

# An Overview of Korean Performing Arts

# Theatre in Korea

An Overview of Korean Performing Arts **Theatre in Korea**

korea Arts  
management  
service

korea Arts  
management  
service

[www.gokams.or.kr](http://www.gokams.or.kr)  
[www.theapro.kr](http://www.theapro.kr)



An Overview  
of Korean  
Performing  
Arts

# Theatre in Korea

# CONTENTS

## I. History of Korean Theatre

1) Overview of Contemporary Korean Theatre	6
2) Perspective of Korean Theatre in 21st Century	15
3) Speaking to the Global Audience: Korean Theatre Abroad	24

## II. Korean Directors

1) OH Tae-suk	32
2) LEE Yoon-taek	36
3) SON Jin-chaek	39
4) HAN Tae-sook	41
5) PARK Keun-hyung	44
6) Korean Realism I	47
a. <i>Waiting for Godot</i> directed by LIM Young-woong	48
b. <i>King Lear</i> directed by LEE Byung-hoon	48
c. <i>Pig Hunting</i> directed by LEE Sang-woo	49
d. <i>The Lady in No. 405 Is So Kind</i> directed by PARK Sang-hyeon	50
7) Korean Realism II: Directors Belonging to 386 Generation	
a. Pleasant Watch of Indifferent Realist: Director LEE Sung-yeol	51
b. From Co-Producing to Hyper Realism: Director CHOI Yong-hoon	52
c. Meeting of Realness and Abstractness: Director KIM Gwang-bo	53
d. Poetic Realist: Director KIM Dong-hyun	53
e. Meeting of Fantasy and Reality: Director KOH Sun-woong	53
8) Avant-Garde Directors in Korea I	54
a. <i>Woyzeck</i> directed by IM Do-wan	54
b. <i>Two Medea</i> Directed by IM Hyeong-taek	55
c. <i>The Secret Police</i> directed by KANG Ryang-won	56
d. <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> directed by YANG Jeong-woong	56
9) Avant-Garde Directors in Korea II	58
a. Theatrical Language of Death as Metonymy of History of Violence: CHAI Seung-hoon	58
b. Aesthetic Avant-Garde Seeking Source of Existence: KIM Ara	58
c. Aesthetic Rendezvous of Sensuous Images and Conceptual Thinking: PARK Jeong-hee	59
d. Experiment for Discovery and Creation of Theatricality: KIM Nak-hyung	60

# I. History of Korean Theatre

<b>10) Avant-Garde Directors in Korea III: New Avant-Garde Generation</b>	<b>61</b>
a. Merger of Image, Drawing and Performance: LEE Cheol-sung	<b>61</b>
b. Uncanny Struggle between Body and Material: JEONG Geum-hyung	<b>62</b>
c. Pure Time and Space: GANG Hwa-jeong	<b>62</b>
d. Cooperation with Asian Artists: WON Young-oh and Theater Nettle	<b>63</b>
<b>11) Modernization of Traditions</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>12) Leading Korean Directors in New Millennium</b>	<b>68</b>

## III. Korean Playwrights

<b>1) YOON Dai-sung</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>2) OH Tae-young</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>3) YOON Yeong-seon</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4) Major Contemporary Writers</b>	<b>80</b>
a. LEE Kang-baek's <i>Spring Day</i>	<b>80</b>
b. <i>The Burden</i> by JEONG Bok-geun	<b>81</b>
c. <i>Moon House</i> by ROH Kyung-shik	<b>81</b>
d. <i>Assault on Cleaner's "Oasis"</i> by KIM Jeong-sook	<b>82</b>
e. <i>Dream in a Dream</i> by JANG Sung-hee	<b>82</b>
f. <i>The First Anniversary</i> by KIM Myung-hwa	<b>82</b>
g. <i>Give Sunlight to the Haunted House</i> by LEE Hae-jae	<b>83</b>
h. <i>Resident Parking Only</i> by SUN Uk-hyeon	<b>83</b>
i. <i>Grief Or</i> by KIM Han-gill	<b>83</b>
<b>5) Noticeable Korean Playwrights of Next Generation</b>	<b>84</b>
a. KIM Tae-woong: Exploration of How Society and Arts Interchange Through Yi	<b>84</b>
b. BAE Sam-shik: Well-Organized Structure built through Adaptation and Creation	<b>84</b>
c. CHA Geun-ho: Exploration of Human Existence and Desire Through Reinterpretation of Historic Figures	<b>85</b>
d. KOH Sun-woong: Dramaturgy Filled with Thick Satire and Wit	<b>86</b>
e. HONG Won-ki: New Interpretation and Exploration of History and Canon	<b>86</b>

## IV. Directory

<b>1) Major Art Centers</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>2) Local Art Centers</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>3) Theater Festivals</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4) Organizations and Entities Associated with Theatre</b>	<b>103</b>

# 1

## Overview of Contemporary Korean Theatre: Its Aesthetic Tradition and Innovation

Today, theatrical performance is conceived not as a comprehensive outcome of drama text or synthetic arts, but as an independent structure retaining its own features. This characteristic implies that theatre is a form of reasoning and a cultural phenomenon as well as an artistic form of a certain culture. A specific form of theatre of an age or a community is shaped in close relationship with the contemporary society and culture. In this context, it is meaningful to explore how ideologies and ideas of an era influenced formation of the theatre of the time, and which cultural circumstances made it possible.

In the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Korea began opening itself to the Western culture, Korean intellectuals and artists paid attention to the traditional Western concept of theatre. In other words, what they heeded were well-organized fine scripts, on-stage performance honed through practice, and harmonious orchestration by directors. Their interest was largely motivated by social and cultural factors. The discourse-centered theatre dominated by logos felt like a must for them to arouse critical thinking and national identity among the Korean people. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century shift of paradigm led to coinage of a term “new-theatre,” which connotes severance from the performance-oriented form (i.e. old theatre) of the past. Herein, we will review the changes that Korean theatre had undergone in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the entire Western history of theatre. Through the exploration, I would like to shed light on the aesthetic traditions of the Korean performing arts; and on what forms the traditions have taken and what innovative process it is undergoing.

### a. History of Theatre as Part of History of Perception

#### Paradigm Shift of Western Theatre in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Re-theatricalisation of Theatre

As well known, mechanisms of influence simultaneously sprang out across European and Asian countries by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a phenomenon that is meaningful in terms of today’s intercultural theatre. In the West, innovative efforts were led under the slogan “re-theatricalisation of theatre,” while, in Asia, demand arose for dramas depicting real lives.

In Europe, psychologization began to lead the trend from the early days ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois theatre. It focused on acting through which the audience mistook the characters for real figures. The focus drew attention to fictitious characters and internal communication. In the process, theatrical mechanisms, such as the “fourth wall” and psychological realism in acting, were employed to boost the effects of theatricalisation. Through the mechanisms, audience took the role of a passive receiver like voyeur.

With the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, avant-garde practitioners led the ‘Theatre Reform Movement.’ They set forth their goals in reflection of their views of the world, ideologies and aesthetic positions. Based on the goals, they conceived their own unique strategies to achieve them. In some cases, their effect strategies shared common denominators. The shared thoughts were summed up as change of the “space” concept in the proscenium arch and as change of the way of using theatrical signs. As a result, the proscenium arch, which had dominated theatre since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was no longer favored, and neither were the facilities where special sections and the arch were included. In addition, ‘watching’ and ‘listening’ to theatre disappeared. Furthermore, actors performing an avant-garde theatre practiced actions and gestures borrowed from totally unknown contexts, or executed on stage completely mechanical and abstract moves.<sup>1</sup>

Under the new trend, actors reproduced gestures and moves from the ordinary lives of audiences, a feature that distinguished it from bourgeois drama in which audiences easily identified them with themselves, and interpreted performance. Until that time, the bodies of actors represented signs associated with the mental states of characters. The signs now were indefinitely producible for artificial objects, characters and relationships. Such unlimited, undirected moves of actors on stage called upon audiences for active and creative attitudes. This type of directing shifted the focus from the traditional passive approach to a new active, creative one.

The trials by the theatrical avant-gardists were for the European audiences who wallowed in the social pathologies of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, they aimed at ultimately turning into new humans the audiences of the age faced with cultural crisis arising out of rationalism, capitalism, individualism and logocentrism. The avant-garde

<sup>1</sup> In this context, Meyerhold and Artaud are good examples. Taking the biomechanics approach, the former used actors’ bodies as the materials for artificial symbolization, while, influenced by Balinese dance, the latter treated human bodies as living pictograms to have theatre directly work on the unconscious area of the audience.

activists, however, faced a dramatic turnaround and oppression in the early 1930s when Europe was engulfed in fascism and Stalinism. Neo-avant-garde followers later revived their thoughts in the 1960s.

The historic avant-garde theatre and the neo-avant-garde theatre shared the following in common: departure from the literary scripts that manipulated semantic production in the course of directing and performance; various perception trials by putting emphasis on materialistic nature that had been overshadowed by the semantic symbols of the text, body, performance itself and performativity; and, thereby, rise of the status of audiences as co-producer or co-creator. Indeed in this context, the history of performance does not differ much from that of perception.

### Aesthetic Traditions of Korean Theatre and Paradigm Shift in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

#### Literaturization and Psychologization of Theatre

During the past century, Western theatre had watched its focus shifted from language-oriented discursive dramaturgy to de-textualized, non-linguistic theatricality and performativity, along with shift of the dominant paradigm. For the same period, Asian theatre including that of Korea underwent the changes in the reverse order. In other words, European theatrical activists tried moving audiences from the status of passive customer to that of active subject in order to overcome 'the cultural crisis.' As part of that effort, it was attempted to expend the performing space and to diversify the nonlinguistic theatrical signs for facilitation of external communication. On the other hand, the reformists in Asian countries such as China, Japan and Korea adopted the modern Western drama to spread the idea of individual, to introduce rationalism, and to push for speedy modernization. In this respect, the intercultural trend in theatre is deemed to have contributed, both in the West and the East, to aesthetic and theatrical advance as well as to social and cultural improvement.<sup>2</sup>

Then, what were the dominant features of the Korean performing art (i.e. theatre) prior to introduction of the Western modern drama? According to KIM Ik-doo, "Korean theatre is a set of acts to fend off 'evil things,' to restore 'happy willingness,' and to represent desired aspects of life in an orderly pattern of acts while having fun." He sums

2 Please refer to Erika Fischer-Lichte, *DAS EIGENE UND DAS FREMDE THEATER*, (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 1999), p. 16; SHIN Hyeon-sook, "Theatre and Cultural Reciprocity," *PERFORMANCE AND THEORY*, 3 (2000), pp. 29-34; Hyeon-Sook Shin, *READING STAGE OF CONTEMPORARY KOREAN THEATRE* (Seoul: Theatre and Human, 2002), pp. 171-184.

it up as a 'performance full of liveliness' pursuing dynamics of life, rather than pursuing mimesis.<sup>3</sup> In the meanwhile, theologist Daniel A. Kister pays attention to *Gut*, or shamanistic dancing ritual. He believes that the ritual underlies the people's culture in Korea, through which continuity of life is pursued in harmony and agreement through play and fun. He further asserts that, like *Gut*, the Confucian rituals also pursue the idea of harmony.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the pre-modern theatrical performances of China, Japan and Korea constituted a mixed genre of religious ritual, court or folk music and dance, making it hard to set borders among the disciplines. On this point, the Eastern classical theatre differs from the European classical drama that started, centered around play, from 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. European theatre developed on the soil of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the oldest and first dramaturgy. Music and its relevant theories helped East Asian theatre advance.<sup>5</sup> According to SUH Yon-ho, the term "theatre" started to sporadically show up in the literature from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. But it began to be perceived as an independent art discipline from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Before that time, it was called 'banquet' among intellectuals and 'play' among the general public. Thus, people seem to have used the term in its broad sense to refer to performing arts or traditional plays. From this fact, it follows that division of art disciplines was slow, spreading over several centuries. Major turning points came in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A royal theater *Hyeopyulsa* was founded in 1902, accommodating the traditional plays into an indoor space. *Pansori*, the traditional Korean musical performance, gives a good example, which underwent a process of taking on a form of the modern musical. In the early phase of Korea's acceptance of the Western culture and civilization, the shift of recognition of theatre and drama of that time was motivated by the understanding that they were good for improvement of the public's lifestyle, enlightenment of them, and provision of lessons of social values (e.g. patriotism, righteousness, etc.). *Pansori* got criticized for its insufficient capability for enlightenment of the public. In the process, the demand arose for a new way of writing. The awareness

3 KIM Ik-doo, "A preliminary study for the theoretical establishment of Korean drama and theatre," *STUDIES OF KOREAN DRAMA AND THEATRE* 15(2002), p. 18.

4 Daniel A. Kister, *DRAMA OF LIFE: A STUDY ON RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION OF GUT* (Seoul: Seogam University Press, 1997), p. 174.

5 CHUNG Won-si, *Das koreanische Theater*, Heinz Kindermann (Hrsg.), *Fernöstliches Theater*, Stuttgart 1966, pp. 381-390.

6 SUH Yeon-ho, *HISTORY OF MODERN KOREAN DRAMA* (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1996), p. 33.

and desire for new theatre and drama sparked off imitation of the Japanese new drama (*Shingeki or Shinpa*), and called for renovation of the traditional Korean performing arts. Consequently, new theatre (*Shingeuik*), or the modern musical drama (*Changgeuik*) movement, was born into the world.<sup>7</sup> The space for birth of the modern Korean theatre demanded advent of discursive drama, which led to appearance of a new drama with a new paradigm different from the previous one.

Then, what changes did Korean theatre undergo upon advent of modern drama? The term “theatricality” sums up the changes. As a result, performativity became weaker, while semiosis rose to attention. This new phenomenon ran afoul of the reformative direction of avant-garde activists in Western theatre, who sought to restore independence and autonomy of theatre. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century shift of the Korean theatre’s paradigm stood out, as to be explained below, especially in terms of playwright (i.e. language), audience (i.e. perception) and actor (i.e. body):

First, as discursive dramaturgie emerged, the center of theatre began to be filled with contents of linear linguistic text, topic and writer’s view of world, replacing aesthetic qualities unique to performing arts such as materiality, presence, performativity, intensity, breathing, liveliness and improvisation. In short, the genre of drama emerged, which entailed existence of scripts. Once it was overlooked that drama as literary discipline and theatre as performing arts have their own aesthetic attributes, theatre became subject to literature. This phenomenon stemmed from Western philosophers and aestheticians, who focusing on fixed art works, disparaged performing arts and put them outside the boundaries of fine arts, due to the transitional nature and mobility of the former.

Second, by focusing on representation of scripts and conveyance of meaning, the performative qualities of theatre as a performing art got shrunk. What makes a performing art aesthetically distinct lies in its path to recognition: via perception by the audience. Audiences perceive various components of a performance existing within a venue, prior to recognizing and understanding the intentions and messages of writers or directors. Included within the scope of components are not only the speeches of actors, but also body, movement, gesture, music, lighting, objects, and even reactions between the people sitting next to each other. If a person fails to understand a performance at the level of recognition, it does not mean that there has been no experience at all. As hard as it may be to understand, it is some perceptive phenomenon arousing intense experiences that are performative in nature and, therefore, is the attribute of aesthetic experience provided by theatre. Restoration and recognition of performativity that emphasizes the

characteristics of performing arts got later revitalized: ‘The process’ of a performance is what constitutes its ‘content.’ In the 1980s, for example, various efforts were waged, in the name of restoration and modernization of traditional Korean performing arts, to present them in diverse forms.<sup>7</sup>

Third, ancient Greek theatre functioned as the basic model of theatre of the letter-oriented culture. Theatrical representation takes its model from the structure of the semantic operation that letter-centered theatre has. In other words, it is pursued to imitate nonexistent realities through various signs. Under this scheme of representation, autonomy and independence of theatre are not guaranteed as long as body fails to stop functioning as natural symbols for expression of characters; namely, as long as language and body fail to be de-symbolized.

Korean theatre took the effects of ‘literary theatre’ in 20<sup>th</sup> century through Japan. In the process, Korean theatre unfortunately drifted away from the utopia of original theatricality and performativity, the goals that Western society, during the same period, tried to approach through retheatricalisation.

## **b. Topography and Aesthetic Reform of Korean Theatre Since 1990s**

From the late 1960s, a new movement emerged in Korea by the young theatrical practitioners who learned and experienced Western culture and theatre. They tried to merge the traditional forms of Korean theatre (e.g. masque dance, Pansori, puppetry, etc.) with the Western theatrical grammar. When performing adapted or translated Western pieces, strong attempts were made to reconstruct them within the frame of the traditional structural principles of Korean theatre (e.g. nonlinguistic communication and stress on aesthetic gap) and the Gestus acting style. Examples are the works by KIM Jung-ok and the theatre company Jayu (Freedom), and by Donglang Repertory led by YOO Deok-hyung, AHN Min-soo, and OH Tae-suk. Since the 1990s, this trend of intercultural experiments has been gaining momentum in and outside Korea, as pluralism, multiculturalism, globalization and localization accelerate.

Then, how can Korean theatre since the 1990s be mapped onto topography?

<sup>7</sup> SUH Yeon-ho & LEE Sang-woo, *100 YEARS OF KOREAN THEATRE* (Seoul: Hyunamsa, 2000), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> LEE Hyuk-bal & KoPas eds., *KOREAN PERFORMING ARTS: INSANE GESTURE BURNS WITH SOUL* (Seoul: daVinci Gift, 2005).

While the previous history of performing arts is being reviewed through the post-modernistic spectrum, the contemporary theatrical society tries to shed a new light on the theatrical concepts and theories. Specifically, in the 1970s, the 'performative turn' occurred out of the recognition that culture stems from human behavior that constitutes reality. Before the 1970s, theatre was completed and understood on the basis of scripts. Upon its advent, however, theatre stopped speaking in the language of dialectical synthesis. Post-dramatic theatre, which means 'departure from dramatic theatre,' stimulates audiences in a variety of ways, and expands their senses and harasses their perception. Starting in the 1960s, along with performance art, the ethos of postdramatic theatre is still in the process of developing in Korea in the following forms of intercultural theatre: director's theatre, body-centered theatre, mediatized theatre and theatre of everyday life.

The following are the examples of director's theatre that is built upon deconstruction of Western pieces: KIM Ara's *Oedipus Travel*, HAN Tae-sook's *Lady Macbeth*, IM Do-wan's *Woyzeck*. All of the directors endeavored to reinterpret the Western canon and simultaneously to develop stage language. Furthermore, rather than sticking to the referential stage language of representational theatre, all of them aggressively tried to develop nonlinguistic means of expression. De-canonization and modernization of the classic starts with emergence of the 'performance texts' as writing for the stage where 'presentation' and 'execution' occur.

Under director's theatre, which is de-literary and de-authoritative in nature, directors freely depict changed cognitive conventions. It becomes an ideal model of experimental stage works intended to restore the characteristics of a mechanism unique to theatre. This feature became more outstanding, as intercultural theatre was in vogue. Experiments with forms of theatre serve as a vehicle to get closer to audiences, with the aid of the canon, which contain the general values of the human race. Performance, on the other hand, serves as a venue for rendezvous of Western and Eastern cultures. These dispositions are verifiable through LEE Yoon-taek's *Hamlet*, OH Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet*, YANG Jeong-woong's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, SON Jin-chaek's *King Lear*, and LEE Ja-ram's *Sacheon-ga*. It becomes possible to secure polyphony and intertextuality in performance, and to undergo phenomenal and performative experiences on top of semiotic meanings by carrying out a series of efforts to reconstruct or instill three-dimensional effects into bodies and movements, images and symbols, figures and objects, sound and light. Director's theatre and intercultural theatre, which are to find out the contemporary timeliness and new stage language, result from theatrical reflection to

get closer to the essences of theatre.

Physical theatre dismantles and reconstructs the dramatic theatre in a new form. Few domestic works belong to this category, however. IM Do-wan's *Woyzeck* are one of those few examples of the category, along with KIM Gwang-bo's *Scorching Sun*, SEO Jae-hyung's *Die-hard Run*. Some efforts have been made to merge moves with theatrical expression and depiction, as exemplified by crossover works such as Pina Bausch's 'Tanztheater' type. In Korea, the dance community hailed JUNG Young-doo's *A Seventh Man*. The move, however, has got stalled due to the high barriers between two genres. In addition, digital new media are actively being incorporated in theatre, and, thereby, it is being pursued to experiment, on stage, intermediality and digital theatricality. Furthermore, SHIM Cheol-jong's *Martian* may be the only example one can think of in connection with mediatized theatre, which could become a revolutionary future of theatre replacing representational theatre performed by actors.

In the meanwhile, as an era of detente and de-ideology marched deep into the 1990s, creation of theatrical works began to focus not on macro narrative, but on daily lives and subjective inner worlds of individuals. The trend was termed "theatre of everyday life," which avoids direct judgment of an event or a phenomenon to be depicted. Instead, it focuses on the glimpses of a reality captured in real life from the subjective viewpoint, and presents them objectively. In this respect, theatre of everyday life is a challenge to and deviation from the traditional writing style. Neither traditional tragedy nor comedy functions any more in this age of postmodernism in which the trust in one's self has turned out to be a false image and hallucination. That is why theatre of today inevitably develops, in the director-dominating forms of deconstructive theatre, body-centered theatre and new media-dependent intermedial theatre, along with hyperrealism and theatre of everyday life. A good example of the wave is *The Scientific Minded 1, 2, 3* directed by SUNG Ki-woong, wherein the writer and the director take a diminished role. In other words, theatre of this age helps audiences formulate their own subjective meanings not through hallucination, but through combination and association by setting up performative acts of actors (i.e. reality of theatrical incidents) close to them. Since theatre of everyday life accommodates this type of theatrical communication process in it, it rises to the level of theatre of consciousness, which arouses thinking and reflection about a self or a life that is different from the existing one (as opposed to the theatre that induces catharsis through representation of trivial life). In other words, under the traditional theatre of realistic representation, audiences got immersed in theatrical hallucination with their hands tied up. On the other hand, theatre of everyday life encompasses the space

occupied by audiences within the boundaries of stage, and helps them recognize and experience the plot development at a close distance. In short, it vibrates the consciousness of the audience.

