society." Works by Young-Ja Lee and Chan-Hae Lee represented South Korea's active group of female composers. Also featured was a work by Melissa Hui, who was born in Hong Kong and raised in Vancouver; she was, at the time, on the Stanford faculty. The program also included works by women not particularly associated with California or East Asia, such as Betsy Jolas, Kaija Saariaho, and Shulamit Ran.

The 2003 festival concluded with a piano recital by Eve Egoyan entitled "Northwest Passages." Egoyan presented two works, by Mamoru Fujieda and Jo Kondo, that originated from a Japanese-Canadian commissioning project. The rest of her eclectic program spanned a wide chronological range from Eric Satie's *Pièces froides* of 1897 through Cage's *Amores* (1943), to Karen Tanaka's *Crystalline I* of 1988, to the US premiere of Tenney's *To Weave* (2003). As with the first festival, finding sufficient funding was a major challenge, but Kim managed to cobble together support from a variety of groups to meet her increasing expansive (and expensive) vision.

Outreach following this festival was far more extensive than that associated with the 1996 endeavor. Both the opening concert of April 2 and the salute to women on April 23 were repeated the following day at the prominent Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco. The latter concert was also performed at UCD on April 25. The April 4 performance of music by Chou's disciples saw two more performances as well, in Berkeley and Davis (on April 6 and 8).

2005: The Largest Festival of All

Two years later, in 2005, Kim presented another Pacific Rim Music Festival, again expanding the number of concerts and now compressing the time frame into just over a week. The festival offered nine concerts in as many days, with events taking place every day from April 29 to May 7. The opening of the extravaganza was heralded by an outdoor free celebration by Samulnori—a Korean folk percussion ensemble from the National Center of Korean Traditional Performing Arts—whose members made a dramatic entrance onto the plaza in front of the recital hall in full traditional costume to the delight of the large standing crowd of observers. UCSC's own Balinese and Sundanese gamelan ensembles with guest artist I Nyoman Sumandhi continued the welcoming event.

That same evening, the opening concert reproduced a significant performance that had taken place in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2001 entitled "Hún Qiáo (Bridge of Souls): Remembrance, Reconciliation, and Peace." The St. Paul event had been the inspiration of violinist Young-Nam Kim, artistic director of the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, and included performances by cellist Yo-Yo Ma (who strongly supported the endeavor) and by renowned pipa player Wu Man. Young-Nam Kim's aim was both to pay "homage to the victims and survivors of war atrocities"¹ and to bring about reconciliation among "three countries that hated and loved together," in the words of Wu Man.² The Minnesota Chamber Music Society commissioned four composers to create works "of remembrance and reconciliation": Hi Kyung Kim (Korea; "At the Edge of the Ocean"); Michio Mamiya (Japan; "Serenade No. 3, Germ"); Chen Yi (China; "Ning"); and Andrew Imbrie (USA; "From Time to Time"). For the 2005 Pacific Rim Music Festival, composer Kim worked with violinist Kim to restage this concert at UCSC, using some of the same players who had appeared in St. Paul: not only Young-Nam Kim, but also Wu Man and mezzo-soprano Mutsumi Hatano appeared.

Guest ensembles for the 2005 festival included Speculum Musicae from New York; the EarPort Ensemble from Germany; the New Asia String Quartet from Korea; Quake (a quintet); NOISE from San Diego; the improvisatory jazz ensemble Hesterian Musicism founded by UCSC's jazz flutist/saxophonist and composer Karlton Hester; Timeless Pulse, an electroacoustic improvisation project; and UCD's Emyrean Ensemble. Composers hailed from Korea, Japan, Germany, and Australia, as well as from California and elsewhere in the United States.

¹ http://music.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/0109_hun_qiao/

² Unpublished interview with musicologist Michele Edwards.

The festival this year included a performance of jazz-inspired works, as well as a concert titled a “Korean music ceremony,” which featured Hi Kyung Kim’s latest work, *Ritual III*, in which she combined Korean and Western instruments with dance: it climaxed in a semi-improvised virtuoso drumming competition that pitted UCSC’s William Winant against changgo player Woong Sik Kim. This unusual concert was repeated at Disney Hall in Los Angeles (May 11) and at the Palace of Fine Arts Theater in San Francisco (May 18).