So far, the contemporary theatrical topography of Korea since 1990 was reviewed from the viewpoint of postmodernism. The contemporary theatrical reality of Korea is dominated by dramatic theatre; namely, the theatrical mainstream, in the absence of trials for new paths, is mainly dominated by the task of representing and delivering the meanings of scripts. As one may be aware, theatre takes a unique communication system featuring “now and here.” Therefore, whether it is writing or directing, theatre takes up life on stage, only when contemporary audiences catch it with their cognitive net, and it reaches their aesthetic experience. Above all, in this decentralized postmodern era, our theatrical community should pitch in its best to comprehend the spirit and the cultural flow of the time, which influence how contemporaries perceive and understand. Further, efforts should be made to set forth new strategies each time to help communication between audience and stage so that the audience can experience such amazing changes that are based on aesthetic and sympathetic experiences only possible through theatre. Why? Theatre is the art of change and creation.

**KIM Hyung-ki**

*Theatre Critic*  
Professor Dr. phil., Dept. of Theatre & Dance Studies, Soonchunhyang University, Korea  
kimhki@sch.ac.kr

## 2

### <Perspective of Korean Theatre in 21<sup>st</sup> Century> Rise or Fall of New Millennium Theatre: Theatre in Quantitatively Rich Era of Decentralism

#### a. Introduction: Quantitative Abundance of Performing Events in the Absence of Center

Under the paradigm of new millennium theatre, it is not easy to feel the wind of change. Rather, the 1990s watched more diverse experiments and senses being waged. In this new decade, performances are on the extended path of that of the 1990s. It, however, remains focused on remakes of ordinary trivia and the canon. This move may be deemed as some sort of preliminary search, or as an attempt to search for a new direction. In this new millennium, Korean theatre has been expanding in quantity without showing any new directions of theatricality.

The quantitative expansion of performance is what characterizes the contemporary trend in a most outstanding way. The expansion seems to have been propelled by two factors: graduation of theatre majors in large volume since the 1990s, and the enlarged pool of financial supports including that from the lottery fund. This enriched soil leaves much room for future changes. Still, other than the quantitative increase, changes are far from reach. Diverse financial sources keep performances on stage. The theatrical size and experiment, however, keep a low profile, due to the small size of each funding.

Generally, the changes in the background have raised Korean theatre one notch up. Now, it is hard to run into an amateurish performance. All exhibitions maintain a certain level of completeness. Any of them, however, hardly excels. Is some form of qualitative leveling achieved? From the viewpoint of overlooking the entire body of performances, they are similar to each other, and even feel boring. Qualitative leveling of performance may be associated with the absence of center in the postmodern era. No theme or method dominates the theatrical community. One may feel burdensome of the liberty to do anything at one's own will. Lately, the concept of post-dramatic theatre has been imported. But it still sounds like Greek to Koreans.

How could theatre be characterized in the age of quantitative expansion, qualitative leveling and absence of center? In some sense, no characteristics may be a characteristic in itself. Thus, I characterize this age as age of incubation, and, under the topic, explore issues hereunder.

#### **d. “How-Oriented” Theatrical Creation and Re-creation of Canon**

Theatrical works in this new millennium seem focused not on “what to tell,” but on “how they are made.” Interpreting this tendency positively, heightened professionalism led to creation of quality performances. On the other hand, fewer thoughts were made about humanistic aspects and the role of theatre in society. Moreover, as to the matter of “how,” no new paths were taken. Theatrical performances did not deviate much from the compromised form of existing theatrical works. In other words, theatrical entrepreneurship lacked and commercialism penetrated deeper. Recent tendency to run canon-based works attests to this phenomenon. “Less than perfect” directing has indeed raised the horizon of theatrical quality in general. But, it is hard to encounter the works that are born out of sometimes irrationally fierce craftsmanship. Korean theatre has been filled with somewhat quality performances, without challenging spirit and endeavor. Commercialism surely dictates Korean theatre. Form of theatrical creation is expanding on a commercial path in consideration of artfulness to the needs of the public. For example, The Best Plays, Inc., which Dongsung Art Center sponsored in 2004, replayed hits of the past 20 years, and earned good remarks for artfulness and commercialism. The festival was successfully designed for quality public aesthetics by attracting audiences under the slogan of *Best of 20 Years* and by directing works in a sophisticated but moderate way. For these reasons, ‘spin-offs’ of the festival continue to date.

The stress of “how” seems deeply related to the fact that more and more theatre majors have been produced. They learn theatrical techniques in college. As a result, acting has got better, directing has reached a certain level of qualification, and stage design has improved. Flooded under the tides of techniques, humanistic culture sinks deep, leaving little for its cultivation and shifting focus on re-creation of the canon. The re-creation move technically improves the previous works and guarantees a safe commercial return. But the move translates into loss of humanistic value of searching for truth and loss of the courage to try new experiments.

The phenomenon, however, may not seem all that negative. It reflects the sanguine sign that Korean theatre has brushed off amateurism. It represents a step further toward professionalism. What really matters, however, is what is to be done next. Are the foundations for sound theatrical soil being laid down? Some demand application of economics of scale to theatre for true commercialization, and others demand attraction of manias to artful experimental works, while yet others demand creation of immaculate works that reflect artful beliefs and cater to the public taste. None is satisfied in our theatrical community. Here, it is just confirmed that the focus is being shifted to the matter

of “how.” As not fully satisfactory as it may be, the move is hopefully a step toward professionalism.

Considering the events, it is fair to say that the beginning part of the new millennium was dotted with reinterpretation of the canon. The aforementioned focus on “how” naturally led to frequent performances of the canon. Re-interpretation of a Shakespeare work is like a debut for a young director. YANG Jeong-woong’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a leading example in this context. His interpretation incorporated in it the Korean goblin *Toggaebi*, a trial that attracted attention not only domestically, but also internationally. Works by Anton Chekhov followed Shakespeare’s in reproduction, especially in 2004 when his 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary fell on. *The Seagull* in that year, which was played at Seoul Arts Center, was a hit for its expansion of its theatrical boundaries beyond realism. Also important was the fact that the talented people educated in Russia formed a Russian school. They performed the Russian canon on a large scale, and, thereby, showed a form of realism unique to Russia.

On top of it, efforts were made to raise original Korean works to the level of the canon, leading to re-run of hit works of the past. In addition to the works presented by The Best Plays, Inc., works by OH Young-jin, LEE Geun-sam, CHA Bum-seok, OH Tae-suk and HUH Kyu were replayed more and better than any other time. The quality reruns attracted an army of audiences. The replaying tendency carries a positive effect of forming a repertoire of original Korean theatrical pieces, and it is desirable indeed. But the trend seems to be deeply connected to Korean theatre’s emphasis on “how-oriented” performance. What really bothers is the lopsided devotion to “how.” It may be a problem to rerun past hit works without creating new works that reflect contemporary issues. The ample reproduction and representation of the canon seems in lack of innovation during incubation.

#### **e. Materials for Creation of Original Works**

In dovetail with the “how-oriented” phenomenon, it is hard to encounter a creative original work strongly telling us “something.” This situation, in turn, is associated with disappearing of center; namely, without the center that can attract the public, it is difficult to tell something. Possibly due to the trends, the new millennium has seen few original works. The “what” that original works try to tell through representation seems concentrated on mundane daily chores. In fact, this fledging trend was heralded by, for instance, 1990’s works such as WEE Seong-shin’s *Five Kinds of Sketches on Love* and PARK Keun-hyung’s *Chung Chun Yae Chan (Adoration of Adolescent)*. The works in the 1990s, however, did not fall short as being trivial. They were directly connected to the

agony that pierced through people's lives. The works approached people's lives that ever got belittled and fragmented. Recent works, however, stop short as being trivial. A new name "theatre of daily life" was given, and this new breed has become an important branch in the Korean theatrical community.

Another frequented topic is love. This motif is closely associated with theatre of daily life. Indeed, all of young playwrights take up this theme. Some of their works depict the process of discovering ones' selves. But most of them remain pretty by touching on light love, and this is problematic. They do not endeavor to describe how love changes our lives; rather, they finish their works with fairy-tale endings.

On the other hand, historic events emerge as one of the favorite topics. Veteran writers usually tackle this theme. They seem influenced by postmodern absence of center and new historicism. Therefore, individualization or reinterpretation of history is active among them, tending to interpret history not as that of the public, but that of individuals. At the same time, constantly raised is the problem of distortion of history. The problem arises out of the absence of philosophy in interpretation of history. On the other hand, it seems that veteran writers attempt to make up for their loss of the communication points with young audiences by concentrating on historical ideas. In other words, what concerns us is that veteran writers seemingly have become incapable of telling important stories as individual outsider, when the center has been dismantled. Under these circumstances, young playwrights should emerge in a large number. But they are pitching in their best on what is termed cultural content.

Lastly, as alternatives to the age of decentered value, a series of works by young playwrights seek pornography, weirdness, inconsistency and isolation, caricaturization and comedification, and obsession. What draws our attention is the focus on the



*Five Kinds of Sketches on Love*

individualized, fantasized and isolated way of existence. These works of performing arts avoid, through light and pleasant touches, directly raising issues, contrary to the expectations in an age of caricaturization and comedification. A fragmented age is read, which often protrudes from under the bottom. In this disorganized society, the existence of an individual gets isolated and powerless, or resorts to sensory feelings and hallucination. Reality and imagination get mingled without much resistance, resulting in further isolation of individuals. It would be not that difficult to associate with the contemporary feeling of powerlessness the works by KOH Sun-woong, which are famous for use of comics, comedy and harsh tongue. This group of individual works seems to be already pointing to a certain type of ethos of this age. Still fledging and too light, they may be easily passed over. They represent how to read this age and a series of attempts on the methods of existence in an era of caricaturization and comedification.

#### **d. Globalization**

One of the most outstanding features of the new millennium is international exchange. A large number of foreign performances were hosted. Likewise, numerous Korean works were played outside Korea. Of course, the exchanges were one-time events in nature. Still, the movement was a sharp increase from the 1990s. Actually, compared with the 1980s, the following decade watched the ground works of international exchange laid down. For example, the year of 1991 was designated "Year of Film and Theatre" and an ITI conference was hosted in 1997. In short, a mere stream was widened to a small river in the new millennium. Seoul Performing Arts Festival functioned as a detonator for the inflow of overseas works. Under the directorship of KIM Kwang-lim and KIM Cheol-lee, renowned works presented at Avignon Festival in France were intensively played. In addition, other quality European works were also played at various local festivals in Korea such as Uijeongbu Music Theatre Festival and Gwacheon Hanmadang Festival. It is not uncommon to watch a foreign work played at a local festival. And this is the biggest achievement in the new millennium.

Also on the rise is interest in and exchange with Northeastern Asian countries. Especially, exchange with Japan has sharply risen. The interest in modern theatre has been persistent, although it concerns only a handful of playwrights. In addition, a sizable musical company Shiki once tapped on the Korean market, which unfortunately retreated back to Japan. Bridges between Japan and Korea are being solidly built up. At the same time, interest in China has also risen. But the heightened interest has not been materialized much. For now, sporadic invitations of Chinese works and directors are all

we can see. Attention is also being directed at India. Numerous traditional Indian dances are introduced, and modern Indian theatre such as *Procession* (written by Badal Sircar; and translated and directed by HUH Dong-sung) are adapted and played in Korea. Exchange with non-Western countries serves as a vehicle to promote the diversity in Korea. Under this trend, the absence of center will accelerate in the future, introducing a wider variety of works from more countries to Korean audiences.

Also on a sharp rise is the advance of Korean works of performing arts into the global market. Following OH Tae-suk and LEE Yoon-taek who began to tap on overseas markets from the 1990s, LEE Byung-hoon, YOON Yeong-seon, YANG Jeong-woong and NAM Geung-ho led the move. Especially, YANG Jeong-woong won awards at Cairo International Theatre Festival and Shakespeare Theatre Festival in Poland with his presentation of *Karma* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Likewise, NAM Geung-ho won an award, along with one of his students, at French Mime Festival. Now it is no longer strange to watch Korean theatrical works participate in Avignon Festival. In addition, *Nanta* and *Jump* marked themselves in the global commercial theatrical market. These two are nonverbal performances, a merit that helped them easily appeal to foreign audiences. Still, they have their own appealing attractions and specialties.

Drama ultimately requires language as a vehicle of communication. Despite the limitation, globalization is making advance at this very moment. Indeed, postmodernist thinking, which declared the absence of center near the end of the last century, played a huge role. Advance into the Western world is still led by the works reinterpreting Shakespeare's pieces or by nonverbal works. Faced with the global trend of putting at the core not 'representation' but 'performance,' the linguistic limitations are losing the restrictive force day by day.

### e. Modernization of 'Traditions'

Still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it dominates the Korean theatrical community how to modernize the identity and traditions of Korea. Unlike the past when the community led the movement, it is being waged quietly and sporadically. Re-creation of traditions stopped being the issue in the community. Nonetheless, it remains one of the main concerns, and, through it, reinterpretation gets diversified.

Reinterpretation of the canon as Korean tradition has still remained the mainstream. In fact, this approach has been tried over time. Representative Korean works such as LEE Yoon-taek's *Hamlet*, OH Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet*, YANG Jeong-woong's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were reflective of this movement, and this category of

works is likely to continue.

In the meanwhile, people also heeded *Woorinara Uturi* of The Wuturi Playters (written and directed by KIM Kwang-lim), a theatrical company mainly founded by School of Drama of the Korean National University of Arts. The Korean folktale of *Agizangsu* (Child General) was transformed with modern sense, and was successfully revived as a body mainly consisting of dancing moves of a Korean mask dance *Yangju Sandae Nori*. In addition, the traditional orchestra rendezvoused the entire performance with music, a feature that stemmed from the fact that it is impossible to think of Korean mask dance *Talchum* as an art independent from music. What fascinated audiences were faithful but trans-morphed reinterpretation of traditions and skilled performance of individuals. This pursuance of modern standardization of traditional heritages continued into a modern drama of *Chairman Lee's Assassination*.

*Indangsu Blues* (written by PARK Sae-bom and directed by CHOI Seong-shin) set forth another type of endeavor to graft a folktale with another tradition of *Pansori*. The piece utilizes *dochang*, a form of Korean traditional opera, and incorporated puppet show into a body. It earned the public population for its new method of re-creating and accommodating traditions. Adapted and translated into a story of modern Seoul, *The Good Person of Szechwan* by Brecht was sung by Pansori artist LEE Ja-ram. For her performance, Lee won the best actress award in the 2010 Kontakt - International Theatrical Festival in Poland.

Seoul Performing Arts Company has also contributed to opening a new chapter in accommodation of traditions. Aided by its president SHIN Sun-hee, famous traditional pieces like *Cheongsanbyeolgok*, *Morning of Koryo*, and *Moo-Cheon*, *Sanhwaga* were played. *Cheongsanbyeolgok* focuses on traditional audiovisual aspects, while *Morning of Koryo* was named "comprehensive outdoor musical." *Moo-Cheon*, *Sanhwaga* features songs and dances. These works did not represent simple graft with traditions; rather, ambitiously aimed at restoration of the traditional arts. It is too early to determine their success. Nonetheless, they embodied a comprehensive effort to restore traditions. In this context, people paid attention to reinnovation of a traditional musical *King Uru* (written and directed by KIM Myung-gon) and an original *Changguk* (i.e. a traditional musical theatre) *Non Gae* (directed by AHN Sook-sun, who also wrote songs) for their contribution to diversification of the traditional Korean music. As reinnovated traditional Korean musical, *King Uru* was designed for modern and international audiences by combining *King Lear* and epic story *Baridegi*. Although it fell short in terms of harmonious humanistic graft, it opened a new stage for things of Korean fascination and thrill. *Music of peace and Dream of the Dynasty* (2001) also attracted attention for its re-creation of traditions, wherein the National

Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts reproduced the march of King Jeong-jo.

*Country Learned Man, Cho Nam Myung* (written and directed by LEE Yoon-taek) is also meaningful in this respect. It attempts to utilize the noblemen's culture in furtherance of the folk culture. The exhibition drew attention only for the fact that focus was shifted to a new line of traditions instead of staying at the use of the public culture, and it resorted the noble culture without glitches. *Yi* also widened the horizon by heeding the traditions of the royal performing arts (*gyushikjihee*) and the satirical performances (*Sohakjihee*) in the early and middle days of the Chosun Dynasty.

Reinterpretation of the canon through Korean tradition still constitutes an important method of re-creating tradition. It offers a sanguine phenomenon in that traditions are being sought in diverse ways. In addition, a new theme has arisen as to how to instill modernity and globally shared feelings in the process. It seems that the path to discovering traditions in new ways is still far from completion.

### 1. Path to Hybrid Genres and Postmodern Theatre

Upon the dawn of the new millennium, the term "hybrid genre" began to emerge. Based on postmodern concepts such as mixed existence of differences, plurality, metamorphosis and subversion, the convergence of distinct genres like theatre, film, music and dance has become the more natural. Performances are often carried out in the name of hybrid genre, and support for this genre has been rooted. HONG Sung-min and JEONG Geum-hyung are leading the trend, and Festival Bom has contributed to spread of it among the public.

Along with the popularity of hybrid genre, also in high use are terms like site-specific theatre, dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. Overseas performances were put on display under the category of postdramatic theatre, including Rimini Protokoll's *Karl Marx: Capital* and Chris Kondek's *Dead Cat Bounce*. At this year's Theatre Olympics in Seoul, Robert Willson's *Krapp's Last Tape* is to be played. Although adapted and translated, Korean directing and acting crew reproduced Sarah Kane's *4:48*. Few original Korean works have been created as postdrama. Actually, the theatrical theory on postdrama recently began to be introduced.

### 9. Conclusion: Reflection and Perspective

Theatre of new millennium does not seem to be definable by a certain group of characteristics. What is clear is that it is accompanied by quantitative expansion and commercialism. The postmodern world unequivocally highlights aesthetic populism and absence of center. No one seems able to tell for sure that a certain genre of theatre

dominates the theatrical world. Accepting the trend, the theatrical community pursues commercialization. Each performance, however, is dominated by its own theme. Consequently, critics find it hard to raise issues, covering a wide range of works. It still needs to be seen that whether this age serves as a springboard to another era, or whether it is a process of losing the current status to a new genre. It is more concerning, when considering that adjacent genres in the new millennium are aggressively expanding in the name of what is called the Korean fever or the Korean wave.

What is promising through reproduction of the canon is that the level of performance has improved, and original Korean theatrical works have constituted repertoires. In this period, however, efforts were concentrated on the matter of "how," creating few original works. Most works were about description of mundane daily lives or about individualized love affairs, along with sporadic reinterpretation of history. A new sense has been detected among the works that try to read the contemporary age through caricaturization and comedification. Accommodation of Korean traditions has also been waged in diverse ways, with attention especially given to incorporation of the noble culture, to endeavor to create new standards, and to various efforts to restore them. Above all, the most outstanding feature of this new millennium is the expansion of international exchange. Contemporary European works are introduced, and exchange is expanded not only with the West, but also with China and Japan. At the same time, Korean art pieces have successfully tapped on overseas markets, and secured bridges for the future.

Although slowly introduced to our theatrical community, performances of postdrama and hybrid genre point us to new directions. A genuine postdramatic work has not emerged yet. Still, expansion of nonverbal performances and site-specific dramas are being tried. In other words, Aristotelian linear development of plot is being avoided, and attempts are aimed at various symbols and experiences. Consequently, theatre will probably get closer to arguments functioning within culture, and to serve as a system of complex symbols. With the incorporation of media and technology, reality and fiction, and representation and experience, theatre is likely to proceed to multi-dimensional experience. But this breed of performances is not likely to stand on the center, because, as characterized by the postmodern era, various theatrical works will coexist without dominant priority over each other.

LEE Mee-won

Theatre Critic  
Professor at The Korean National University of Arts, Korea  
mwjolee@hotmail.com

# 3

## Speaking to the Global Audience: Korean Theatre Abroad

### a. From Local to Global

Contemporary South Korean theatre and its artists remain relatively unknown to most international theatre critics and scholars despite the fact that Korea has been the moving force behind the development of BESETO (Beijing-Seoul-Tokyo) Theatre Festival, and a Korean is the current president of the International Theatre Critics Association. In addition, quite a number of Korean theatrical artists have won international awards. The lack of discourse about Korean theatre in the international theatre community is attributable to several socio-historical reasons: the history of Korean modern theater is relatively short. Further, it was initiated by Japanese colonialists and interrupted by the Korean War in the early 1950's. In addition, the government's strict censorship was enforced until 1987; it was only the latter part of the 1990s when Korean artists made their way into the international theatre community.

As the number of overseas Korean productions increased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the scope of stage and audience of Korean theatre have grown much more globalized than before. This essay is to introduce theatrical artists and works representative of Korea's advance to the world's stage in the last five years. We will also examine how these artists invent their own ways out of cultural collisions between East and West, traditional and modern theatre forms. Since detailed information about each artist will be provided in the latter part of this book, this essay focuses on the characteristics of Korean productions abroad and their encounter with global audiences.

When does a theatre become 'global'? If doers on the stage and spectators in the auditorium come from a different 'locality,' a theatre becomes global either when the local's distinctive cultural identity gets highlighted by its theatrical background or when the gap between the two localities transcends into a level of universality with the theatre as 'medium.' Confronted by issues arising out of identifying particular relevance to its times, contemporary theatre constantly oscillates between the two choices: localization/differentiation or globalization/universalization. Korean theatre is no exception in this never-ending struggle with cultural frictions and negotiations.

In order to have itself rooted in local specificities, but at the same time equipped with 'universal' grammar that could speak to a larger and global audience, Korean theatre employs largely three aesthetic strategies: 1) interweaving Western classics with Korean theatre forms, 2) staging non-verbal physical theatre that can transcend the language barrier,

and 3) exporting local productions that have strong narrative universality. The encounter between Korean theatre and global audiences takes place mainly in three forms/venues: 1) participating in international theatre festivals, 2) individual companies' overseas tour, and 3) attracting foreign spectators as a part of tourism or by hosting international festivals in Korea

### b. Shakespeare Re-visited:

#### OH Tae-suk, LEE Yoon-taek, YANG Jung-woong

When two local cultures meet and become global, it will be helpful to retain a certain amount of knowledge about the other, along with common experience/ knowledge. For example, Korea and Germany share similar histories as divided countries. This shared experience is probably the force driving the active cultural exchange between them.

With regard to the common knowledge/experience of two different locals, Shakespeare might be one of the most prototypical examples. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that Shakespeare plays a crucial role in terms of intercultural theatre worldwide. In the last decade or so, Korean theater also witnessed sudden popularity for its Shakespearean adaptations, most of which were characterized with a young, free and experimental style. Shakespeare is now revisited and refurbished as a global cultural icon in Korea as he is around the world.

For OH, LEE, and YANG who revisit and refurbish Shakespeare as Korea's contemporary theatre, however, Shakespeare is rather a "ticket" to the global stage, not an ultimate goal. If Brook, Grotowski, and Barba wanted to re-discover the "universal" language of theatre (pre- or post-locality) in the ritualistic form of Asian theatre, these Korean directors share a paradoxical passion for communicating Korea's 'local' language and movement with the rest of the world with this global "passport" named Shakespeare. For them, Shakespeare is an "enabling" text that initiates the communication, but never a 'deciding' one that determines the mode and manners of the encounter.

Since its premier in Korea (1995) *Romeo and Juliet* of OH Tae-suk 's Mokhwa Repertory Company has toured in Europe and Asia for more than 10 years. As expressed on the company's website, Mokhwa has developed its own theatre grammars drawn to abbreviation, unexpected surprise, and improvisation of Korean traditional theatre. Interwoven in Korean and Western traditions, Mokhwa's unique aesthetics of language, movement, and sound is now widely appreciated and praised by world audiences.

German audiences, for example, were impressed by "such a powerful and accurate work with the body" (Renate Heitmann). John Russel Brown, the co-chair of the Bremen Shakespeare Festival in 2001, described Mokhwa's *Romeo and Juliet* as "a show that was

alive for every single moment, told the play's story in striking and subtle images, and, above all, communicated its passions so that they seemed both traditional and contemporary at the same time." Barbican production in London, home of Shakespeare, was also greeted by enthusiastic British audiences who hailed "Master Oh's *Romeo and Juliet*" as "production that cuts the cackle and gets beneath the bedsheets"(reviewsGate.com). "It takes a while to get used to, but becomes mesmerizing, and brings more feeling to the love story than a thousand more 'naturalistic' performances"(Sunday Telegraph 12/3/2006). Ironically many critics evaluated Oh's *Romeo and Juliet* as "modern," and called its more tragic ending with no hint of reconciliation "contemporary."

Street Theatre Troupe led by LEE Yoon-taek also endeavors to reconstruct traditional theatre to create a theatrical format that appeals to contemporaries. For Lee who keeps asking himself how they can go beyond the mere imitation of Western theatre and to achieve the universal form of modern theatre, while performing in traditional Korean theatrical grammar, Koreanization, modernization, and popularization of Shakespeare are not separate; rather, they constitute a single concept. In order to incorporate the contemporaneity and Korean uniqueness, Lee suggests three possible approaches to staging Shakespeare in Korea: 1) interpreting Shakespeare "authentically" or "faithfully," 2) adapting Shakespeare within a framework of Korean theatre traditions, or 3) bringing Shakespeare down to the here-and-now of everyday life. While he lists them as three separate options, his productions are often a combination of all three.

*Hamlet* is the result of such endeavor of Lee who wanted to make Korean theatre reciprocally open to other theatres; not an exclusive one impenetrable by others, but a theatrical work made with universal theatrical symbols that can be communicated to and understood by world audiences despite its tool of Korean tradition. *Hamlet* has toured Russia, Germany, Japan, and Rumania over ten years, receiving audience's passionate reactions and rave reviews.

YANG Jung-woong's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: from the East was named Best production at the Gdansk Shakespeare Festival, Poland, 2006. Critics welcomed this highly visual and physical theatrical production. For example, a British review read, "This Shakespeare from the East transports you to a world of unforgettable fantasy through dance, movement, voice, and percussion." In addition, a Colombian critic stated, "This Korean company breaks language and cultural barriers."

Yang's company Yohangza (Travelers) was founded in 1997. From the very beginning they aspired to meet various audiences worldwide traveling all the corners of the globe. Like Oh and Lee, Yang developed their own style based on Korean traditional

elements after long and continuous training. On its website, the company defines itself as "an exciting collision of past and present reworking of existing Korean styles and themes infused with contemporary elements." Yang blends language with theatrical components such as dance and music, and always combines them with Korean mis-en-scene and aesthetic forms. Yang believes that "tradition in itself doesn't mean anything. Only when traditional theatrical elements collide with the contemporary, tradition finally becomes meaningful." (From the interview with Mary Brennan) The company has been invited to various Shakespeare festivals and world arts centers in Australia, Cuba, Germany, Poland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei and the UK. Their international success is considered to set a benchmark for other Asian theatre groups that are pursuing world recognition while maintaining cultural heritage.

### **C. Experimenting with World Classics: LIM Hyung-taek, IM Do-wan**

LIM Hyung-taek's *Medea and Its Double*, which won the Best director award at the 2007 Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre, has toured to Russia (2009), India (2009), Chile (2009), New York(2010), and Rumania (2010). Daily News of Egypt wrote, "Director LIM Hyung-taek brilliantly succeeds in making Korean culture the perfect home for Greek tragedy. The sheer power of an inventive theater director's singular vision can transcend any barrier chained to the world's oldest form of entertainment." Lim radically re-interpreted this world classic by splitting the title character into two Medeas onstage—one dubbed "Medea as mother" and the other as "Medea as lover." Lim also has stripped Euripides's script down to a few lines, distilling the essence of plot and emotion. Even though all the lines were spoken in Korean without subtitles, it was not that difficult for the foreign audience to follow, thanks to Lim's techniques of "physical contact" which infused Bogart's and Grotowski's works with traditional Korean performance such as mask dance, martial arts, and Korea's traditional one-person opera called *Pansori*.

Sadari Movement Laboratory's *Woyzeck* is exceptional, because unlike other directors mentioned so far, director IM Do-wan consciously excluded any techniques—even traces—of Korean traditional theatre. Light on dialogue, rich in high-powered movement and powerful visual images, Im's *Woyzeck* testifies how a Korean theatrical work can be so progressive, contemporary, and global without resorting to traditional techniques such as martial arts, *Pansori*, and *Gut*. Im staged Buchner's unfinished play solely with movement, sound, and eleven chairs (the only props on the stage), but critics responded to *Woyzeck* with excitement and enthusiasm, calling it "a fascinating adventure in physical theatre, a welcome glimpse of something other than the martial

arts spectaculars that we've seen" (The Herald 08/07/2007) Being praised as "one of the finest on the Fringe (Edinburgh)" and "a little less than perfect," Sadari's *Woyzeck* has toured Switzerland (2005), Poland (2007), Japan (2007), Edinburgh (2007, Herald Angel Award), London (2008, International Mime Festival), Taipei (2008), Moscow (2008), New York (2009, Public Theatre), Singapore (2009), Australia (2009), and Georgia (2009).

#### d. Non-verbal Physical Theatre:

##### *The Angel and the Woodcutter, Jump*

Company Cho-In's *The Angel and the Woodcutter* and Yegam Theatre Company's *Jump* are examples of non-verbal physical theatre intended for global spectators from the very conception. Blending traditional and contemporary physical styles therein, *The Angel and the Woodcutter* (directed by PARK Chung-euy) aims to bring audiences together to share universal human traits beyond different nationality, race, or culture. The use of objects, puppetry, masks, music and movement creates an innovative fusion of narrative means which enhance the emotional engagement of the spectators. It was received as "a triumph of communication that transcends language and strikes a real chord with the audience" (the Guardian 8/22/2009). Their sensory collage of music and movement blended in both traditional and contemporary Korean and Western forms, manifests universal themes of compassion and hope. *The Angel and the Woodcutter* toured Avignon (2007, 2008), Edinburgh (2008), London (2009), San Francisco (2009), Italy (2009), and Ireland (2009).

Yegam Theatre's "nonverbal comic martial arts performance" *Jump* has successfully completed one-year run on off-Broadway in 2007; it was performed at London's West End every year from 2006 to 2009 consecutively; it won the 'box office No. 1 award' and 'comedy award' respectively in 2005 and 2006; in 2006 it was featured in BBC's the Royal Variety Show sponsored by the Royal Family. Dance critic Libby Costello, dubbing *Jump* as "a modern masterpiece, a celebration of kitsch, a homage to carry on," hailed it as "a happy marriage of Eastern art and Western Humor" (londondance.com 11/02/2009). As a "choreographed narrative," *Jump* blended Asian traditions with modern cinematic style like freeze frames, rewinds, fast-forwards. Despite the obvious physicality of its martial arts format, British critics discerned that the real driving force of *Jump* is not the martial arts itself but the show's successful characterization. *Jump* and its postmodern spectacle in which traditional Korean performance forms were liberally mixed with global popular culture became a global family entertainment that could appeal to all types of audiences regardless of nation and age.

#### e. Towards a 'New' Universality

All the directors introduced in this essay share a common passion: the search for what is both contemporary and truly Korean theatre. What is truly Korean then? As for those directors, it is not something given or destined, but something they need to keep imagining, working on, and making in and with the world. In that sense, unlike multicultural theatre that simply displays diverse cultures side by side, their work aspires to be 'intercultural' theatre that does 'interweave' different cultures, without being too obsessed with the notion of cultural 'authenticity' or 'originality'. They neither adhere slavishly to native heritage, nor simply display various eclectic styles. Critics worldwide now witness one of the most exciting experimental theatrical works arising out of Korea today. These works playfully mingle in both traditional forms and postmodern popular cultural forms, and critics around the world label them as post-dramatic, non-dramatic and hybrid theatre.

Scholars armed with postcolonialism often criticize intercultural artists – Euro-American directors as "cultural imperialists" and Korean/Asian directors as conformists catering to the Western taste for Orientalism. Yet, as the world rapidly becomes 'trans-cultural,' intercultural appropriations create dynamic cultural 'friction' (even 'loss' of the tradition) that could be opened to a more liberating and expanding space where we can imagine 'new' identities. This interweaving process itself showcases paradigms with which to explore and invent new ways of being or becoming in this age of globalization. If "All the world's a stage" and vice versa, the stage that recontextualizes the global and the local not only predicts but also formulates the world to come.

Theatre today is already global whether we are aware of it or not because the locality itself is the outcome of long, steady, ceaseless process of global encounters and interactions. The global is blended within the local and the local is interwoven within the global. In other words, theatres are global from the very beginning, and that makes the reverse of Shakespeare's line also true: All the stage's the world! We in and near theatre share belief that despite external differences, human beings do have things in common that can be expressed and shared in and through theatre. After seeing OH Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet*, a German critic confessed, "Despite of the geographical and linguistic distance, I felt so close to them aesthetically." The closeness he felt did not come from a repetition of the same old familiar universality. It was rather an expansion to a "new universality," which can be only obtained by responding to the Other's aesthetics with heart.

**CHOI Sung-hee**

*Theatre Critic / Associate professor at Kyung Hee University, Korea  
shchoi@khu.ac.kr*

## II. Korean Directors

# 1

## OH Tae-suk: Playwright & Director

Born in 1940 in Chungcheongnam-do Province, OH Tae-suk graduated from Yonsei University as a philosophy major. His *Wedding Dress* won an award at the Spring Literary Contest hosted by The Chosun Ilbo. Then in 1967, he presented *The Change of Seasons* at the National Theater of Korea. After that, he performed *Queen and Weird Monk*, *Dear Judas! Before Cock Crows*, *Stroller on the Overpass*, and *Hay Fever* in 1969; *Kyohaeng*, *Roller skating roly ploy and Breeding* in 1970; *Transplant Operation* and *The Birman Wood* in 1971; and, *The Grass Tomb* in 1972. He awakened Korean theatre and brought in a new wind in the 1970s with his amazing ideas and original, experimental works.

A turning point in his playwright career came with the performance of *The Grass Tomb* in 1972. Amidst the sensational shock, the work won an award from The Hankook Ilbo. After it was played in 1974 in New York, it was rerun in Korea. *The Grass Tomb* was praised for its tight structure of symbols, ritual components and body language, and maximization of imagery. More surprisingly, the sensation brought about by *The Grass Tomb* was replaced by another work *Tae* in 1974. The new play caused a tornado of rebellion in the Korean theatrical community. Success of *Tae* was attributable to the following three factors: incorporating the surface structure of the distressing death of Danjong in the underlying structure of eternal questions of the mankind, or death and life; accelerating the dramatic tempo by putting emphasis on bold omission and poetic density, rather than concentrating on the traditional pattern of concentrating on explanatory lines; and inducing shocking visual effects through dynamic and rhythmical moves of the body.

After the two, Oh continued creating works such as *Water Spray* (1978), *Sachugi* (1979, winning the 1<sup>st</sup> Seoul Drama Critic Group's Best Drama Award), *May 1980* (1980), *Corni Fructus* (1980, winning the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seoul Drama Group's Best Drama Award), *Hanmanseon* (1982), *Mother* (1983), *The Bicycle* (1983), *Africa* (1984), *Dream of a humble Woman* (1985), *Affection between Father and Son* (1987, winning the grand prize at Seoul Theater Festival), *Saebul* (1988), *WoonSangGak* (1990), *Why Did Simcheong Throw Herself into Indangsu Twice* (1990, grand prize at Donga Theater Awards), and *Baegu! Don't Jump Up* (1991, KIM Soo-geun Cultural Leadership Awards).

Especially, based on rancor, *Water Spray* looks deep into the original anxiety and feat of the human beings. It is a drama that cunningly combines shamanism and the life



OH Tae-suk's *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet



of a fisherman in the form of a ritual. In short, *Water Spray* is a symbolic drama that allows factual details of the world to communicate through light and sound, and is in line with his later works such as *Affection between Father and Son*, *Why Did Simcheong Throw Herself into Indangsu Twice*, and *Baengmagang Dalbame*. Taking the Korean War as its settings, *Corni Fructus* reveals Oh's critical view on social matters, and is associated with *Bicycle* and *My Love DMZ*. On the other hand, a multi-tiered experimental drama, *Hanmanseon* introduces therein visual objects in rebellion against theatre of realism. It is a shocking drama exuding clues about his artistic tendency in the latter part of his career, as exemplified *Romeo and Juliet*.

Critic SHIN Hyon-sook accurately defines the essence of the theatrical world of OH Tae-suk, saying,

“Mr. Oh does not follow the grammar of Western theater. He expresses the unique way of Koreans' thinking, the sources of that thinking, and the power of life erupting out of the bottom of history, in use of traditional plays and performing arts. His drama is a playground where consciousness and unconsciousness, reality and dream, life and death, and humor and cruelty mingle with each other. Some times he discloses the basic world or desire holing up deep in the inside of a human, or other times he unearths the inner side of history. Thus, he let audiences look back on themselves and their community, and their wrongdoings.”

When everyone thought about domestic activities, Oh began to tap on overseas markets, and thereby has contributed to international theatrical exchange. Starting the 1995 Germany show, he has been touring since 2000 many foreign countries including

Great Britain, India, Japan and China. The results of his frontierism are appreciable through the critics' comments on the London performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Luke Jennings said, “At the Barbican, meanwhile, the Korean company Mokwha are showing their dance-theatre version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Set in a village, and featuring traditional dance and stylized, slow-motion swordplay, it's an engaging take on Shakespeare. The scale of the piece is small but the tragedy is genuine.” (The Observer, Nov. 26, 2006)

Most accurately, Kieron Quirke defined, “The company mixes the ritualistic and experimental. Passages of text are decorated with colorful Korean dance and surreal theatricality.” (Evening Standard, Nov. 27)

Rivka Jacobson encouraged Oh during his comments, saying, “The courtyard on stage is clearly not Verona; we are in South Korea or thereabouts. Blue and white lanterns adorn the courtyard's wooden colonnade. Director Master Oh's *Romeo and Juliet* emphasizes the lovers' youth, humor, mischievous smile, the twinkle in her eyes together with her overall demeanour, ignite a believable flame of teenage whole self-absorbed sweet love. Master Oh's production is energetic, imaginative and provides a moving, yet enjoyable evening at the theatre.” (The British Theatre Guide, Nov. 28, 2006)

The Internet edition of The Times also jumped on the praising wagon. “These are the crowning moments of this free interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy, presented by Korea's Mokhwa Repertory Company and the revered playwright and director OH Tae-suk.” (The Times on Line Nov. 29, 2006)

Consistently exploring topics like “modernization of traditional Korean arts” and “Korea's accommodation of Western theater,” Oh has led the Korean theatrical community in experiment of various theatrical techniques of expression. He also has a colorful spectrum of careers as playwright, director, CEO of Mokwha Repertory Company, art director of The National Theater of Korea, and a college professor. His career and achievements are demonstrated with the numerous prizes he has won from, for example, KIM Soo-geun Cultural Leadership Awards, PaekSang Arts Awards, Donga Theater Awards, Daesan Literary Awards, and Ho-Am Prize, just to name a few.

LEE Tae-Ju

Theatre Critic

Guest Professor, Dong-Ah Institute of Media and Arts, Korea

# 2

## Discussion on LEE Yoon-taek: Theatrical Labyrinth or Breakthrough

### a. LEE Yoon-taek and Korean Theatre

In 2010, the space created by LEE Yoon-taek (1952-) for making theatrical pieces is big, but too big in the Korean theatrical community. Herein, the meaning of “big” connotes his influence, which solely belongs to his capacity. On the other hand, “too big” implies that the roles and capacities of other individuals are relatively small in comparison with those of Lee in the theatrical magnetic field. Starting in a small theater in Busan that is on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, he advanced to Seoul, the capital of Korea in 1989. Since then, he has built up so many amazing achievements: running of theatrical organizations such as Guerrilla Theater and Milan Theater Village, creation and operation of diverse works including adapted foreign pieces. For the past 20 years, he has created 16 plays, adapted 15 works, and re-created 4. But he does not know of stopping. In addition, he has also written books such as poems and essays. Defining life as “Every day [he] breathe[s] is a festival,” he is now sitting on the forefront of the festival.

He further defines performance as “memory in time and the secret memory.” Looking deep into the numerous works he has done, it follows that his successful theatrical footprint has trailed from literature. In other words, he bound out theatre as a form and a great book. This book throws a broad landscape in which the world is transformed as a word and a performance, and is melted. That is how people define Lee’s artistic world and achievements. At the same time, it is what he speaks through theatre. It is seldom, however, asked what he has not spoken. To understand his world as well as Lee himself, it is necessary to what language he speaks, what messages he wishes to deliver and what grammar he follows. He once said, “Nothing much to be expected from the world.” But why has he produced so many plays and books?

### b. Language and Form

What really matters in Lee’s artistic world are language and community. He himself terms the audience as “public recall,” which is inevitable to his world. His works always are the trial of questioning and answering the relations between language and existence. His theatrical world takes the form of continuous inquiries in “What being does language speak of?” and “Nothing is said, but nothing is kept silent. Which language does this form, or theatre, take on?” That is why his life seems full of prolific works. Through the



uncountable works created by himself, he keeps asking, how to perform theatrical pieces, but how to perceive this or that aspect of them. This endeavor of him is well exemplified by his famous works such as *Ogu* and *Problematic Human Yeonsan*.

The most important thing in Lee’s dramas concerns who speaks, since his topic is how to show that the perfect gathering space of language is the owner of speech, or the owner of words.” In a nutshell, his theater is a theatre of “who speaks.” The speaker in his play is always absolute and much more transcendental than what is being spoken.

Lee has gone farther than most Korean playwrights and directors. It is simply verifiable just by looking at the list of his performances. But he has never deviated from

the magnetic field of language, performed within the frame of theatre, and verified, thereby, the existence of theater. What his theatrical world heeds is the matter of who speaks; namely, the matter of treating human beings themselves as object. In this respect, should a theatrical work speak humans, it is absolutely necessary to go back to the language called theatre. Considering these characteristics, he seems to have gone too far, but he is a classicist indeed. Just as language is rational, what he pursues as theater must be the classicism of this type. Linguistic rules are inevitable. Likewise, that is why he assigns numerous formal names to his plays and dramas as his works undergo diverse discussion on their forms (e.g. form of power in *Mask of Fire*, form of love in *Dummy Bride*, form of life in *Drama*, and form of death in *Ogu*). He has never tried a theatrical trial that may bypass language. Rather than the fame or the value of his works, he attempts to shine the brightness of existence. Sometimes, his works feature irrational aspects such as dance and the Korean shamanistic dancing ritual. But the feature is not unrelated to the classic form, which embraces the density of life and the disorder in life like urge.

### 6. Future of Theatre

Form is the result of relations, and, at the same time, is the source of relations. What makes expression of his plays and dramas possible functions like a net. He runs a sizable theatrical entity, which seems an absolutely inevitable organization for production of theatrical works. To date, he discovers complicated daily matters through the filter called organization, and rearranges what he has discovered in his work. What he has organized must be of equal value to the world. Problems may arise when the organized get disbanded and it becomes impossible to transform them in plays. The challenge may be an individual horizon, or a labyrinth or a breakthrough of Korean theatre. He has won numerous prizes including a Donga Theater award, and graduated from Korea National Open University. Now, he served as an artistic director for the National Theater of Korea and now serves an artistic director for Street Theater Troupe, and teaches at Youngsan University.