In addition to this varied array of composers and musical styles from around the world, the 2005 festival also featured two particularly remarkable events. One was a grandiose celebration of the seventieth birthday of Terry Riley. Instead of taking place in UCSC’s 400-seat recital hall, where all of the other concerts of both AISC and PacRim had been held, this event nearly filled the city’s 2,000-seat Civic Center Auditorium. The concert went on for many hours to the delight of Riley’s fans. The all-star lineup included Wu Man, the Kronos Quartet, tabla player Zakir Hussain (who at one point, with a twinkle in his eye, tapped out “Happy Birthday” on his drums), and Tracy Silverman, who played John Adams’s “Sri Moonshine” on electric violin. The festival also commissioned a piece from Pauline Oliveros: “70 chords for Terry.”

The 2005 festival ended with famed pianist Aki Takahashi playing half a concert; in the second half, the entire Berkeley Symphony along with the UCSC Concert Choir performed under the direction of celebrated conductor Kent Nagano, who had completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at UCSC in 1974. This large body of performers (who barely fit on the UCSC recital hall stage) presented a preview performance of the work *Manzanar: An American Story*. In 2000 Kevin Starr, Librarian Emeritus of the State of California, had asked Nagano “to oversee the creation of a work that would encourage persons of all backgrounds to reflect upon and remember the experience of the [World War II Japanese] internment camps.”³ The resulting composition, by Naomi Sekiya (movements 1 and 3) and Jean-Pascal Beintus (movement 2) played to a rapt audience.

Funding for the increasingly large-scale and numerous productions of successive Pacific Rim Music Festivals was, of course, well beyond the financial means of the UCSC Music Department and Arts Division. In 2005 Kim obtained external grants from many sources, including the Korean, Japanese, and German Consulates, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trades and its Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Asiana Air Lines, Lockheed Martin Corporation, and many others.

2007: Festival for Gayageum and Western Instruments

The 2005 festival would turn out to be the largest of all of the Pacific Rim presentations in terms of the number of events, although the 2017 festival would exceed it in terms of the number of foreign performers who traveled to California. The energy the 2005 festival engendered in the department, and in Kim herself, however, continued to resonate for many years and led to follow-on festivals. Kim began to bring a series of traditional Korean musicians to Santa Cruz for residencies in an effort to acquaint faculty and doctoral students in the composition program with the possibilities of cross-cultural instrumental mixtures. Her main focus after the 2005 festival was on the gayageum, a

³ From Nagano’s notes printed in the Festival program booklet.

Korean zither similar to the Chinese zheng and the Japanese koto. Students and faculty learned the intricacies of the instrument and wrote compositions for it. The result of this effort was a two-concert presentation on April 22–23, 2007, titled Festival for Korean Gayageum and Western Instruments, mounted as part of AISC. The first concert featured ten works by doctoral students for gayageum, sometimes alone and sometimes combined with flute, cello, guitar, or pre-recorded tape. The second included works featuring the same instrument by UCSC faculty members David Cope, David Evan Jones, and Hi Kyung Kim, as well as Yu-Hui Chang from Brandeis. This project launched a major focus of future Pacific Rim Festivals, namely, the presentation of premieres of works written by composers from different institutions for cross-cultural instrumental ensembles.

Concerts of Korean traditional music rounded out this series of focused events. Although these gayageum and Western instruments performances did not constitute a full Pacific Rim Music Festival, they were very influential in terms of outreach. Repeat performances took place not only at UCD and the well-known Old First Church series in San Francisco, but also in Korea at Ewha Women's University, the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, and the National University of the Arts on June 18–22. Supported by generous grants from the Korea Foundation & Cultural Council of Korea, UCSC students and faculty traveled to Korea for the events.