**AHN Chi-woon**

*Theatre Critic*  
Professor at Dept Theatre Studies, Hoseo University, Korea  
via@hoseo.edu

# 3

## Discussion on SON Jin-chaek

Korea did not have a director specialized in traditional Korean theatrical works. The specialized directors did not emerge until the 1920s, or until a decade passed by since modern Korean theatre, which copied after the Western plays and dramas, began to show up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the context of this history, veteran director SON Jin-chaek belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. Attending college in the 1970s, he joined Theatre Sanha to learn acting. But his career as director started at Minye Theatre with his determination to pursue Korea's own theatre, seeking something Korean. Minye Theatre was first founded in 1974 by director HUH Kyu, who stayed outside the mainstream of the time. Huh believed that it was necessary to create Korea's own modern plays and dramas to beef up the national identity of Koreans, since Korean theatre stuck to the old grooves of copying Western works. With the belief, he recruited members and had them learn and practice traditional forms of theatre (Pansori, traditional puppetry, etc.), shamanistic dance and folk music.

Newly graduated from college, Son joined the organization, and studied traditional arts with them. He also received tutoring in directing from Huh. To sum up, Son studied theories on orthodox theatre, temporarily learned Western directing at Theatre Sanha that focused on theatre of realism, and practiced traditional arts at Minye Theatre. Considering this background, it is no wonder why the scope of his directing is so broad. He also debuted with a traditional musical Hanne-ui Seungcheon (written by OH Young-jin). From that on, he dedicated himself to modernization and re-creation of traditional art pieces. At the same time, he widened his career by directing adapted foreign works.

During this time, he met his wife KIM Sung-nyeo, who was and is famous for multiplaying theatrical actress. His marriage gave a momentum to his directing life. At that time, the Korean theatrical community suffered from shortage of qualified actresses. In this respect, his wife gave him a vantage point, since her quality acting covered him in many works. Especially, she was capable of digesting not only Western dramas, but also traditional Korean performances. Thus, the main actress in Son's works was always his wife. The shift of his learning from Western theatre to Korean one has attached his mind to creation of most national Korean dramas.

Therefore, it was undoubtedly natural for him to pay attention to *Madang Theater*, or interchangeably *Madang-Geuk* (literally translated as open-yard drama), which is a type of open theatre. When *Madang Theater* leaned toward political extremes, he put a distance

with the trend. Instead, he poured his passion in creation of more joyful, but still open theatrical genre called *Madang Nori*. Although these two started from the same branch of tradition, they show a wide gap in terms of ideology. The former is full of socialist tendency and was used to stand up against the military dictatorship in 1970s, while *Madang Nori* is focused on inducement of entertainment based on Korean traditional arts.

As a result, in the 1980s, he devoted himself to popularization of *Madang Nori*, a movement that was led by MBC, than to dramas by Minye Theatre. *Madang Nori* by itself may feel boring to the contemporary people, since most of it is based on traditional arts. Aware of the risk, Son incorporated high-tech components in the genre to make it more enjoyable by the public. But he could not be satisfied. He founded Theatre Michoo himself in 1988 to realize his dream of creating the most Korean dramas. To celebrate its foundation, he presented *Keeper* (written by JEONG Bok-keun), an act that might be interpretable as his real intent and goal: Son just wanted to show the most Korean things. The title *Keeper* is the expression of his will to defend what are deemed Korean. His will did not stop just as an intention. He put it into practice by, for example, asking philosopher KIM Yong-ok to create plays for his company.

On the other hand, however, his political viewpoint is tinted in the works he favored, a fact that appears to our attention when carefully examining them. For example, he put on stage *Death and the Maiden*, the work created by a Chilean human rights activist. Moreover, he often satirized politics through his *Madang Nori* works. In short, Son does not favor socialist works. Still, he has never closed his eyes to the unfairness and the unfair politics in society. In the meanwhile, his lifelong goal of creating “national theatre” has not been successful all the time. His stiff approach underwent a considerable number of bumps on the road. For these reasons, he studies more than any other director in Korea.

As mentioned above, the scope of Son’s directorship is hugely broad. He has directed almost everything from *Madang Nori*, to musical, Korean classical opera, to Fringe Theater. Actually, it was Son who directed the opening ceremony of the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Korea. All his skills and experiences are incorporated in *Fairy in the Wall*. Crystallized with his directing technique and theatrical philosophy, *Fairy in the Wall* moved many souls. He won almost all of the major domestic awards with *Fairy in the Wall*, including Seoul Theater Festival. He is simply one of the few representative directors of the Korean theatrical community.

YOO Min-young  
Theatre Critic

# 4

## Director HAN Tae-sook and *Lady Macbeth*

HAN Tae-sook is one of the representative woman directors/playwrights in the contemporary Korean theatre. She has won several prestigious awards including Grand Prix Award of Seoul Theatre Festival(1999) for her play *Lady Macbeth*, and Dong-A Theatre Award (2003) for *A Train to Xian*. She began her theatrical career initially as a playwright, and later also engaged herself in directing. Then, in 1998, she formed Theatre Moollee. She has so far written three original plays, three adaptations including *Lady Macbeth* (1999), and has directed about 30 dramas including the Shakespearean play *Richard III* (2004), and the Shakespearean adaptation *Iago and Othello* (2006).

Notably, director HAN Tae-sook’s directorial concept is that a play is to be “for seeing, listening and feeling.” All her plays truly embody such belief viscerally. Albeit not a self-proclaimed feminist, she has clearly revealed a woman-centered point of view in re-creating the historical tragic Korean woman figures in her plays such as *Princess Dukhye* (1995), the last princess of Chosun Dynasty, and *KIM Su-im, Myself* (1997), a Korean New Woman who was sentenced to death on charges of north Korean spy activities during the mid 1950s.

Han also has shown a particular interest in exploring women’s psyches, as



*A Train to Xian*

*Lady Macbeth*



exemplified in such plays as *A Face Behind a Face* (1996) and *BAE Jang-hwa and BAE Hong-nyeon* (2001) (a story dealing with two sisters), which was made into a film. *Lady Macbeth*, Han's representative play based on Macbeth, is a fine addition in this sequence.

*Lady Macbeth* superbly demonstrates Han's directing style of creating a highly refined visceral and emotional mise-en-scene on the stage. In this performance, she creates the psyche of *Lady Macbeth* interculturally from a Korean woman's vision and ethos. More specifically, *Lady Macbeth* and her desire for power are embedded in the gene; her psychic state of guilt is fully explored while her subconscious realm is transformed into an intercultural space reminding of Korean shamanistic ritual of *Gut* and the state of trance, in which a high level of emotional energies are let out to be finally purged.

Han also wrote and directed *A Train to Xian* (2005), which deals with issues of memory, sub-consciousness, racial-sexual identity and homosexuality. In this play, Han depicts a male character Sang-gon, a Chinese Korean on a train in his journey to Xian, after killing his gay lover. The dramatic narrative interweaves the montages of Sang-gon's sub-consciousness and the images at Qin Shin Huang's tomb, thereby ultimately suggesting the question of human obsessions.

This year, she is actively engaged in an interculturally challenging work of adaptation and directing of a Japanese legendary myth *Horror Stories of Four Valleys*, basically a woman's revenge story in a world haunted by ghosts, commissioned by Japanese En Theatre Group. It is to be premiered in August in Tokyo, Japan.

**SHIM Jung-soon**

*Theatre Critic*  
Professor of Drama, Soongsil University, Korea  
jsshim@ssu.ac.kr

# 5

## PARK Keun-hyung: Director of Social Criticism through Grotesque Dramaticity

### a. Introduction

After studying theatre for many years at a theatrical company, PARK Keun-hyung (1963-) founded his own troupe and now works as director. Backed by theatricality based on grotesque, Park's dramaturgie shows effectiveness, and functions as a critical voice in society. Especially, his theatrical language interacts with other components of the stage design, and influences audiences, when it is formed on a small stage. These features of Park's theatrical aesthetics have betokened, since the 1990s, how a small theater can survive under the circumstances of this age. His dramas realize extreme realities on stage, and the realized realities combine with theatricality created by language and situation, finally producing grotesque.

The grotesque of Park's theatrical world is closely associated, above all, with the dramaticity of paradox, which emerged in the course of dramatic description. In a group or a society where the normal has yielded its position to the abnormal, theatrical works stimulate consciousness and emotions of audiences through the momentary "border-crossing" rendered by the dramaticity of paradox, and ultimately creates the effects of grotesque. Furthermore, these dramatic, aesthetic characteristics clarify themselves through stage formation. For instance, the main character in his drama often resorts to knife, scissors, blood, suicide and violence. These vehicles connote self-infliction of harm. At the same time, they exude grotesque feelings. Actor's speech leads grotesque and paradoxical dramaticity in connection with the components of stage design in a small theater including the actors/actresses who directly breathe with audiences, and affects them.

### b. World of Playwriting and Directing

The subjects in Park's works always deal with the issues arising out of the industrialized society in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, the socially disadvantaged during industrialization and in the industrialized Korea dominate the themes of his works. More specifically, the key topics include changes of the values happening in an industrialized society where the normal and the abnormal are upside down, along with global issues. Now, he is paying attention to those who benefit from the distorted and unfair structure of the industrialized society. In detail, Park sharply and finely describes how humanity gets

distorted and its values get reversed under the rampant spread of stereotype-based thinking and judgment, and, as a result, how humans get isolated and oppressed. Therefore, his works unfold a comprehensive picture for us, which shows how the social and economic changes in Korea since industrialization affected the human consciousness and the values. Then, we understand how theatrical works carry out the role of checks and balances in society.

### c. Representative Works

Among the recently released works by Park, *Don't Be Shocked*, which was performed in 2009, stands out most. Like in that drama, Park

dramatizes isolation of a Korean in the industrial society by raising issues about disorganization of families. The source of human isolation is confirmed in materialism of the industrial society. Park takes it granted that the family misfortune comes true from the mother, who struggles under a heavy gambling debt, and runs away with all the family money. In this drama, the daughter-in-law stabs herself in the abdomen, and the second son guts himself with whatever force he can muster. And, the father hangs himself in the restroom, while spitting out a Korean pop song from the 1970s. The grotesque created on stage by all the figures most vividly shows the dramaturgie of Park's theatrical world. The core of dramaticity that always shows up in Park's drama is triggered in the course of irrational reaction to a situation. Leaving the body of his father just as he has hung himself in a stinky restroom, the oldest son shakes the hanging body, crying and repeatedly hollering out, "I hate you." A person with a sound soul would never understand. Disgusting parts are closed up by the characters'sincere, but inappropriate acting, and with their talks that are not suitable for their actions. Thus, rather than hiding, the inner side of the situation is instantly exposed.



*Don't Be Shocked*

Another moment that also appears in Park's drama is associated with the reason the second son always eats crabmeat alone. Crabmeat functions as a reminder of the days when all family members live together, counting on each other. But the food is no longer the one they remember. The crabmeat food just contains the flavor of it, meaning only the appearance is left without substance. Crabmeat is a metonymic tool in the drama. What it connotes is the life of outsiders in an industrialized society, who pursue the disguised happiness but end up in being disposed of without tasting the material outcomes.

#### d. Chronological Theatrical History (Awards Included)

In 1994 : *Aspirin*

In 1998 : *Mouse*

In 1999 : *Glory of Youth* (the best drama award from The Korean Association of Theatre Critics, the best script award at the 2000 PaekSang Arts Awards, and the best script award & the best drama award at the Donga Theater Award)

In 2000 : *No one breathes under the Water* and *Generation to Generation* (among top three drams of the year from The Korean Association of Theatre Critics)

In 2002 : *Shovel or Ax*, and *House*

In 2003 : *The Three Musketeers*

In 2005 : *At the Dock*

In 2006 : *Kyoung-suk, Kyoung-suk's Father* (the best drama award at the Donga Theater Award and the best script award at the Daesan Literary Awards in 2007)

In 2007 : *At Baekmudong*

In 2008 : *The Return Of President Eom*

In 2009 : *Don't Be Shocked* (among top three drams of the year from The Korean Association of Theatre Critics)

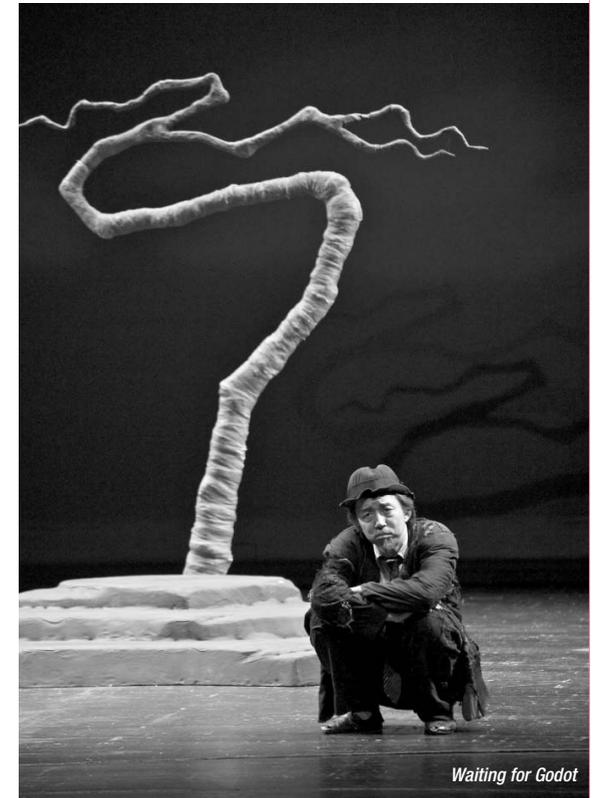
SHIM Jae-min

Theatre Critic  
sternheim@hanmail.net

# 6

## Korean Realism I

Senior director LIM Young-woong covers a wide range of genres including Theatre of the Absurd, musicals and experimental drams. Still, traditional realism dominates his personal ethos. On the other hand, LEE Byung-hoon shows a unique and personalized Asian way of thinking concerning aesthetics of space. Excelling in directing of comedies, LEE Sang-woo satirizes the current state of Korea through modern language, and attracts young audiences. Epic carries a huge meaning for the theatrical world of PARK Sang-hyeon who builds realistic performances. What all of them have in common is hard to find out. Nonetheless, it is hardly deniable that they all masterly imprint Korean emotions in their directing.



*Waiting for Godot*

**a. *Waiting for Godot* directed by LIM Young-woong:**

**Superb Harmony of Realism and Theatre of the Absurd**

Having eyewitnessed the advent and development of Korean theatre, LIM Young-woong is often called the Maginot Line of realism. He is famous for his thorough analysis and study of scripts. But he is very cautious of being trapped in schematic aspects and frame in directing. He put very realistic plays like *Three Sisters* and *Ghosts* on stage under his directorship, along with an orthodox comedy like *The Game of Love and Chance*. Although some may have thought that he went out of his way when he directed musicals like *Fiddler on The Roof*, he proved himself a core realist by directing an experimental work *In Solitude of Cotton Fields*. When we talk about LIM Young-woong, it is *Waiting for Godot* that we talk about. He first directed it in 1970, when he founded Sanwoollim Theater. Since then, he honed it to his style, while rerunning it 36 times. Lee is unthinkable without it. Acknowledging its value, Avignon Festival (1989) and Dublin Theatre Festival (1990) invited it, and the audiences marked it as a creative work seasoned with Korean-style humor. Considering his adherence to the original play, his directorship creates traditional and original moves and rhythm of Korea. Asian way of thinking, which seeks the true meaning of life even in the face of hardship, is melted in *Waiting for Godot* that theatrically depicts light and pleasant rhythm and tragic view of life.

**Awards:** Donga Theater Award in 1986, Korea Culture and Art Award in 1987, Korea National Academy of Arts Award in 1995, Dongrang Theatre Award in 1995, and Order of Culture in 2004

**b. *King Lear* directed by LEE Byung-hoon:**

**Asian Space Aesthetics Stressing Beauty of Margin**

Having started his career first with Hyehwadong 1<sup>st</sup> Street, LEE Byung-hoon is a director who has excellent logical and analytical abilities in addition to his theoretical and practical background. With his directorship in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Across the River in May*, he was lauded for his contained expressions and strong awareness of the topic. These days, he is pitching in his best to find out how to expand and operate space in a new way in connection with exploration of the theatrical space based on the traditional Korean concept of it. Therefore, it seems necessary to heed theatrical imagination and use of space in Lee's dramas. In *King Lear* (2008), for example, he unfolded a medieval tragedy like presenting a Korean performing art *Madang Nori*. In *King Lear* where Eastern and Western ideologies are ingeniously incorporated, Lee presented multi-tiered meanings by compressing or omitting theatrical space with translucent feet and a screen. *King Lear* was praised for its depiction of inner minds of characters by means of symbols

and metaphoric space. Lee's another work *Country Girl* (2005) is deemed to represent his peculiar directorship in association with space aesthetics. Adapting Noda Hideki's original, Lee draws out, in *Country Girl*, the loss of humanity arising out of urbanization. Lee always sleeps on questions such as "What is the spirit of the contemporary age?" and "Does out theatre really talk about symptoms of real life?" Lee puts *Country Girl* in a stage setting similar to the one used for traditional Asian dramas, not the proscenium stage, to face the acting crew toward audiences and, thereby, to spread meanings. Through the setting, Lee emphasizes that his theatrical space is not for deceiving, and highlights conflicts and the topic through symmetry of space.

**Awards:** Grand prix at the 2002 Yomiuri Performing Arts Award; one of top three dramas chosen by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics in 2008; and the Best Korean Drama Award and Reporters' Award & chosen as one of top three dramas chosen by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics for *King Lear* (2008).

**c. *Pig Hunting* directed by LEE Sang-woo:**

**Heralding Birth of Koreanized Comedy**

As planner-turned-playwright/director, LEE Sang-woo takes on a path of directing aesthetics totally different from those of the aforementioned two directors. He still contains the tint of realism. He, however, prefers the uniqueness of the 386 generation or the digital generation. Unlike most Korean directors, he shows interest in black comedy full of social issues and satire. *Story of Old Thief* and *Pig Hunting* fascinates young audiences with light and pleasant humor, and short speeches keeping coming out of characters' mouths. Under its slogan of a pleasant, joyful and lighthearted drama, *Pig Hunting* is often deemed as one of those comedies. Contrary to the general perception, *Pig Hunting* tries to change the audiences' perception about daily life in use of the medium of laughter, based on study and understanding of basic human nature and inner human minds. Intentional and exaggerated laughter stimulates the instinct of the audience. Through reflection of an individual obsessed with power, we realize the hypocrisy of the male-dominating Korean society whether power and sex coexist. Stressed in his comedies are play of words, misunderstanding and exaggerated gestures. Another features include repetition, improvised acting, parody and easy topic.

**Awards:** *Reunification Express* (1999) chosen as one of top five dramas chosen by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics; KIM Sang-yeol Drama Award for *Pig Hunting* (2000-2001); and There chosen as one of top three dramas by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics. (2002)

#### d. *The Lady in No. 405 Is So Kind* directed by PARK Sang-hyeon: Looking Back on Korean Society

PARK Sang-hyeon is a young playwright and director, eyewitnessing political and economic changes in Korea as he grew up. Looking sharply deep into the social reality, PARK Sang-hyeon has demonstrated his command of metaphorically representing the issues therein. *The Lady in No. 405 Is So Kind* pictures how humans are isolated and suffer in a condominium complex through peeps into distortion of human image. The stage copies daily surroundings and the characters are ordinary. But strange hallucination and tension trickles out through the cracks of daily life. This work was lauded for its close-up of the loneliness and uncertainty of modern people by contrasting camera's focus with human eyes' focus, and memory of film with memory of humans. At a glance, *Woman with Everything* may seem like a melodrama, but it excises out to our attention the problems with capitalism, patriarchy, and the status of women in society. In *Terrorists*, which features a nationally respected independence movement leader KIM Guh, Park reviews the modern history of Korea, and agonizes over divided two Koreas and the future of reunified Korea. In general, Park turns the ordinary daily life of an individual into a realistic background, and throws questions like "What does it mean to live under given circumstances?" and "What role does society carry out?"

**Awards:** Daesan Literary award for *The Lady in No. 405 Is So Kind* (2004), and Kim Sang-Yeol Drama Award and chosen by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics as one of top three dramas for *Terrorists*.

**LEE Sun-hyung**

*Theatre Critic*  
Professor at Gimcheon University, Korea  
tardi@gimcheon.ac.kr

#### Korean Realism II: Directors Belonging to 386 Generation

Realism retains a broad paradigm. Should we consider it in terms of its form, or its content? When we look at it as a form, realism got into hibernation in the 1970s, and was awakened in the middle and late 1990s. Then, it began to shed a new light not on scholastic discourse, but on daily life. Doing so has helped it regain its strength. On the other hand, in a broader context, realism has developed, while watching the rapidly changing Korean society – a fact that contradicts the aesthetic stages of formalists. This movement, especially during the past decade, was led by the directors of the "386 generation," who are socialists and critics of the society.

The 386 generation refers to the generation of South Koreans born in the 1960s who were extremely politically active as young adults, and actively participated in and sometimes, led the democratic movements of the 1980s. After the collapse of the Eastern Europe, they turned antagonistic about neo-liberalism, and tried to part from the values of the past and to look into the daily life from the microeconomic and indifferent point of view. This essay deals with the 386 generation directors who led the movement in the theatrical field.

#### a. Pleasant Watch of Indifferent Realist: Director LEE Sung-yeol

LEE Sung-yeol (1962- ) started his career with experimental forms such as multimedia theatre. Lately, he has been transforming himself into a director who focuses on script-oriented works of high quality, while sharply and economically capturing the reality of the Korean society. Lee's directorship is not swayed by emotions, yet it is pleasant. The daily life captured by LEE Sung-yeol does not, based on poetic beauty, comfort the audiences with what ought to be or what appeals. Instead, he peels off the aesthetic wrapping and exposes the dark sides of the Korean society through an empty stage and simple props that symbolize the coarseness of reality and through cunning but incompetent characters in presenting the contrived Korean society. But his stage, so dynamically full of dramaticity, disarms the audiences. In other words, under his directorship, audiences reflect upon the snobbery and crude reality of the Korean society from a certain theatrical distance, and they get amused at the same time. Representative examples of the works are *Bultina* wherein the fall of the 386 generation is described, *Travel* that deals with emptiness of life through the medium of death and *Walking along the Youngdong Bridge under Night Rain*, which portrays political oppression in the dismantled daily life.

**Awards:** the best drama award at the Seoul Theater Festival for *Travel*, and the grand prize at This Year's Arts Award and the best director award at the Seoul Theater Festival for *Green Bench*.

### **b. From Co-Producing to Hyper Realism: Director CHOI Yong-hoon**

By co-producing theatrical works, CHOI Yong-hoon (1963- ) drew attention for his ability to induce transformation of actors/actresses and for his speedy directing. For the past decade, however, he has built up his reputation as an interpretive director who



accurately interprets completed scripts. His drama views reality from a critical point of view, but never force-feeds it to audiences. Above all, it is very flexible. Without much emphasis, it is colorful, accurately and finely captures diverse figures in reality, and juxtaposes contradicting scenes so that audiences can figure out answers by themselves. In terms of form, his realism is not definable in terms of a single style. Sometimes, he concentrates on details in designing his work and performance to realize hyperrealism. In other times, he creates his unique ensemble of a dozen of individuals full of individual personalities to unfold a panorama of the real world. His famous works for the past decade include *Dol-nal (The First Birthday Party)* that presents the fall of the 386 generation, *Mr. Lee*, in which the corrupt politics of Korea is compared to a small town election, and *Amy* by David Hare who reflected neo-liberalism.

**Awards:** the best drama and the best director awards at the Donga Theatre Awards for *Dol-nal*, and the same prizes for *Mr. Kimchi Soup got Mad*.

### **c. Meeting of Realness and Abstractness: Director KIM Gwang-bo**

KIM Gwang-bo (1964- ) exudes an unstoppable stream of theatrical energy. Recently, however, his method of expressing energy has changed. Unlike the extrovert energy shown in the past years, he swiveled to refrainment, and began to put only the essentials on stage. Thus, he prefers simple stage design without much colorful adoration, realistic but compressed acting, and rhythmical change of scenes. Likewise, contrary to the past, his choice of works has leaned more toward criticism of reality, but it secures the abstractness close to allegory. In other words, KIM Gwang-bo is a director who combines reality and abstractness, and is a realist who pursues not details but essence. This tendency is very consistent, and different scripts of different natures are all transformed his way. In this respect, his hegemony is considerable. Most of the works that he chooses are focused on the violence that dominates the lives of contemporary people. Examples of this category are playwright KO Yeon-ok's *Smile, Tomb* and *On the footstep*, and Sakkate Yoji's *Blooming of the Rose of Sharon*.

**Awards:** the grand prize at Seoul Theatre Awards for *On the footstep* and this Year's Arts Award for *Smile, Tomb*.

### **d. Poetic Realist: Director KIM Dong-hyun**

KIM Dong-hyun (1965- ) paid attention to poetic images and dismantlement from his early days. Kim, who dismantled Shakespeare's works or preferred minor themes such as love to engagement in giant discourses, is now widening his interest to a more realistic horizon. Unlike the aforementioned directors, he engages in reality without criticism or satire. Instead, he lightens the lives hovering over the outskirts of the world with a warm heart. The works showing Kim's personal trend include *A Good Man Cho Yang-Kyu* that reconstructs the life of a missing person, which is presented in the format of documentary; *White Cherry* that depicts those who choose to live disadvantaged lives over the competitive mainstream; and *La Tortuga de Darwin* that reexamines the modern history from the viewpoint of a turtle. However, the poetic imagery that he has pursued since the early days still remains unchanged, along with finely tuned light and sound. Putting these features and his realism together, it may be termed as poetic realism.

**Awards:** KIM Sang-yeol Drama Award for *White Cherry*, and one of best 3 performances chosen by the Korean Association of Theatre Critics for *La Tortuga de Darwin*

### **e. Meeting of Fantasy and Reality: Director KOH Sun-woong**

As a playwright and director full of dramaticity, KOH Sun-woong (1968- ) has marked himself in the Korean theatrical community for his comic and playful imagination crossing into fantasy. The lines produced by him, aside from the development of the plot, create a new world of puns, or bring about glib talks almost as lengthy as *Pansori*. Recently, however, critical attitude is being strongly squeezed into this tendency. This new trend is exemplified by *Steel King* and *Eight-man* that Koh has written and directed to express the stress of modern people, and *Mermaid City* that highlights life and death of an unstable modern Korean. Frankly, it may be far fetched to associate Koh's dramatic world with realism, since he is too theatrical and employs a variety of methods of expression. But what needs to be noted is that his early artistic world of openness and subjectiveness has been, during recent years, expanding the distinctive insights and the universality of reality. In that context, he leaves a possibility to formally expand realism.

**Awards:** Today's Young Artist award and This Year's Arts Award for *Woman of Sand*

**KIM Myeong-hwa**  
Theatre Critic  
hwa9896@hanmail.net

# 8

## Avant-Garde Directors in Korea I

The most renowned neo-avant-garde Korean directors, IM Do-wan, IM Hyeong-taek, KANG Ryang-won, and YANG Jeong-woong studied theatre, prior to commencement of their careers, in the countries each of which belongs to a different cultural zone. Their directing aesthetics shows such features as body-centered theatre, object theatre, debordering, superstate, intercultural performance and converged genre. Each of them responds to conservatism and cultural pluralism, while maintaining the unique aesthetics and values of each. For these reasons, their works are even favored by global audiences, and are lauded at international theater festivals.

### a. *Woyzeck* directed by IM Do-wan: Performance of Body Language and Objects

Graduated from L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, IM Do-wan transmorphs the constructional image of physical moves into theatrical pieces; namely, he



turns the inner motif of the script into a form, and structures the form into a variety of moves prior to expression. *Woyzeck* (Büchner, 2005) develops through changes in arrangement and structure of bodies of actors/actresses and chairs. Of course, objects and sound, as actor, occupy space and construct their own audio-visual images. Formative structure and arrangement of chairs as objects and symbols indicate social status, hierarchy and structure of social oppression. Chairs are stuck in these frames, are under piles of chairs, or the actors/actresses madly arranging the chairs represent the process

of turning humans into objects, isolation and madness in modern society. *Woyzeck* reveals the unfairness and tragic nature of the world in a more persuasive way than dramas using language through performance of formative beauty.

**Other Works:** *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov, 2005) and *Les Aveugles* (Maeterlinck, 2007)

**Awards:** *Woyzeck* won, in 2007, the Herald Angel Award and the Total Theater Award in the category of physical theater at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and the work was chosen as one of top 10 performances at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe; and *The Cherry Orchard* won the New Drama Concept Award of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Donga Drama Awards.

<http://www.sadarimovementlab.org>

### b. *Two Medea* Directed by IM Hyeong-taek: Intercultural Drama Shining With Material and Visual Imagination

IM Hyeong-taek received MFAs from New York University and Columbia University. As director of physical theatre, Im reinterprets the canon of the West and the East from the viewpoint of “now,” and expresses them through the bodies and sounds of actors/actresses. To run *Two Medea* (Euripides, 2007), Im trained actors/actresses in viewpoint



and yoga, and divided the stage design into red wall and blue floor to symbolize basic two desires of humans. Water, which carries the image of woman and mother, actually runs through the miniscule canal located on both sides of the stage. In addition, in accordance with the Buddhists rituals, lotus lamps drift thereon, which symbolize the flame of soul. Overall, the entire spectacle adds ritual and sensational liveliness. Images of physical language, sound and space constitute the spectacle, and, against it, two selves of medeas appear as double main characters. Here, they represent lover and mother each. *Two Medea* is an intercultural drama in which mythical imagination (transformation of the Greek mythology into Asia), dual discourse on desires and Korean shamanistic rituals get combined, and instill mythology and timeliness.

**Other Works:** *La Lenteur* (Kundera Milan, 2002) and *La Dispute* (Marivaux, 2010)

**Awards:** *Two Medea* won the Best Director award at the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theater in 2007, and was invited by Lamama Theater for three weeks of performance in 2010.

<http://www.seoufactory.co.kr>

**c. *The Secret Police* directed by KANG Ryang-won:  
Postmodern Performance as Converged Genre**

Acquiring MFA from Shchukin Theatre Academy in Russia, KANG Ryang-won merged the Stanislavsky system with Meyerhold's theory of acting, and established his theory of physical acting. Based thereon, he has melted down the border between acting and directing, and pursues actor's assumption of the role of director. Upon application of his theory, *Thérèse Raquin* (Zola, 2008) presents a drama of impromptu body, which shows the natural scene of spring as its "raw state." Directing an adapted version Gogol's *The Inspector General* under the title *The Secret Police* (2010), he employed Meyerhold's experiments in the 1910s at cabarets. Unlike the original, *The Secret Police* satirizes madness of the public, manipulated games, and snobbery of government workers in an era free of the secret police. Turning the stage into a cabaret, *The Secret Police* incorporates all possible forms of expression therein, including mime, puppet show, Commedia dell'arte, and mask theatre, just to name a few. It gives a pleasant shock with its postmodern spectacle through its convergence of sound effects, which reconstructs traditional Korean music in a modern way, pop art-style stage design full of black



comedy, dépaysement of objects, cabaret-style acting and song, and dance.

**Other Works:** *Les Bonnes* (Genet, Jean, 2000) and *Die Verwandlung* (Kafka, 2006), and others

**Awards:** PAF Award in 2008 for *Thérèse Raquin*, and the New Drama Concept Award of the Donga Theater Awards in 2008 for *As I Lay Dying* (Faulkner, W.C.).

<http://cafe.daum.net/dongplay>

**d. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by YANG Jeong-woong:  
Fantastic Occurrence of Body, Sound and Image**

As a young man, YANG Jeong-woong worked as a member of Lasenkan International Theatre, and traveled India, China and Spain. As a playwright and director, Yang masterly combines poetry with theatre, and Asian theatre with Shakespeare's. His directorship expresses poetically and sensuously the general messages that contain Korean physical expression, dance and music, along with the epics of the Western canon. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare, 2002-2010), he moves the spatiotemporal settings from the Middle Age

England to Korea of that time, and puts on stage Korean folktale *goblins*. Thereby, he transforms the romantic epic in the original to a joyful and fantastic occurrence. Physical expression almost like acrobatic moves, traditional Korean music and dance, the costume and makeup of young clowns and goblins, formative acting and liberal speech, all of them are incorporated in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Therefore, this work is a beautiful theatrical poem and intercultural performance, since it is Shakespeare-like, Korean, medieval and modern at the same time. His directorship of *Peer Gynt* (Ibsen, 2009) maximizes symbolic functions of physical language and objects in place of philosophical lines, and embraces an enormous spatiotemporal system and a world of reality and myth. Using the nude body of an actress as object-symbol, *Peer Gynt* gives shock and joy, and helps us reflect on our lives for its black humor and mutation of body and image, as in a surrealistic picture.

**Other Works:** *Les Chaises* (Ionesco, 2005) and *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 2010), and others

**Awards:** Grand Prize at the 2003 Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theater for *Karma* (written and directed by YANG Jeong-woong), Grand Prix at the 2006 Gdansk International Shakespeare Festival in Poland for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Best Director award at the 2009 Korea Drama Awards for *Peer Gynt*.

**SHIN Hyun-sook**

Theatre Critic  
anashin@hanmail.net



## Avant-Garde Directors in Korea II

### a. Theatrical Language of Death as Metonymy of History of Violence: CHAI Seung-hoon

CHAI Seung-hoon is an avant-garde director who has led the experimental theatre of Korea. The features of Chai's formative aesthetics include minimal stage settings, ritual objects, physical images indicative of violence and death, poetic lines dismembering narratives, extremely suppressed formative acting, and fragmented and disrupting sound and lighting. These features emit powerful energy close to madness, and instantly overwhelm the consciousness and sense of audiences. At a glance, his artistic world seems similar to Artaud's theatre of cruelty. But it puts in metonymy the Korean history dotted with violence and madness. In this respect, Chai's world is totally different from Artaud's. Criticism and reflection of history and society function as the root of Chai's theatrical thinking and as a momentum for creation.

*Hamlet* (2001-2007) is a nonverbal drama, and reminds us of agonizing history of oppression through images of cruel death and violence. In *Hamlet*, he turns, through metaphor, Opealia and Gertrude into the 'people' who are the victim of history, and furthers it as 'Korea' who has fallen victim to imperialism. Thereby, he combines critical view of history and radical concept of beauty in it. For these characteristics, it has been invited and played at international theatrical festivals including Japan's Kanazawa, Lumania's Sibiu, Germany's Manover, Moldova's Bitei, and Lumania's Babel.

In an experimental drama *The Lost Memory* (2008, 2009), Chai disorganizes and reconstructs Cantor's *Wielopole Wielopole* into a drama of new dimension, or language of death. Here, the term "language of death" refers the language of communication with the victims of madness and violence through fragmented and distorted gestures and sound of actors/actresses. What stands out most are the metonymic stage that puts in metaphor the historic space of Korea soaked in blood, and physical images that raise the mental scars internalized in the minds of individuals and groups. It has been invited from Lumania and Czech, and invited at the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress Theatre Festival. In 2009, it won the best drama award at the Prague Theatre Festival.

### b. Aesthetic Avant-Garde Seeking Source of Existence: KIM Ara

Since the mid-1980s, KIM Ara has tried a variety of forms such as theatricalism, modified realism, expressionism, theatre of image, and theatre of silence, to name a few. In the

process, she has built her own world of theatrical aesthetics. Since the foundation of Theatre Mucheon in 1992, she has been pursuing formative experiments in earnest. In the course of the trial, she introduced to the Korean theatrical community multi-genre music theatre for the first time, which transforms the meanings of language or scripts into audio images. Her trial has earned the attention from in and outside Korea. Through extremely suppressed formative theatrical language, Kim endeavors to look deep into the origin of human beings. Her directorship has reached a higher level of completion since the beginning of the new millennium through *The Trap: A Mediation About Hamlet* (2005) and *Wind Station* (2009).

In *The Trap: A Mediation About Hamlet*, she abandons the original theme of vengeance and justice in the epic Hamlet, presents in a multi-tiered way the issue of desire that is deemed as the source of the power dominating general human behavior and consciousness. Therefore, unfolded in *The Trap: A Mediation About Hamlet* are the images of desire dominating sexual desire and love, jealousy and hate, and betrayal and revenge. Speech of actor is recognized not through its meaning, but through sound and rhythm. Likewise, actions are described unrealistically and fantastically. In addition, the world of desire dominating human emotions and sense is unfolded sensuously and fantastically by means of piano sound that fills space, visual effects, movie-like scenes and lighting techniques.

Experimenting Ota Shogo's original work, she rendered *Wind Station* in which literary epic and speech are extremely suppressed, and the source of our life is recognized sensuously through poetic image and musical resonance. The drama pursues "poetry on stage about time, relationship, desire, possession, extinction and absolute solicitude of human beings — the concepts that are depicted only through visual components such as silent gestures of actors/actresses, music and imagery." Kim stimulates imagination of audiences through various audiovisual images, and leads them to think about philosophical matters about life through silence-draped stage. In these aspects, it seems fair to say that the work shows a new horizon of Korean avant-garde theatre.

<http://www.kimara.co.kr/main>

### c. Aesthetic Rendezvous of Sensuous Images and Conceptual Thinking: PARK Jeong-hee

As a director, PARK Jeong-hee is famous for her ability to express components of the conceptual world such as life and death, desire deep in human mind, and existence of self in a material and sensuous language of image. Especially, she breaks down original works in fine pieces, and reconstructs them as she imagines to show a stage where

literariness and theatricality, communicating nature of image and audibility of language are aesthetically balanced.

*Les Bonnes* (2002) drew attention, since Jean Genet's original was reconstructed through a play of rituals close to madness.

*Les Bonnes* deeply shocks the emotions of audiences by expressing the desire hidden in the minds of maids by means of violent physical images. What capture our attention most are the two scenes: In one, maids are playing with bare feet in a tub filled with water, and, in another, they await death sunk in the tub. Through the symbolic images of water and tub, and physical images of actresses, Park helps recognize sensuously and materially two faces of desire competing between eros and Thanatos.



#### d. Experiment for Discovery and Creation of Theatricality: KIM Nak-hyung

KIM Nak-hyung has been targeting two types of theatre: theatre of realism and that of imagery. The former directly points to social issues, while the latter pictures basic human desire or sin through objects and physical language. The two-thronged path comes from his dedication to discovery, not of formative experiments, but of theatricality through which one can truly communicate with audiences. Therefore, his theatrical performance always highlights existence of actor and theatricality of stage, despite the various formative experiments he tries.

In *Macbeth* (2009), he renders a new interpretation of Shakespeare's original, which has earned him high remarks about his capacity of experimental directing. In the adapted piece, the focus still remains on Macbeth's inner consciousness. But his desire and sin is represented through prototypical consciousness of human as the source tragedy. In use of objects such as chair and candle and in exclusion of colorful stage decorations and lighting, Kim found his unique way of directing the world where life and death, evil and quality feelings collide with each other. In addition, Kim stimulates emotions and senses through images of dynamic physical moves, formative gestures and fragmented noise, and successfully creates a strongly ritual theatrical space whether audiences and acting crew get incorporated in a single body of basic energy.

PAEK Rora  
Theatre Critic

# 10

## Avant-Garde Directors in Korea III: New Avant-Garde Generation

One of the notable phenomena in Korean theatre in the new millennium is the existence of a group of performers who have grown up in a way totally different from the way previous generations grew up. The predecessors trained under some sort of apprenticeship. The new generation, however, start(ed) their careers on a level field and in close cooperation with various peer art groups. The different growth experience is wholly reflected in their works, which distinguish themselves from those of the previous generations. First of all, they do not adhere to literary scripts as their starting point. Rather, they pay attention to concrete vehicles of theatrical language such as image and sound. They also heed such concepts as re-creation of plot, rejection of representation, concrete material nature of theatrical language and sensibility. On the surface, this tendency may look overlapping with their previous generations. In substance, however, they go straight deep into performativity, while the previous generations carried out experiments as suspicion and resistance to the traditional customs.

#### a. Merger of Image, Drawing and Performance: LEE Cheol-sung

LEE Cheol-sung is one of the most illuminating exemplary artists, who pursue their own styles in tackling a new challenge in the course of creation.

As shown in *Paint Performance Wall* (2006), *The Self-Portrait* (2007) and *Paper Window* (2007), he stands for visual theatre. His visual theatre breaks



the past paradigm under which performers represent what the writer and the director intend, and organizes the entire process of creation from the viewpoint of performers. Since he is a poet as well, Lee develops his poetic motif by means of image, drawing and performance. The image projected onto the wall is waged on a real-time basis in drawing, and Lee as performer merges the moves of the drawing with his performance. He often performs in an ordinary place like street, office and public park. His act is not an aesthetic and ideological resistance to Black Box Theater; rather, it indicates an effort to simplify techniques for integration of the entire process of creation. He combines techniques and simplify them at the same time, thereby expanding theatrical language and stressing the importance of interaction with audience.



### b. Uncanny Struggle between Body and Material: JEONG Geum-hyung

One of the most outstanding theatrical artists these days, JEONG Geum-hyung is a one-person creator who organizes the entire process of creation by her own performance. Her works show a very interesting process that objects and a human body jointly create. Examples are *Vacuum Cleaner* (2006) *Oil Pressure Vibrator* (2008) and *7 Ways* (2009). Above all, she expands the grammar of performance through miniaturized theatrical language of doll and movement. More specifically, only her body exists

in her works. Her body is always divided on stage. On stage, one part is the dolls that exist through her body, which have incomplete bodies that miss faces, hands, legs, and the like. Jeong's body assumes the other part. Greedy desire itself is put in perspective without the intervention of epic mechanisms like incidents and characters. What is interesting lies in that dolls show aggressive desire, while her body stays very passive. The aggressiveness is amplified, from time to time, with mechanical force and size like vacuum machines or excavators. Therefore, greedy desire of an object always conquers her body in her performance. The weirdness that stems from divided subject or subversion of object and subject approaches us as familiar strangeness and makes us uncomfortable.

### c. Pure Time and Space: GANG Hwa-jeong

Compared with LEE Cheol-sung and JEONG Geum-hyung, GANG Hwa-jeong more faithfully carries out the role of playwright and director. Of course, she herself performs on stage. In addition, Gang's stage is considerably colorful. On her stage, multiple people roam around, shooting out lots of words thereon. She sometimes arouses or annoys her audiences with a music piece like rock and roll. Further, she decorates her stage with confetti-like paper and clothing bits, or heaps a mountain of clothes on stage. In short, the stage of Gang is full of materials, senses, stimulations, memories and ideas, just as each different stage language screams.

The personality continues in her trilogy on time and space, which reconstructs her previous works (i.e. *Disappeared Museum's Invitation* (2007), *Jene peux pas aimer!* (2008) and *The Novel Juice* (2005), and *Shooting in the First Person: My Submerging Eyes* (2006)). It is impossible to neatly rearrange characters, situations and events, all of which develop amidst chaos. On the contrary, as her drama advances, the meanings of

characters and events fade away. The only thing that remains vivid is death. Her characters sometimes live death. Usually death is the strongest limit one can experience. In Gang's works, however, death exists as a transparent border. Hovering over both sides of the border, time and space get inflected, distorted and displaced. That is why she fills up to the limit, empties all ideas and leaves pure time and space. It is this purity that resists any interpretation and any attempt to penetrate by an idea.