2010 Festival: Music from the Past, Music for the Future

By 2010 Kim was ready to launch another full-blown Pacific Rim Music Festival. This one included six concerts from April 21 through April 25 (two of them on a single day). The San Francisco Conservatory's New Music Ensemble (conducted by Paiement) and the UCSC Percussion Ensemble (directed by Winant) led off with a tribute to Edgard Varèse, followed by three concerts of world premieres performed by guest ensembles: the Contemporary Music Ensemble Korea, the Del Sol and Lydian String Quartets, and a Santa Cruz chamber group. One of the premiere concerts featured works by UCSC doctoral students; the others presented pieces by faculty and independent composers from around the United States and Korea. An evening of music on April 24, played the New York New Music Ensemble (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion), also included two world premieres (by David Cope and Charles Wuorinen) as well as the US and West Coast premieres of *The Eternal Pine* and *Ode to Eternal Pine* by the still-very-active Chou Wen-chung. The 2010 Festival closed with the appearance of the renowned San Francisco-based Balinese Gamelan Sekar Jaya and UCSC's own two gamelan ensembles in a program that included both traditional music and contemporary works for the ensembles by Lou Harrison, Nano S, and composer, ethnomusicologist, and author Bill Alves from Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California.

Thanks to a grant from the Asian Cultural Council in New York and support from the Korean National University of the Arts (KNUA) in Seoul and Brandeis University in Boston, repeat performances of concerts 2 and 3 took place on April 27 and June 6 at these two universities.

2017: The Climax of Twenty Years: From The Root to The Living Tradition

As I finish writing this essay, the last of the Pacific Rim Music Festivals has just ended—five concerts in five days (October 25–29) that featured, in addition to renowned guest composers and ensembles from Boston and New York, no fewer than fifty-five performers and twenty staff members from Korea’s National Gugak Center (NGC), who traveled to California with numerous trunks filled with instruments, costumes, and scenery. The budget was close to \$2 million, funded by generous grants from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea, the National Gugak Center, the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, the Korea Foundation, the Korea Times, the UCSC Music Department and Arts Division, and a host of smaller donors. For the first time, all festival events were free. Audiences were consistently large and enthusiastic.

Kim swears that this momentous undertaking will constitute her last PacRim Music Festival, but only time will tell whether she can resist the temptation to repeat her successful and increasingly ambitious series of international collaborations in the future.

This 2017 festival was preceded by a “teaser”: a preview concert on April 15, 2016, performed by seven master musicians from Korea playing traditional instruments, conducted by UCSC’s new ensemble director Bruce Kiesling. Four pieces billed as “preview performances”—by UCSC’s David Evan Jones, UCD’s Kurt Rodhe, UCB’s Cindy Cox, and Rice University professor Shih Hui Chen—gave a taste of the types of works these composers would ultimately write for the enormous Creative Traditional Orchestra, the centerpiece of the 2017 festival. Also included on this preview concert was the world premiere of a piece by Hi Kyung Kim for ajaeng, and two traditional Korean works. The following day a closed reading session took place in which compositions by Richard Carrick, Laurie San-Martin, and five doctoral students from UCSC and UCB were presented.

The festival itself took place in the fall term instead of the spring. It opened with a concert of traditional court and folk music from Korea, titled “From the Root,” featuring the Creative Traditional Orchestra. UCSC’s stage was brilliantly decorated with an immense woven backdrop and colorful banners. A large crowd greeted the unusual concert with enthusiasm, particularly heralding the (very loud) Samulnori percussion ensemble piece.

Three concerts of new works followed, most of which combined Korean and Western instruments. Old friends reappeared, including Chinary Ung, whose music had been performed on every festival since 1996, and two ensembles that had received enthusiastic receptions in past years—the Borromeo String Quartet from Boston and New York New Music. The performance entitled “Into Blossoming,” on Thursday, October 26, presented works by Cindy Cox, Kurt Rohde, Vedran Mehinovic, Theodore Wiprud, Andrew Imbrie, Lee Young-Ja, Sebastian Currier, and Hi Kyung Kim, with the Borromeo Quartet teaming up with members of the National Gugak Center Chamber Ensemble. For “Into Being,” the next night’s performance, New York New Music members appeared with the Festival Ensemble Korea to present works by UCSC faculty members Benjamin Carson, Karlton Hester, Larry Polansky, and David Cope (emeritus), as well as Laurie San Martin from UCD, Choe Uzong from Seoul National University, Chaya Czernowin from