### d. Cooperation with Asian Artists: WON Young-oh and Theater Nettle

WON Young-oh and Theater Nettle have worked in various global stages on such re-created theatrical pieces as reborn as those of physical theatre after annihilation of the scripts of the canon, like *Hamlet from the East* (1999), *The Return* (2003), and *Woyzeck* (2009). Pursuing a theatrical community, they create scripts belonging to the category of physical drama. They now run Hooyong Performing Arts Centre, whose building was formerly used as a school before the dwindling local population stopped its function. In the meanwhile, the center offers a variety of residence programs for overseas artists. The programs often lead to creation of works. Cooperation with Malaysian, Indonesian, Australian and Japanese artists gave a birth to *The Buddha My Body* (2008). It describes the psychological pilgrimage of a man who faces the death of his mother. Again in this work, language is minimal, while the images created by music and motion lead the theatrical development. Just as global performers speak in their own languages, foreign

folk music and stores serve as motif for narration. The journey depicted by the drama gets closer to us as freshness of Asian life, which flies well beyond the boundaries set by the development of the plot.

KIM So-yeon  
Theatre Critic



## Modernization of Traditions

### a. Pursuit of Identity and Environment for Interculturalism

The world was engulfed with the idea of pursuit of identity. The same movement also swept the Korean theatrical community. Thus, brushing aside the Western realism that dominated the community by that time, Korean artists began to endeavor to find out a new paradigm that could hold against the upcoming globalization and pluralism. The re-theatricalization movement in the West was realized in various forms including, for example, avant-garde, anti-theatre and epic theatre. Spearheaded by Theater 76's *Publikumsbeschimpfung*, the adapted works of Artaud, Ionesco and Bertolt Brecht went beyond the limitations posed by adapted works, and were opening a door that would break traditional concepts and forms.

### b. Modernization of Korean Traditional Opera

The first transformation of traditional Korean theatre started with the traditional opera *Chang-Geuk*. Under the protocol format of *Pansori*, one man assumes the roles of multiple characters. *Chang-Geuk* represents the first attempt to modernize Korean traditions by differentiating plot development from division of roles. The origin is traced back to the Western theatre introduced by Japan. Despite numerous efforts to divide roles, to incorporate them in theatrical development, and to put them on stage in the form of *Pansori*, the form still remains to be seen. In addition, global audiences are still hard to satisfy.

Fortunately from 2007, however, the National Theater of Korea has been spearheading the leading role by adopting themes, for example, in CHA Beom-Seok's *Sanbull* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In addition, the theatre is assuming new trials in areas of song creation and composition to communicate with and get closer to domestic and global audiences. Especially, the attempts to create new Korean operas are worth our attention. Among the diverse approaches tried in *Sanbull* and *Romeo and Juliet*, characterization of sound and figure; namely, it is laudable to have successfully used the method of creating a figure whose emotions and subconsciousness are in direct contrast with voice and singing. But the road to successful globalization seems a long, long way to go.

### c. Modernization of Pansori and Witty Monolog: LEE Ja-Ram's Pansori Drama Sacheon-ga

LEE Ja-Ram's *Pansori* drama *Sacheon-ga* (written by LEE Ja-ram and directed by NAM In-woo) successfully created a yard where Western theatre and the traditional Korean narrative



song *Pansori* harmoniously mingle with each other. Adapting Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *Sacheon-ga* is performed by one person, as opposed to the case of *Chang-Geuk*. Especially, it successfully adopts the double-role structure of the original work. In the traditional performance, only one drum major is required. In the modern version, a variety of instruments like guitar and drum are used to arouse enthusiasm among audiences. Thrilling interludes contribute not only to communication with audiences, but also to inducement of impromptu and agile reactions from them. In addition, as actress, Lee works out a rapport with audiences through her masterly use of her voice and vocal techniques.

Graduating from the Seoul National University as music major in traditional Korean music, Lee debuted in 1984 with *My Name Ye-sol*. Actually, she lived immersed in *Pansori* since her childhood, and checks communicability with the world through her performances in Germany and Poland. Especially in 2010, he won the best actress award at the Kontakt International Theatre Festival in Poland.

### d. Korean Ritual and Musical:

#### LEE Sang-hee's 'Theatre Jiphyun' and JANG Seong-shik's 'KOPAC Theater'

It would not be an exaggeration to say that what may run in blood of Koreans as part of their emotion on performing arts must be contained in and resurfaced through Gut, or the shamanistic dancing ritual.

If LEE Sang-hee's "Theatre Jiphyun," and JANG Seong-shik's 'KOPAC Theater' hone their sophisticatedness, they will surely give a wonderful present to the Korean theatrical community.

### Works directed by LEE Sang-hee

Director LEE Sang-hee mostly spends his time in the Incheon area, and now leads the theatrical company Theatre Jiphyun with his wife. Assisting shaman LEE Sun-bee who has been designated as human cultural asset for his expertise in *Someori Gut*, he also serves as secretary general for LEE Sun-bee's organization. At the same time, he has been passionately running the company, and has played famous works such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *To the King*. Still fledging in some sense, his continuing effort will surely shine in the global market. Especially, the percussion performances he and his crew create are already recognized abroad, including Thailand, Italy, Great Britain and Hungary. There, his crew has been a regular invitee. Likewise, he is one of those most cherished guests at domestic festivals. He personally learns traditional music and dance genres and creates theatrical pieces, a rare attitude that is hard to see in this age. What makes LEE Sang-hee's works attractive is LEE Sang-hee's good command of *Gut*, as with actress/*Pansori* singer LEE Ja-ram. Thus, it will not be that long before we see LEE Sang-hee's works in full bloom.

### Works Directed by JANG Seong-shik

There is another type of comprehensive approach to tradition. It is director JANG Seong-shik of KOPAC Theater of Korea Performing Arts Center, Inc. He intends first to find out the emotions rooted in the traditions of Korean performing arts, and the spiritual canon. And then, he wishes to accomplish globalization through modernization of the emotions and the canon. For this, he studies how to dramatize Korean sound, color, line, and Korean concepts of space, time and nature. Everything from acting practice to writing to performance is being done in the context of modernization of tradition.

The works directed by Jang such as *Karma* (2002, 2003) and *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* (2000, 2002) serve as protocols for the KOPAC project "Korean Theatre," and have already been performed and lauded abroad.

Specifically, the Special Award went to *Karma* at the Hanoi International Festival for Experimental Theater that does not have the title "grand prize." The work looks into the life of an individual wallowing in the inherited hardship. In fact, it is an adapted version of Oedipus. Jang reinterpreted it from the Buddhist point of view. In 2003, it was invited at the Greek Antik Drama Festival. *Karma* is the prototype model of a traditional ritual, and *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* is the prototype model for Korean musical under the KOPAC project. The latter has induced a different tradition through constant plays.

### e. Case on Creation of New Types of Traditions:

#### *Hamlet from the East* directed by WON Young-oh of Theater Nottle

Unlike the aforementioned three artists, director Won majored in the French literature in college. Thus, he had never learned how to play traditional instruments or how to sing traditional songs. To avoid trapping himself in the mysticism of tradition, he boldly develops performances, aiming at universality and globalness.

*Hamlet from the East* is like a single fragmentary thought that sheds off the frame of language and shoots up into space, tearing off the space of reality. Free from the traditional development of the plot and the semantic linguistic world, mixture of sound and color leads audiences to take it as a faint reality, or a reality in dream, which might happen somewhere up in space. Therefore, audiences get immersed in it for 70 minutes.

This work was praised at the BeSeTo Theatre Festival, and the acting and directing crew of Theater Nottle are joining hands with a Japanese theatrical company to overcome geographic borders. Located in a small town outside Seoul, they consistently and passionately work on theatre. Their youthfulness is well demonstrated in *Woyzeck*, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, *The Return* and *Atelier* (co-produced with a Japanese theatrical company). Peeling off the old traditional fashion, they sharply put on handsome modern fashion. What they produce is modern theatrical pieces. They will surely soon be hailed in the world market. The key to success for Korean avant-garde practitioners lies in the shortened use of the long rope called tradition.

YANG Hye-sook

Theatre Critic



*Hamlet from the East*

## Leading Korean Directors in New Millennium

The directors introduced herein as leaders of next generation belong to a new theatrical era when they have to face the changes in Korean society, which are happening on all fronts since the start of the new millennium that began with the slogan neo-liberalism. Summed up as “too diverse, sporadic to be defined as mainstream,” the tendency of Korean theatre of this millennium is understood as an effort to internalize the radical social changes and to organize it as generational identity. And that is materialized as a tense balance among urban sense, formative experiment, historic, political and social realities, and the coarse life that abandons them.

Among them, what director/playwright SUNG Ki-woong adheres to is the reality of Korea where speedy pluralism, individualism burdened with heavy spending, collective feeling of bond, and the socially unadjusted live together. When turning the realities into a theatrical piece, Sung opts for exploration of the matters of “now and here” through overlapping of different spatiotemporal entities. Starting with *The Scientific Minded* in 2006, Sung translated and introduced Japanese playwright Hirata Oriza. By overlapping problems of the contemporary Japanese society with those of Korea, he depicted not only the cultural differences between the country, but also the contemporary universality through intersection of similar, but distinct spaces. On the other hand, in *Writer Gubo and People in Gyungsung* (2007) and *Our Happy Day of Youth* (2008), he laid down a time bridge transcending from the modernity in the 1930s and that in the 1990s. As his belief that theatre is language, Sung’s works are presented on a stage enriched with dialects of relevant times. But Sung insists that he has never instigated mobs openly. Instead, he whispers his opinions and positions privately. This shows an identity different from those of the previous generations that criticized unfairness in society through dramatic events.

For Koreans in their 20s and 30s, the survival game of neo-liberalism is a reality. At the same time, the young Koreans constitute the consuming group of Korean pop culture. Director and playwright KIM Jae-yeub not only appeals to their cultural sense, but also presents their special interest in reality. Kim depicted the shrunken young people through linguistic play in *Waiting for Ghost*, which won the grand prize at Keochang International Festival of Theatre. In *Where did today’s books disappear?* (2006) that deals with the past and the present of X generation, Kim shows the despair and reality of the “former” X generation who are now in their 30s. In the meanwhile, *Who Will Save 20s of Korea?* (2008) brings to our attention the young people who are called “professional part-timers.” They show grudge against the unyielding social establishment.

JANG Yoo-jeong and CHOO Min-ju are the directors who vigorously talk with the public through familiar subjects and warm topics in the form of musical that gains popularity day after day. Insisting on original musicals as opposed to regressive movicals and blockbuster musicals, they opt for small and moderate theaters than sizable and colorful ones. Jang talks about coarse life through quality works wherein music, story and dance harmoniously mingle in. But she never abandons warm heart. On the other hand, Choo speaks for temporary workers and alien workers, and their harsh realities through fresh speech and easy melody. Jang made commercial hits of *Oh! While You Are Sleeping* (2005), *Hey, Bro!* (2005), and *Finding Kim Jong-Wook* (2006). *Choo’s Ssukbujaengi* (2004), *Hot-blooded Woman Bingheogak* (2004) and *Washing* (2005) made hits.

KOO Tae-hwan and MOON Sam-hwa are the directors who faithfully study the canon and enrich themselves. After winning a prize at the Keochang International Festival of Theatre with *Looking for Name* (2006), Koo demonstrated his balanced ability to accurately dramatize renowned foreign works such as *The Trial* (2007), *The Cherry Orchard* (2008) and *The Gift of the Gorgon* (2009). After her debut with *The Praying Mantis* (2003), Moon has adapted and created various pieces including *Raybang* (2004), *Story of Sergeant Baek* (2006), *Good Night Mother* (2008) and *A Street Car Named Desire* (2010).

In the context of internalization of the foreign canon, KIM Hyun-tak does not seem much different from the other artists. But his focus as director is on internalization itself. Kim insists on re-creation of well-known works. As demonstrated in *Women in Red Forest* (2008) and *Hamlet* (2009), he re-created the canon, instead of translating and adapting them. His working method is very attractive. He internalizes the universality embedded in the canon with contemporary touches.

SEO Jae-heong and PARK Cheong-yi are the directors who try a variety of methods of expression to induce sympathetic pity from audiences. Taking office of artistic director at Hanguk Performing Arts Center, Seo has produced what might be called “theatre of active images.” Through a series of works such as *Die-hard Run* (2004), *The Disappearance of the Crown Prince* (2005), *Relay* (2006), *Hoya* (2010) and *A Tournament* (2010), Seo has stressed dynamic moves such as running and dancing, their images, and scripts that destroy simultaneity of ignition and motion. In addition, with this constant search for new forms, he moved his audiences to tears. On the other hand, Park colorfully and effectively depicted the harsh life, just as in a carnival of the coarse, without use of language in *Train* (2003) and *The Angel and the Woodcutter* (2007). In *Hotel Splendid* that explores the relations of history and individuals in earnest, he adopted a direct method of strongly stimulating the emotions of audiences.

KIM Ki-ran

Theatre Critic

### III. Korean Playwrights

# 1

## Discussion on YOON Dai-sung

Starting with *Departure* in 1967, YOON Dai-sung has produced more than three dozens of scripts for the past 40 years. He has pointed out issues over social structures and demise of humanity by means of various forms and witty language, and is now deemed as one of the most representative playwrights. He has put in his works the aspects of tragic human beings that crawl their ways out of a pit of meaningless life of unfair reality. His trial adopted all the merits from, for instance, the epic technique in metatheatre, the documentary features in psychological theatre, and the characteristics of traditional play. His use of double plot, which most strikingly characterizes dramatic form, is a strategic choice to turn the path to disorganization of metaphysical thinking and perception of reality. The synchronizing strategy in external dramas helps verify and understand the metaphysical world, while the distancing strategy in internal dramas provides a means of overthrowing the perceived world. Represented conflictingly through double structure, the world presents, to audiences, the two side as one single overlapped body in the entire drama. Through the mechanism, audiences become able to comprehend the object world, and simultaneously overcome the dominant contemporary ideology.

*The Success Story* is based on a real event of the survival story of a mineworker. Dramatic wit and ironic language dramatize such social problems as the pathological phenomena in Korean society shadowed by the speedy development, ecology of media and mental devastation of the contemporaries, and nonhumanization. Later, YOON turned a playwright. Then, Peter Weiss's work *Marat Sade* influenced and led him to creation of *Myth 1900* in 1982. In the drama, Yoon brought to realization the social madness and the structural irrationality by those with power in society. In *Myth 1900*, an innocent young man is accused of murder and later executed. The public depicted therein consciously and unconsciously contributes to sacrificing of an innocent man for their own interest, pleasure, honor and wealth. Illustrated as in *Myth 1900*, his works were dominated, up until the mid-turn of his career, by themes such as criticism and accusation of the media, which only serves the people in power, and frustration and feeling of being a loser derived from rotten society.

Motivated by the macroscopic focus of the world history and the changes in Korean society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the interest of Yoon shifted to individuals and internal matters of family. But he did not show any change in his tragic attitude human being and society. What changed was the shift of his attention from society in general to family



*If I Could Love a Person Once More* (2010)

affairs between married couples. In a trilogy on divorce (*Two Men and Two Women, Conditions for Divorce and Bye, honey*), couples represent the mutation of the oppressive and irrational world. Their agony and struggle gets fiercer, because, bounded in a family, they conflict on each and every daily matter. The conflict goes extreme between a man who is immersed in patriarchal society and a woman who no longer desires to be bound in the name of sacrifice. The patriarchal order in Korean society has regressed to a position where it no longer reflects practical values. Still, some men hallucinated by the idea try to find solace in young women. But the solace does not provide an alternative. In the end, men opt for death in the middle of absolute solitude and frustration (*Bye, honey*). The topic of the drama, however, is not limited to the problems of middle-aged men. It does deal with problems with the young or their children's generation, and shows the conflict of egoistic human nature and the diverse aspects of gender confrontation. The images of the men in the "divorce trilogy" portray Yoon's nihilistic recognition of reality. His works employ a slew of dramatic techniques to enhance tension on the audience side, including fine juxtaposition of the present and the past, parallelism of representation and imagination within the frame of a drama-embedded drama, psychological tools, and movie-like continuity.

Intensively highlighted in *If I Could Love a Person Once More* (2010) is the agony and emptiness of the elderly. The drama earned sympathy from the middle-aged and elderly audiences, propelled by the wide experience and the dedication of its elderly writer, director and actors/actresses. It reflects the changes occurring in the rapidly aging Korean society. Then, comes a suicide of a former TV producer more than 70 years old. It is driven by social isolation, economic poverty and loneliness brought about after retirement. The problems also agonize the retired screenwriter, the laid-off banker and the elderly actor, who visit his funeral. This drama stands out in that it faces the elderly life, which encounters the harsh reality in a post-industrial society. What keenly appeals to emotions is the internal state that is aroused through characters' moaning, dialog and self-scorning language. Watching the box containing the ashes of their friend, the characters realize the emptiness of being a human, and understand the meaning of their remaining lives under the collateral of death. Promising to create a musical out of their friends' life under the title *If I Could Love a Person Once More*, the three men reappraise the truth that life can continue as hope. The images of death and elderliness get visualized through vehicles such as ochreous tint shadowing the entire floor of Sanwoollim Theater, the smiling picture of the dead personal and the image of the cremation place elongated in diagonal line. The topic of the drama is also augmented through ironic contrast of an old man and a cell phone, and that of performance of a traditional Korean shamanistic dancing ritual and an older Korean pop song, in dovetail with an image of an elderly person. His capacity as playwright has earned Yoon numerous awards including a presidential award and the Best Script Award at the Seoul Theater Festival.

**CHANG Hye-jeon**

*Theatre Critic*

# 2

## Theatrical World of OH Tae-young: Focused on His Series on Reunification

### a. Career and Artistic Disposition

OH Tae-young (1948- ) debuted in 1987 by winning an award at the annual contest hosted by The JoongAng Daily for his *Walking Practice*. After that, he has won numerous awards such as Korea Drama Award in 1981, Modern Literature Award in 1987, and Korea Literature Award in 2006, and marked himself as one of the most representative Korean playwrights. During the 1980s when freedom of expression was smothered under censorship, his dramas mainly delved in existential matters through which realities in society were indirectly, rather than directly, expressed. From the late 1980s, social oppression got eased. Then, he began to release works critical of social problems, and *Prostitution* in 1988 was most illuminating in this respect. At that time, the Performance Ethics Board banned its run for alleged violation of social values. In fact, the board did not like the anti-US sentiment melted in the work. The writer and the theatrical company rebelled and continued the show. But in a week, the theater got shut down, arousing sensations in the Korean theatrical community. Triggered by the incident, the public outcry burst out for amendment of the Performance Act, and the Act indeed got revised in that autumn, striking the prior censorship clause out of the law. But a stigma of "nudity-pursuing writer" tailed Oh. Thus, he stopped creating any works for the ten years to come.

### b. Core of OH Tae-young's Theatrical World and Representative Works

The core of OH Tae-young's theatrical world is built around the form of fable or sarcasm, and satirical criticism of social and political issues. In the course of criticizing the existing social order, institutional power and social contradictions, his works sometimes produced social issues. That is why Oh's theatrical world draws attention in the Korean theatrical community that has been dominated by microeconomic themes since the 1990s. His dramatic world is a space where comic characters, sexual motifs and subversive imagination play. Full of subversive energy, his art pieces tear off the masks worn by negative figures to show their real faces. Unlike in realism, negativeness shows the world in a distorted mirror. And this feature serves as the ground for play of satire and criticism, and, at the same time, as an opportunity for audiences to look at reality from a critical distance.

His theatrical tendency underwent an important turnaround in the late 1990s when

the détente was fostering over two Koreas. He began to work on the theme of reunification since then. He produced *Reunification Express* for the first time in 10 years since *Prostitution*. This script was put on stage in the name of *Chotongmyeonok Restaurant* under the directorship of MIN Bok-ki. Including *Reunification Express*, his following works such as *Lard* (2000) and *Burning Sofa* (2001) are termed as “OH Tae-young’s re-unification series.”

Actually, numerous works tinted with socialism have dealt with the topic of reunification. Nonetheless, Oh’s series is important, since his works stab directly into the topic, as opposed to other writers’ works that appeal to emotion by focusing, for example, on separated families. All Koreans share the dire situations of Korean families separated between the borders, and, thus, it is an important matter. Therefore, it is easier to get close to the matter emotionally. Instead of taking up this easy approach, Oh tries to contain the public attitude toward reunification within his works.



### c. *Reunification Express*

*Reunification Express* throws a slew of implications as to reunification, piercing through our conscience about it. We seem to pursue our own interest, while wishing for one Korea on the surface. This conflicting attitude ultimately mirrors today’s ourselves. In this respect, this work breathes and lives as social drama. Unlike most dramatic works released from the 1990s, *Reunification Express* tackles a topic that Korean theatre must deal with. As the form, it is interesting the way *Reunification Express* turns a heavy topic

into a fun and playful drama. Everything unfolds like a prank, thereby, ironically making the core feel like an accessory. In short, despite the heaviness of the topic and the satirical criticism of society, Oh transfused light touches in the work through a unique form.

### d. *Bean Flour (Konggaru)*

In *Bean Flour*, politicians in South Korea manipulate a war crisis to their political interests. The topic of divided Korea poses numerous issues concerning from politics, to economy, to society, to education. One silver bullet may be reunification. At least, no one seems to deny the truth. But they differ in methodology. Each looks at reunification from a different viewpoint, and produces a different logic of enemy to back up his/her own argument. The drama *Bean Flour* depicts these circumstances under the disguise of a broken family. In *Bean Flour*, OH Tae-young tries to define who the enemy is; namely, who hamper(s) the reunification efforts, who deter(s) reunification arguing his/her/their own argument, whether the enemy is inside or outside, or whether the concept of enemy is fabricated from the beginning.



### e. Significance of OH Tae-young’s Reunification Dramas

Most of the works that take up the topic of reunification resort to emotional concepts such as meeting and departure, or focus on the hope expected from the unification. The trend arises out of the impossibility of melting such complicated problems as reunification into a short theatrical work. Despite the difficulty, Oh continued writing on unification series, and approached the subject with different topic and issue in each work. For example, he created a business that transforms division and unification, spun out a story in which the hope of reunification gets smashed by the powers, satirized the administrations that seek political breakthroughs in use of the crisis over the peninsula. For these characteristics, his works feel cold rather than warm, and sarcastic rather than hopeful. Even considering the shortcomings, his dedication to unification and its results (i.e. his reunification series) are worth the attention of the contemporary age.

**KIM Seon-uk**  
Theatre Critic

# 3

## Discussion on YOON Yeong-seon: Imagination Springing Out of Inner Part of Life and Landscape of Distorted Language



### a. Life and Career of YOON Yeong-seon

YOON Yeong-seon was born in 1954 in Haenam, Jeollanam-do Province of South Korea. But he had spent most of his days outside his hometown, which is reflected in his characters that do not speak local dialects, despite their births in rural areas. After graduating from the department of English language and literature at Danguk University, he taught English at school. Later he studied theatre at Stony Brook University, New York. Upon his return to

Korea in 1993, *Cross-eyed's Zen riddle* debuted him as a playwright.

Later in 1997, motivated by his living in New York, Yoon released *Manhattan #1* (1997), which had been played first in the United States in 1990. In addition, he wrote out *Kiss* (1997) that depicts loneliness from lack of communication in use of fantastic play of language and an omnibus format, and *Party* (1998) that yarns out a story on the sudden visits of grotesque neighbors and the fear about strangers. Again in the new millennium, he highlighted fragmented imagery and poetic language through an experimental form in *Tree Does Not Visit Shoe Store* (2000), and a neat and orderly epic description in *Travel* (2005), which is an exceptional feature found in his works.

Some in Korea would like to label him as weird. But he had built up his own unique world. He mostly devoted his life to exploration of the solitude of human beings and the original limitations of human relationships. However, he was a man with a warm heart, coveting drinking, climbing, trees and the cordial relationships with other individuals. Playwright and theatrical director, Yoon taught students at college for fertilization of Korean theatre. He produced 11 works until his death, and left 7 unreleased works. *Kiss* was selected as one of the best dramas of the year in 1997, and *Travel* won the best drama, the best script, the best performance and the best theatre design awards in 2006.

### b. Grotesque Hallucination Trickled into Theatrical Reality

Yoon's plays start with grotesque hallucination that suddenly trickles into reality. Watching his works, therefore, an unrealistic life feels like rushing into our living space where everything should be in order. That feeling may be a person, an illusion, an idea, or a call

from the past or from one's inside. Or, it may be a guilty feeling that he might have faced in a foreign land away from the oppressive reality, or an irresponsible responsibility. Answering the call, his characters are drawn into a direction that audiences have hardly expected.

Hidden over the path Yoon had trodden is something that is, like in *Grandpa Living in Refrigerator*, weird but hard to keep the eyes off. We realize whether or not and how much that "something" resembles our daily life, only after we watch Yoon's works. Our first reaction may be strange, fearful and unfamiliar. In the end, we realize "that something" has been "inside" or "next to" us for a long time. In short, he was a dedicated theatrical artist who tried to unfold before us an unseen and "not-easily-recognizable" world, but a world living and hiding close to us.

### c. Cognitive Enlargement Through Poetic Language

Among the dramatic components, what he dedicated himself to most was language. The language constituting his plays takes on the form that distorts our ordinary language. In addition, his dramatic plot seldom assumes a neat development of events; rather, it is woven with fragmented narrations and broken chapters. Thus, for those who enjoy consistent stories, his works, play or drama, impose confusing experiences.

For example, he tried to shed light on the identity of kiss by indefinitely and boringly repeating, say, "I am here and you are there" (*Kiss*), to spin out a figure of irrational life through incomprehensible questions and answers (*Cross-eyed's Zen riddle*), or to make audiences confused with a tantalizing monolog like "I want to become a tree" (*Tree Does Not Visit Shoe Store*).

Despite the different types of linguistic usage, they share one thing in common. It is a desire to even vaguely awake the figure of life existing on the back of the language by overthrowing mundane lists of words and standardized forms.

The desire functions as the original source of power transforming Yoon's theatrical language into an ordinary one or a different one. In this respect, his dramatic language is a language of poem, since the dramatic one reminds us of the extraordinary usage of ordinary language. As with poetry that crawls to and beyond the cognitive border, which is unreachable by language and recognition, by means of compressed and general expressions, his drama shows the inner side of our life. The poetic language of YOON Yeong-seon was his mental journey and artistic search toward completion of his theatrical goals of true life and realization.

KIM Nam-seok

Theatre Critic / Assistant Professor, Pukyong National University, Korea  
darkjedi@dreamwiz.com

# 4

## Major Contemporary Writers

Let's first go over the major Korean playwrights with the focus on recent plays put on stage in the new millennium. The recent works may not be representative of the writer under review. But it will contribute to comprehension of the entire stream of ethos. It is difficult to classify playwrights with different careers, award-winning histories, backgrounds and inclinations. However, they will be classified and examined for their expression of the modern Korean history and society through critical prism (e.g. LEE Kang-baek, JEONG Bok-geun and KIM Jeong-sook), for their attempts to interpret the existence through perspective on basic human desires (e.g. LEE Hae-jae and JANG Seung-hee), for their exploration of ups and downs of the modern history (e.g. ROH Kyung-shik and KIM Myung-hwa), and for their in-depth look into unfairness and irrationality in society (e.g. SEON Uk-hyun and KIM Han-kil). They faithfully reinforce the social function of theatre by addressing individual desire in their own ways, which arises out of conflicts with and suppression from such general and basic themes, or out of the conditions surrounding our lives such as history, institution and tradition.

### a. LEE Kang-baek's *Spring Days*: Allegory of Resistance to Oppression

Since his debut in 1971, LEE Kang-baek (1947- ) has written more than 40 plays, and published seven books. Poring over the modern society with his razor-sharp eyes, he has allegorically expressed the oppression under which the public suffered. *Spring Days* (1984 and 1997) was invited at Seoul Theater Festival in 2009, and played at Arko Arts Center under the directorship of LEE Sung-yeol. In *Spring Days*, Lee incorporated the story of a young girl into a story of seven sons standing up against the patriarchal father, or the character that symbolizes the government. Inserted during development of the plot are poems about spring, pictures, movies and letters in order to organize a double structure. The child girl is the allegorical symbol of the rejuvenation or the resistance to oppression, who revives the father and receives the love of the youngest son. His latest drama *To live or To Die* (2009) depicts a man who has been behind bars for 17 years for involuntary manslaughter and later tries to redeem himself from the sin. Heeding the identical treatment of living and death under the Korean language, Lee shows that they are complementary each other and ultimately one entity. It is a message to the aging Korean society about the matter of extinction.



### b. *The Burden* by JEONG Bok-geun: Raise of Issues about Historic Accountability

JEONG Bok-geun (1946- ) debuted in 1976. She has mainly dealt with historical issues by accommodating historic figures and incidents

in her plays. *The Burden* raises issues on the responsibility of Korea and Japan about history by means of an historic event concerning a Japanese warship "Ukisima." Ukisima sank into sea along with thousands of Korean forced laborers and their families onboard, while sailing them back to Korea. The Japanese government forcibly drafted them and made them work in Japan during the World War II. "The burden" symbolizes the unresolved historic event and the deep scars left in the minds of the surviving family members of the war victims. Her latest work *I Am You* (2010) deals with one of the most important historic figures in Korea – AHN Joong-geun, who fought against Japan during its occupation of Korea. She proposes to forgive and embrace his son AHN Joon-saeng, who worked for the Japanese occupying government.

### c. *Moon House* by ROH Kyung-shik: Reflection of Painful Memories of Modern History

For 45 years since his 1965 debut, ROH Kyung-shik (1938- ) published 5 books containing 28 plays. Taking motifs from historic incidents or contemporary events, Roh has shown how those events are presented in individuals' lives. As main character in *Moon House*, an elderly lady depicts the painful part of the Korean history after independence from the Japanese Occupation through her personal life. The Jeolla-do dialect well expresses the localism of the rural area of Namwon that serves as the setting in the drama. Translating and adapting *Road to Seoul* (1995) in a recreated French version (i.e. *Train to Seoul* 2008), he had a tour from Keochang International Festival of Theatre to Masan International Theatre Festival to Pohang Bada International Theater Festival. *Road to Seoul* pictures, through allegory, an unknown local scamp who tries to stop heavy, running trains at an isolated train station in a country, which implies resistance to political oppression imposed in the past in Korea.

**d. Assault on Cleaner's "Oasis" by KIM Jeong-sook:  
Pleasant Play Making Fun of Materialism**

KIM Jeong-sook (1960- ) first debuted as actress in 1982, and later as theatrical director in 1984. Then in 1989, she founded a theatrical company and has been writing various art pieces. She also paid attention to the Korean modern history scarred through civil war and national division. In the process, she has published three compilations of her plays. *Assault on Cleaner's "Oasis"* (2003) won a commercial success for its humorous and satirical allegory. Patrons of the cleaner's hear that the store stores a huge amount of inheritance, and assault it in the dark of the night to find it out. 30-year-old professional cleaner, KANG Tae-gook blames them for their greed, and cleans them in the Laundromat. The work won the best play award at the 2003 Donga Theater Awards.

**e. Dream in a Dream by JANG Sung-hee:  
Contemplation of Ever-Changing Life and Irony of Desire**



JANG Sung-hee debuted as playwright and theatrical critic in 1997. *Dream in a Dream* (2008) in her second compilation book contemplates the ever-changing life, and introduces an episode of selling dream in Samguk Yusa (三國遺事: the Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms). Focused on two sisters of KIM Yu-shin who unified three kingdoms, the work depicts the irony of desire spun out by the crossed journeys of lives of the two. It won the grand prize and the best play award at Seoul Theater Festival in 2008.

**f. The First Anniversary by KIM Myung-hwa:  
Critical View on Contradictions of History in Real Life**

Debuted as playwright and critic in 1997, KIM Myung-hwa (1966- ) has written plays that sharply see through the historic contradictions in reality from the feministic point of view. *The First Birthday* (2001) vividly unfolds how the unfairness in modern society is reflected in and presented through the life of each individual. The main character meets again with his old school buddies for the first time in 10 years. But their moral deformation and fall imply the institutional corruption and hypocrisy of society. Dry style and ironic humor was effective, and the realistic form of the drama left a strong impression. It won the Daesan Literary Award.



**g. Give Sunlight to the Haunted House by LEE Hae-jae:  
Play Full of Imagination in Wish for Purification**

Playwright and director, LEE Hae-jae portrays the basic human world of desire in a very unique way of imagination and language. Officially invited at Seoul Theater Festival in 1999 and 2000, at Seoul Theater Festival in 2010, *Give Sunlight to the Haunted House* is a place where legions of diverse pagan gods get together with diverse desires. But what is waged in the haunted house is what people do in life. *Give Sunlight to the Haunted House* employs the folktale concept of "guardian god of house" and a unique language, and yarns out a story about a spring-onion seller who has to live eternally in the house and live a life of the previous night. Here, the haunted house implies a deserted place where people beneath humanity live. Thus, it is wished that sunlight someday comes in and purify the spirits.



**h. Resident Parking Only by SUN Uk-hyeon:  
Pity, Sharp View on Contradictory Unfairness in Society**

Starting his career as actor, SUN Uk-hyeon (1968- ) debuted in 1995, as playwright, actor and director. He later founded a theatrical company Theater Feel-tong. He compiled plays in two books with each for Theatre of the Absurd and for the Korean backyard-performing drama or *Madang-Geuk*. Sun assets that he gets to burn his mental anger and accommodate the wishes of the world, through writing. His work of *Resident Parking Only* (2006) depicts in a comic way a murder arising out of a trivial argument about parking. What it really conveys to audiences are the urban problems such as egotism, intolerance, and distrust.

**i. Grief Or by KIM Han-gill:  
Warm Attitude Toward Socially Disadvantaged**

KIM Han-gill is a playwright, director, actor and leader of the theatrical company Cheonggukjang Repertory. He is a member of the 4<sup>th</sup> class of Hyehwadong 1<sup>st</sup> street, which is a group established in 1994 by the directors who pursue not commercialism, but pure artfulness. A music drama, *Grief Or* describes lives of the people living at the bottom of society such as "commercial" organ donors, people with disabilities, and hookers. The writer watches, with a warm heart, their search for love through their own sacrifice, and explores the true meaning of love.

**SONG Min-sook**  
Theatre Critic  
/ ryu1501@kornet.net

# 5

## Noticeable Korean Playwrights of Next Generation

For the past decade since the advent of the new millennium, about a dozen of young Korean playwrights continuously kept writing new plays. Among them are KIM Tae-woong, BAE Sam-shik, CHA Geun-ho, KIM Jae-yeub, KOH Sun-woong and HONG Won-ki. These young writers in their 30s and 40s also take on the role of director, and have endeavored to look into the past and the present histories of Korea.

### a. KIM Tae-woong:

#### Exploration of How Society and Arts Interchange Through *Yi*

KIM Tae-woong (1965- ) carries many titles before his name: playwright, director, professor at Korea National University of Arts, and CEO of the theatrical company Wooin Theatre. For the past ten years, he has mainly created orthodox plays based on his solid storytelling. The most famous of his works, *Yi*, was later recreated as a film *King and The Clown* (2005), and became a box office hit. Kim's play reinterprets the history under despot Yeonsangun through two clowns, JANG Saeng and KONG Gill. In an era rampant with violence, it helps think about the ultimate destinations of the desire for power, and of arts. In addition, Kim has written and directed *Symphony Balloon* (2001), *Happy Life* (2004), *Reflection* (2007) and *Ring Ring Ring* (2009). Furthermore, he adapted and directed a play of Machiavelli *Mandragola*. Previously in 2001, he won a couple of awards. So far, he has published three books (i.e. *Yi* (2004), *Reflection* (2007) and *Ring Ring Ring* (2010)

### b. BAE Sam-shik:

#### Well-Organized Structure built through Adaptation and Creation



As full-time playwright with Theatre Michoo, BAE Sam-shik (1970-) has worked on two genres: adaptation and creation of theatrical works. His famous work *White Cherry* (2009) remarkably deviates from his writing style. It is a scientific play wherein geology, paleontology, and horticultural knowledge are

melted. In it, Bae indifferently drew out the limitedness of life in indefinite circulation of time. On the empty stage where only a skinny fence of golden-bell tree is seen, various characters and episodes are well organized. His work of creation did not stop. He has

released new works almost every year: *November* (2000), *Barbarian Woman Ongnyo* (2001), *Choi Seung-Hee* (2003), a monodrama *Fairy in the Wall* (2005), *Yeolhailgi Manbo* (2007), *The World of Silver* (2008), a traditional Korean drama, *Sassy Man Mr. Park* (2008), *Gertrude Poisoned* (2008), and a dance drama *Princess Nakrang* (2009). He is to run a new version of *Oedipus* in 2011 to celebrate the National Drama Company of Korea, which will be launched as a new organization. He will reportedly interpret the ancient Greek tragedy by means of traditional Korean dance and music. He won the grand prize and the best play award at Donga Theater Awards with *Yeolhailgi Manbo* in 2007, along with another award at Daesan Literary Award for the same play, Kim Sang Yeol Theatre Award in 2008, and the best play award at Donga Theater Awards with *White Cherry* in 2009.

### c. CHA Geun-ho: Exploration of Human Existence and Desire Through Reinterpretation of Historic Figures

CHA Geun-ho (1972- ) is a playwright, director and president of the theatrical company MPC Field. He had usually released epic dramas. Of late, his focus is beginning to shift to basic human desire. His famous work *Turandot Wearing Armor* is the result of reinterpreting the *Turandot* folktale in a Korean way. This work depicts the human adherence to the repetitive history of killing each other. Unlike the original, Cha's reinterpretation emotionally describes a prince who tries to sever the bloody history of revenge. Other famous works by him are *Ritual Place for the Kings of Chosun Dynasty* (1999), *Story of Hero from Dark Legend* (2000), *Millenium Kingdom Year 1623* (2000), *Origin of Love* (2000), *House* (2003), *Good Kill* (2005), *Murder Lesson* (2006), *Lucid Dream* (2010), *Pairan* (2008), and *Every Man* (2010) that is the adapted version of a religious drama from the Middle Ages. In 2000, he won an award at Donga Theater Awards with *Ritual Place for the Kings of Chosun Dynasty*, and another one at the Samsung Literature Award with *Story of Hero from Dark Legend*. He has published *Ritual Place for the Kings of Chosun Dynasty* in 2010, which is a compilation of play scripts.

### d. KOH Sun-woong: Dramaturgy Filled with Thick Satire and Wit

KOH Sun-woong (1968- ), CEO of leading play factory Mabangzen, is also a playwright and director. His famous *Steel King* (2009) is about a dancer who becomes an iron man under repeating stress. Its settings may be somewhat fantastic. But what it really holds in itself are social issues such as the conflict between employees and employers, the conflict between rich people and the confrontation between capital and art. His comic imagination takes life through thrilling actions and witty language. His other works are

*Rakheeman Show* (1999), *Vagabond*, CHUNG Yeo-rim (2000), *Barber* PARK Bong-gu (2001), *Chronicle of Coexistence of Natural Enemies* (2001), *Caligula No.1237*, *Marijuana* (2006), *Moon of Buffalo* (2010) and *Mermaid City* (2010); adapted works are *Woman of Sand* (2009) and *Elder Brother*



Steel King

*Came Back* (2010); and adapted musicals are *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (2003) and *Namhansung* (2009). His *Chronicle of Coexistence of Natural Enemies* brought him an Ockrang Drama Award.

#### e. HONG Won-ki:

#### New Interpretation and Exploration of History and Canon

Uniquely, HONG Won-ki (1959-) is an actor-turned-playwright. Heavily influenced by his mentor OH Tae-suk, HONG Won-ki drew attention for his style and reinterpretation of history. His famous *King Father* is a reinterpretation of the Korean epic shaman song *Baridegi*, and is associated with Shakespeare's *King Lear* as well. Felt like an ancient folktale, this art piece leads us to rethink about attachment to the feudalistic order, the desire for power and the ensuing struggles, and the true meaning of family amidst the problems. This work was played overseas including Japan (three runs), Hungary and Lithuania. His works include



King Father

*Cheonmado* (1998), *Goguryeo Blues* (1999), *Sseul Dangun* (1999), *Wife the General* (2000), *Non Gae* (2001), *Sphinx*, *Family Theater* (2003), *The Host of the Wind* (2004), *Whale Island* (2006) and *Hotel of Morning Calm* (2010). *Cheonmado* earned him a Samsung Literature award in 1996, *Sseul Dangun* an Ockrang Drama award in 1999, and *King Father* a Kim Sam-yeol Drama Award in 2002.

By LEE Jai-myung

Theatre Critic

## IV. Directory

### MAJOR ART CENTERS

#### Chongdong Theater

Opened in 1995 as a wing of the National Theater of Korea, Chongdong Theater became incorporated in 1997. It hosts a series of events for the urban workers and residents, including a free concert for workers during lunch break.

**Homepage:** [www.chongdong.com](http://www.chongdong.com)

**Address:** 41 Jeong-dong-gil, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-751-1500

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 334

#### HANPAC(Hanguk Performing Arts Center)

In an effort to create the nation's leading performing theater, The Arko Arts Theater merged its creative forces with Daehangno Arts Theater to become the Hanguk Performing Arts Center(HanPAC).

**Homepage:** <http://www.hanpac.or.kr>

**Address:** 1-67 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-ru, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-3668-0029

#### ▶ The Arko Arts Theater

Opened in 1981, AAT has served the Korean performing arts community as a specialized theater, it had presented 22,255 performances by the end of 2007 to 4,497,639 visiting viewers. The main hall is W15m x D 17m x H 7.8m, and the small hall is W11.8m x D 15.4m x H 4.9m.

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 608 (Main Hall), 150 (Small Hall)

#### ▶ The Daehangno Arts Theater

DAT opened with the purpose of motivating the performance arts movement in

Daehangno. The theater has 4 basement level floors and 5 ground level floors with a main hall that has 504 seats and a small hall which can accommodate 150 audience members.

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 504 (Main Hall), 252 (Small Hall)

#### LG Arts Center

Opened on March 27, 2000, LG Arts Center is a superb multi-purpose cultural venue for performing arts. The Center aims to provide the artists with one of the best spaces for artistry, the audience with the best services, and to promote the Korean performing arts creativity and diversity. As a future-oriented, multi-purpose auditorium that can accommodate diverse fields of art, from music to dance to drama to choral, the Center has the capacity of 1,103 seats throughout three floors with the stage dimensions of 16.4m in width and 25m in depth.

**Homepage:** [www.lgart.com](http://www.lgart.com)

**Address:** 679 Yeoksam Dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-2005-0114

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 1,103

#### Myeongdong Theater

Myeongdong Theater, the former national theater of Korea, reopened June 2009. The new 'Myeongdong Theater' remains to have the old facade of its former with partial remodeling on the first floor, considering its architectural heritage. However its inside is totally changed into a perfect place for theatre-oriented performances. As Korea's core producer of classic and new works, it maintains close relationship with many international and national

artists. With the respect for traditions and challenge toward creativity, The Myeongdong contribute to the development of Korean theatre.

**Homepage:** [www.mct.or.kr](http://www.mct.or.kr)

**Address:** Myeong-dong 1 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 1644-2003

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 558

#### Namsan Arts Center

On June 8, 2009, Drama Center was reborn through renovation as Namsan Arts Center. Its predecessor, Drama Center, led the efforts to promote Korean theatre in the 1960s and 1970s. It serves as a multi-purpose cultural facility, which houses a theatrical performing space and an art education center. Thereby, it provides diverse experiences to its visitors including creation of performing art pieces and art education.

**Homepage:** [www.nsartscenter.or.kr](http://www.nsartscenter.or.kr)

**Address:** 8-19 Yejang-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-758-2000

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 480

#### Sejong Center for Performing Arts

Opened to the public on April 14, 1978, Sejong Center for Performing Arts ranks among the top 10 arts centers in the world. Now, it serves as a mecca of Korean performing arts, and was a cradle of fine arts from the 1970s to the 1980s. It became a foundation in 1999, and consists of diverse facilities such as Chamber Hall and M Theater. The center has a total of 102 stage-turning battens, enabling rotation and horizontal moves of the stages. Opened in 2007 as medium-sized hall, the M Theater, as a multi-purpose facility, carries out all types of performances.