Harvard, and Lim June-Hee from KNUA. All of the works except two featured Korean and Western instrumental mixtures and seven of the nine pieces were world premieres. The following evening brought together the Borromeo Quartet, the New York ensemble, and Festival Ensemble Korea in a program of works by doctoral students from UCSC, UCD, UCB, Columbia, Seoul National University, and KNUA. All the pieces were world premieres and all combined Western and Asian instruments.

The 2017 festival was capped by a dramatic, exciting, and inspiring concert of new music commissioned by the National Gugak Center (NGC) in collaboration with the Pacific Rim Music Festival, and specifically written for the NGC's Creative Traditional Orchestra. The stage was filled almost to overflowing with traditional Korean instruments played by an ensemble of more than forty expert performers who had learned eight new works. After an introductory number by Baek Daeung consisting of an imaginative interweaving of Korean folk melodies, the concert featured new pieces by veteran composers representing a wide spectrum of geographic regions and compositional languages: George Lewis from Columbia, Shih Hui Chen from Rice, Chinary Ung from UCSD, David Evan Jones from UCSC, Edmund Campion from UCB, and Lee Geonyong, emeritus professor from KNUA. Also included were two short pieces by teenagers that emerged from the New York Philharmonic's "Very Young Composers" program. The stunning variety of compositional techniques showed the varied possibilities of this versatile ensemble as envisioned by Western and Korean creators. One work (Ung's *Singing Inside Aura III*) included a viola soloist (Ung's wife Susan Ung), who not only played along with the orchestra, but also sang a text consisting of phrases in Sanskrit, Pali, and Khmer. The final work, by Lee Geonyong, included a pansori singer rendering the familiar Korean legend of a young, rebellious green frog who refuses to listen to his mother's instructions, as recounted in a poem by Ki Man Paik. The US composers commissioned to write works for this final concert had traveled to Korea in December 2016 to work with the Creative Traditional Orchestra; a preview concert took place there on December 8. This activity created an exceptional opportunity for the composers to collaborate with the Korean musicians and refine their own works to take full advantage of the ensemble's capabilities.

Affiliated events included not only talks by the composers and lively parades on the plaza in front of the recital hall by the traditional instrumentalists, but also two high profile concerts sponsored by Cal Performances that took place in UC Berkeley's 2600-seat Zellerbach Auditorium on the afternoon and evening of October 28. The opening and closing concerts of the UCSC festival, featuring the Creative Traditional Orchestra, were repeated in this large and prominent venue. To complete the international circuit, most of the commissioned works were played at the National Gugak Center in Seoul on December 2.

Preceding the final concert of the 2017 festival, Hi Kyung Kim spoke movingly of what the twenty-one-year endeavor had achieved, both musically and culturally. "The Pacific Rim Music Festival is not just a normal festival," she said; "it is a festival of premieres." To transform those new musical visions into live sound for a live audience requires an intense devotion to cross-cultural and interpersonal cooperation. "We collaborate, we work together, we study together, and we present together for the sake of education and cultural outreach." Noting that each composer on the program came from a different background and a different understanding of Korean music, she asked the audience to

appreciate the way in which they could translate their knowledge into their personal musical language. Indeed, the breadth of stylistic variety in these newly created works was stunning, as the audience acknowledged by their enthusiastic standing ovation at the concert's conclusion. In her introduction, however, Kim also acknowledged not only the composers and the performers, but also the devoted staff who made sure that the complex logistics were managed so as to produce seamless and trouble-free performances. "We are not a very big school," she told the audience, "but we have a winning team." Indeed, Kim finds it remarkable that a geographically isolated small city like Santa Cruz can connect with the world through artistic collaboration. Her vision of what can be accomplished when artists work together to create new, inspiring music, bridging cultural and linguistic differences that could otherwise prove to be barriers, is the true legacy of the Pacific Rim Music Festivals.

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