**Homepage:** [www.sejongpac.or.kr](http://www.sejongpac.or.kr)

**Address:** 81-3 Sejong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-399-1111

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 3,022 (Grand Theater), 609(M Theater), 443 (Chamber Hall)

#### Seoul Arts Center

Sitting on an area of 43,512m<sup>2</sup>, Seoul Arts Center was opened in 1993. It accommodates all types of performing arts including opera, musical, drama and dance, along with traditional and avant-garde performances. Opera Theater has a proscenium structure, equipped with various state-of-the-art devices, a 450m<sup>2</sup> main stage and 27 dressing rooms. Towol Theater is a sized-down copy of Opera Theater, while Jayu Theater has an elevating stage.

**Homepage:** [www.sac.or.kr](http://www.sac.or.kr)

**Address:** 700 Seocho-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-580-1300

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 2,200 (Opera Theater), 670 (Towol Theater), 258 (Jayu Theater)

#### The National Theater of Korea

The theater promotes Korean culture through diverse programs, such as youth-oriented performance arts festivals for the youth, four-season festivals (the White Night Festival (every season; four times a year) and free outdoor cultural programs offered free of charge. It also organizes carries out projects and performances to engage the public in cultural activities and introduce s world-renowned productions from abroad around the world.

**Homepage:** [www.ntok.go.kr](http://www.ntok.go.kr)

**Address:** 14-67 Janchung-dong 2 Ga, Seoul, Korea

**Tel:** 82-2-2280-4114

**Capacity (No. of seats):** 1,563 (Main Hall 'HAE'), 427 (Small Hall 'DAL'), 100(Studio Byeol), 732 (KB Haneul Youth Theater)

## LOCAL ART CENTERS

#### Seoul Metropolitan City

Name (Capacity or No. of Seats)

Address

Tel

#### Arirang Art Hall (100)

51-49 Donam-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-927-3414

#### Arko Arts Theater: Big Theater (608), Little Theater (132)

100 Daehang-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-3668-0007

#### Arong-guji Theater (Small size)

1-54 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-741-5978

#### Bukchon Changwoo Theater (Small capacity)

158-2 Wonseo-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-747-3809

#### Changmu Post Theater (Small capacity) 5-92 Changcheon-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-337-5961

#### Charlotte Theater (1,240)

40-1 Jamsil-dong, Songpa-gu, Seoul, Korea

1644-0078

#### Chongdong Theater (334)

41 Jeongdong-gil, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-751-1500

#### ChungA Theater (Small capacity)

195 Hyeohwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-741-1837

#### Chungdol Theater (Small capacity)

1-97 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

82-2-764-5715

#### Chungmu Art Hall: Grand Theater (1,231), Middle Theater Black (327), Small Theater Blue (258)

131 Heungin-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2230-6600

#### Coex Art Hall (186)

159 Samsung-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-6000-0114

#### Coex Artum (808)

159 Samsung-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-739-8288

#### Daehangno Art: Madang 1 (276), 2(230), 3(230), 4(232)

139 Ehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-747-2117

#### Daehangno Arts Theater (504)

1-67 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3668-0029

#### Daehangno Culture Place: Eda 1st Wing (373), 2nd Wing(158)

1-75 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-762-0010

#### Daehangno live Theater (300)

1-94 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-744-6700

#### Daehangno Star City (Small size)

Star City Bldg., B2, 113-1 Myeongnyun-dong 4 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-747-9139

#### Danmak Theater (Small capacity)

12-6 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-765-1544

#### Dong Soong Art Center (450), Small Theatre (small capacity)

1-5 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-766-3390

#### Dong Soong Art Center: Yonkang Hall (620), Space 111 (Small capacity)

Doosan Arts Center, 270 Yeonji-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-708-5001

**Dongsoong Stage Small Theater (Small capacity)**

109-1 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-765-7073

**Doore Hall 1 (Small capacity)**

1-78 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-741-5978

**Dream Forest Arts Center performance Hall (283)**

Mt. 28-6 Beon-dong, Kangbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2289-5401

**Erang Theater (180)**

187-12 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-766-1717

**First Fire Cecil Theater (200)**

3-7 Jeong-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-736-7600

**Ggum Art Hall (Small capacity)**

21st Century Bldg., 5th Fl., 1-33 Dongsung-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-766-2022

**Hakchon Blue Theater (Small capacity)**

1-79 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-763-8233

**Hakchon Green Theater (Small capacity)**

1-8 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-763-8233

**Haneol Theater (Small capacity)**

70-1 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-766-7010

**Hansung Art Hall (Small capacity)**

41-4 Myeongnyun-dong 2 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-741-0251

**Hanyang Repertory Theater (90)**

185 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-764-6460

**Happy Theater (Small size)**

10-17 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-747-2090

**Hoam Art Hall (643)**

7 Sunhwa-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul 100-759, Korea  
82-2-751-9607

**Humanistic Globe Theatre in Seoul, Korea (110)**

Dongmaru Bldg., 4th Fl., 178-1 Yeongseon-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-764-4600

**Ina Theater (Small capacity)**

21-10 Myeongnyun-dong 2 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-763-2151

**Jeongbo Little Theater (Small size)**

1-81 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3673-0554

**Jungmiso Theater (Small capacity)**

199-17 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3672-3001

**KEPCO (Korea Electric Power Corporation) Art Center (1,000)**

34 Ssukgogae-gil, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2105-8133

**Kim Dong-su's Playhouse (Small capacity)**

Dongmaru Bldg., B1, 178-1 Yeongseon-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3675-4675

**KT&G Sangsang Art Hall (422)**

1002 Daechi-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3404-4311

**Kumho Art Hall (390)**

57 Shinmunno 1 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-6303-7700

**Lee Hae-rang Art Theater (302)**

26 Pil-dong 3 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2260-8901

**LG Arts Center (1,103)**

679 Yeoksam-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2005-114

**Life Theater Tree and Water (Small capacity)**

8-1 Myeongnyun-dong 2 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-745-2124

**LIG Art Hall (157)**

649-11 Yeoksam-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-6900-3900

**Madang Sesil Theater (Small capacity)**

192-18 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-747-5773

**Mapo Art Center: Art Hall Mac (Medium size), Play Mac (Small size)**

85 Guminhoigwan-gil, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3274-8614

**Maronie Theater (Small capacity)**

130-47 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-744-686

**Mimaji Art Center: Nunbit Theater (282), Pulbit Theater (109), Oasis Theater (100)**

1-133 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-6404-5005

**Miracle Theater (Small capacity)**

Daehak Bldg., 4th Fl., 1-145 Dongsung-dong  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-742-7261

**Muin Little Theater (Small size)**

4-69 Myeongnyun-dong 1 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-744-8174

**Munhwailbo Hall (260)**

68 Chungjeong-no 1 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3701-5754

**Myeongdong Theater (558)**

54 Myeong-dong 1 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
1644-2003

**Myungbo Art Hall (354)**

18-5 Cho-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2274-2121

**Naksan Theater (Small capacity)**

201 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3676-5551

**Namsan Arts Center (480)**

8-19 Yeojang-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
(Previously known: Namsan Drama Center)  
82-2-758-2000

**Naru Culture & Art Center (656)**

375 Neungdongno, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2049-4700

**Newcore Theater (200)**

70-2 Jamwon-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-530-5000

**Samilro Changgo Theater (Small size)**

1-20 Jeo-dong 1 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-319-8020

**Samtoh Bluebird Theater (180)**

1-115 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-763-8961

**Sanwoollim Theater (150)**

327-9 Seogyo-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-334-5915

**Sejong Center for Performing Arts (3,022)**

81-3 Seojong-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-399-1111

**Seodaemun Art Hall (650)**

163 Migeun-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-362-3820

**Seoul Arts Center (2,200)**

700 Seocho-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-580-1300

**Seoul Open Theatre Changdong (879)**

1-6 Chang-dong, Dobong-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-994-1465

**Seoul Performing Art Hall (781)**

30-3 Daeheung-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3274-8613

**Seoul Universal Arts Center (1,082)**

25 Neung-dong, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, Korea  
070-7124-1740

**Sewoo Art Center (Small size)**

1-61 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-6409-901

**Shinyon Art Hall (Small capacity)**

1-37 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3676-0282

**Studio 76 (Small capacity)**

180 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-766-9252

**The Good Theater (Small capacity)**

185 Hyehe-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
070-8633-6307

**The National Theater of Korea (1,563)**

14-67 Jangchung-dong 2 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2280-4114

**Theater Experiment Hyewhadont 1 (Small capacity)**

88-1 Hyehe-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-761-810

**Theater Arirang (Small capacity)**

1-153 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-741-5332

**Theater Chukje (Small capacity)**

111-2 Myeongnyun-dong 4 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-765-5625

**Theater Egg and Nucleus (Small capacity)**

1-140 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-745-8833

**Theater PMC (120)**

Village Bldg., 3rd Fl., 1-48 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3674-5555

**Theater Woori (Small capacity)**

113-1 Myeongnyun-dong 4 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-745-0308

**Theater Yeonwoo (Small capacity)**

53-9 Hyehe-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-744-5701

**Theater Yong (805)**

168-6 Yongsan-dong 6 ga, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, Korea  
1544-5955

**Theater Zero (Small capacity)**

364-4 Seogyo-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-323-6812

**Top Art Hall (Small capacity)**

50-20 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-747-3066

**Valentine Theater (Small size)**

641-11 Deungchon-1-dong, Kangseo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2659-6003

**Wonder Space (Donggeurami Theatre, Semo Theatre, Nemo Theatre) (Small capacity)**

163-24 Hyehe-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-763-1355

**Woosuk Repertory Theater (Small capacity)**

192-8 Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-765-7501

**Youngsan Art Hall (621)**

Kukmin Ilbo Bldg., B2, 12 Yeouido-dong, Yeongdeung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-761-1587

**Gyeonggi-do Province & Incheon Metropolitan City****Ansan Arts Center:**

**Headoji Theater (1,368), Dalmaji Theater (686), Byeolmuri Theater (142)**  
14 Hwaajeongcheondong-gil, Danwon-gu, Ansan City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-481-4000

**Anyang Foundation for Culture and Arts's**

**Anyang Art Center:**  
**Gwanak Hall (1,127), Suri Hall (382)**  
36 Munye-ro, Manan-gu, Anyang City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-687-0500

**Bucheon Citizen Hall:**

**Main Hall (1,218), Small Hall (352)**  
14 Hanareum-Maeul-ro, Wonmi-gu, Bucheon City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-32-320-6300

**Bupyeong Arts Center:**

**Haenuri Theater (893), Dainuri Theater (355)**  
186-411 Sipheong-dong, Bupyeong-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
82-32-500-2000

**Gapyeong Culture and Arts Center Main Hall (641)**

320 Daegok 2 ri, Gapyeong County, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-580-4800

**Gimpo Citizen Hall Multipurpose Hall (200)**

6 Bukbyeon 1 gil, Gimpo City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-997-3803

**Goyang Oulimnuri:**

**Oulim Theater (1,242), Aram Theater (1887)**  
777 Seongsa-dong, Deokyang-gu, Goyang City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-960-0300

**Goyang-si Culture and Arts Center Main Hall (474)**

10 Goyangsicheong-no, Deokyang-gu, Goyang City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-965-2957

**Gunpo Culture and Art Center:**

**Grand Hall (1,129), Small Hall (422)**  
196 Dangsang-no, Gupo City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-390-3500

**Gwacheon Citizen Hall:**

**Big Theater (929), Small Theater (380)**  
11 Dongyeong-gil, Gwacheon City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-2-504-7300

**Gyeonggi Arts Center:**

**Grand Hall (1,887), Small Hall (281)**  
816 Madu-dong, Ilsandong-gu, Goyang City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-960-0180

**Gyeonggi Arts Center:**

**Grand Hall (1559), Small Hall**  
35 Munhwa-ro, Paldal-gu, Suwon City, Gyeonggi Province 442-835, Korea  
82-31-230-3440

**Haksan Small Theater (Small size)**

Yonghyeong-dong Administrative District Office, 4th Fl., 81-8 Yonghyeon-4-dong, Nam-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
82-32-866-3993

**Hanam Arts Center:**

**Gumdan Hall (911), Arang Hall (367)**  
694 Deokpung-dong, Hanam City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-790-7979

**Hwaseong Art Hall (720)**

734 Byeongjeom-dong, Hwaseong City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-267-8800

**Icheon Art Hall:**  
**Main Hall (1,200), Small Theater (451)**  
 490 Jungri-dong, Icheon City, Korea  
 82-31-644-2100

**Icheon Culture and Arts Center:**  
**Main Hall (1332), Small Hall (524)**  
 80 Munhwahwigwan-gil, Namdong-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
 82-32-427-8401

**Icheon Educational and Cultural Center For Students: Main Hall (600), Small Hall (220)**  
 5 Inhyeon-dong, Jung-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
 82-32-777-9140

**Icheon Seogu Culture Hall:**  
**Main Hall (957), Small Hall (200)**  
 256 Seodalsan-gil, Useo-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
 82-32-580-1150

**KPU (Korea Polytechnic University) Art Center (305)**  
 2121 Jeongwang-dong, Siheung City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-8041-0961

**Ojeong Art Hall (404)**  
 Boksagol Cultural Center, 17 Hanareum-Maeul-ro, Wonmi-gu, Bucheon City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-32-320-6300

**Osan Culture and Arts Center:**  
**Main Theater (860), Small Theater (200)**  
 365 Gangbyeon-ro, Osan City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-378-4255

**Pocheon Banwoel Art Hall:**  
**Big Theater (900), Small Theater (257)**  
 Pocheon Banwoel Art Hall, 153 Cheongseong-ro, Gunnae-myeon, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-540-6213

**Samho Art Center (337)**  
 1124 Ingye-dong, Paldal-gu, Suwon City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-234-6200

**Sungnam Arts Center:**  
**Opera House (1,804), Ensemble Theater(378)**  
 757 Yatap-dong, Budang-gu, Seongnam City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-783-8000

**Suwon Citizen Hall Main Hall (458)**  
 81 Paldal-gongwon-gil, Paldal-gu, Suwon City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-244-2161

**UiJeongbu Arts Center:**  
**Main Theater (1,025), Small Theater (237),**  
 323 Uijeongbu-2-dong, Uijeongbu City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-828-5841

**Yangju Culture and Arts Center:**  
**Main Theater (1470), Small Theater (355)**  
 94 Gwonyul-ro 1487 gil, Gwangjeok-myeon, Yangju City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-828-9707

**Yongin Culture and Arts Center Auditorium (798)**  
 704 Mapeyeong-dong Cheoin-gu, Yongin City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
 82-31-321-6581

**Other Localities**  
**Gangwon-do Province**

**Chuncheon Culture and Art Center Hall (1,003)**  
 Mt. 40-2 Hyoja-1-dong, Chuncheon City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-251-3474

**Gangneung Dano Cultural Center Main Hall (485)**  
 1 Danojang-gi, Kangneung City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-640-4951

**Gangneung-si Culture and Arts Center Main Hall (438)**  
 76 Jonghap-Wundongjang-gi, Kangneung City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-647-2004

**Hongcheon Cultural Arts Center:**  
**Main Theater, Small Theater (506)**  
 67-2 Galmagok-ri, Hongcheon County, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-434-8976

**Momjit Theatre (154)**  
 531 Hyoja-dong, Chuncheon City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-251-0531

**Taeback Culture Art Hall (796)**  
 49-225 Hwangji-dong, Taebaek City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-550-2781

**Wonju Chiak Arts Hall (720)**  
 99 Seowon Blvd., Wonju City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
 82-33-737-2538

**Chungcheongnam-do Province**

**Asan-si Citizen Life Hall (509)**  
 78 Namsan-no, Asan City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-537-3913

**Boryeong Culture and Art Center:**  
**Main Hall (820), Small Hall (200)**  
 77 Seongjusan-no, Boryeong City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-930-3510

**Cheonan Citizen Culture Hall:**  
**Main Theater (998), Small Theater (200)**  
 417-1 Shinbu-dong, Cheonan City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-521-2854

**Cheongyang Cultural and Arts Center:**  
**Main Hall (735), Small Hall (213)**  
 250 Guncheongdae-ro, Cheongyang County, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-940-2360

**Dangjin Culture and Art Center:**  
**Main Theater (1,018), Small Theater (300)**  
 1062 Eupnae-ri, Dangjin County, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-350-4772

**Geumsandarawon:**  
**Main Theater (796), Small Theater (280)**  
 68-9 Yangjeon-ri, Geumsan County, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-750-4413

**Gongju Culture and Arts Center:**  
**Main Theater (775), Small Theater (190)**  
 283 Ongjin-dong, Gongju City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-840-2467

**Nonsan Culture and Arts Center:**  
**Main Hall, (587) Small Hall (180)**  
 270 Simin-no, Nonsan City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-730-4631

**Seosan City Culture Hall:**  
**Main Hall (601), Small Hall (100)**  
 150 Munhwa-ro, Seosan City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-660-2566

**Taeon Culture and Arts Center (687)**  
 9-7 Dongmun-ri, Daeon County, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-670-2257

**Yeongi-gun Culture and Arts Center Main Hall (913)**  
 226-1 Chimsan-ri, Yeonggi County, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
 82-41-861-2311

**Chungcheongbuk-do Province**

**Cheongju Arts Center Main Hall (1,493), Small Hall (296)**  
 329 Heungdeok-no, Heungdeok-gu, Cheongju City, Chungcheongbuk-do Province, Korea  
 82-43-200-4421

**Eumseong Culture and Arts Center Main Hall (600)**

102 Yesul-no, Eumseong County,  
Chungcheongbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-43-871-3883

**Okcheon Culture and Art Center (478)**

32 Bunjeong-1-gil, Okcheon County,  
Chungcheongbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-43-730-4891

**Jeollabuk-do Province****Buan Art Center (503)**

222-1 Dongjung-ri, Buan County, Jeollabuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-63-580-4191

**Gochang Culture Center (625)**

188 Eupnae-ri, Gochang County, Jeollabuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-63-560-2321

**Gimje Culture and Arts Center (488)**

280-1 Gyo-dong, Kimjae City, Jeollabuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-63-540-4171

**Iksan Somri Culture and Arts Hall:****Main Hall (603), Small Hall (371)**

58 Ma-dong, Iksan City, Jeollabuk-do Province,  
Korea  
82-63-858-4830

**Jeongeup Cultural and Arts Center (605)**

87-2 Sigi-3-dong, Jeongeup City, Jeollabuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-63-539-6410

**Sori Arts Center of Jeollabuk-do (666)**

Mt. 1-1 Deokjin-dong 1 ga, Deokjin-gu, Jeonju  
City, Jeollabuk-do Province, Korea  
82-63-270-8000

**There Saramsesang Theater (Small size)**

779-7 Naun-1-dong, Gunsan City, Jeollabuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-63-468-2139

**Jeollanam-do Province****Damyang-gun Culture Center:****Main Hall (670), Small Hall (144)**

112-6 Jichim-ri, Damyang County, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-380-3144

**Goheung Culture and Arts Center:****Main Hall (583), Small Hall (180)**

991 Hohyeong-ri, Goheung County, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-835-2439

**Gwangyang Culture and Arts Center:****Main Hall (545), Small Hall (189)**

9-30 hyanggyo-gil, Wusan-ri, Gwangyang City,  
Jeollanam-do Province, Korea  
82-61-797-2528

**Jangheung Culture and Art Center (496)**

60 Namdong-ri, Jangheung County, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-862-6071

**Haenam Cultural and Arts Center:****Main Hall (760), Small Hall (400)**

4 Seongnae-ri, Haenam County, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-530-5451

**Mokpo Culture and Arts Center (698)**

100 Namnong-no, Mokpo City, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-270-8484

**Muan Seungdal Culture and Arts Center:****Main Hall (388), Small Hall (200)**

127-4 Gyochon-ri, Muan County, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-450-5665

**Naju Culture and Arts Center (800)**

771-2 Songwuel-dong, Naju City, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-330-8530

**Suncheoncity Culture And Art Center:****Main Hall (950), Small Hall (152)**

24 Samsan-ro, Suncheon City, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-749-3516

**Yeosu Citizen Hall (960)**

42-4 Gwangmu-dong, Yeosu City, Jeollanam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-61-690-7220

**Gwangju Metropolitan City****Gwangju 5.18 Commemoration Culture Center(802)**

152 Naebang-no, Seo-gu, Gwangju City, Korea  
82-62-376-5197

**Gwangju Culture and Art Center:****Main Theater (1,732), Small Theater (509)**

855 Bukmun-no, Buk-gu, Gwangju City, Korea  
82-62-510-9252

**Gwangju National Museum Nurigwan(250)**

Mt. 83-3 Maegok-dong, Buk-gu, Gwangju City,  
Korea  
82-62-570-7000

**Busan Metropolitan City****Busan Citizen Hall:****Main Theater (1,624), Small Theater (335)**

830-31 Beomil-2-dong, Dong-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-630-5200

**Busan Cultural Center:****Main Hall (1,423), Middle Hall (781),****Small Hall (249)**

848-4 Daeyeon-4-dong, Nam-gu, Busan City, Korea  
82-51-607-6070

**Busan Democracy Park:****Main Theater (419), Small Theater (116)**

Mt. 10-16 Yeongju-dong, Jung-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-790-7400

**Garam Art Hall (143)**

965-2 Daeyeon-dong, Nam-gu, Busan City, Korea  
82-51-621-6669

**Geumjeong Cultural Center:****Main Theater (868), Small Theater (330)**

481 Guseo-1-dong, Geumjeong-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-519-5651

**Haeundae Cultural Center:****Main Hall (495), Multi-purpose Hall (110)**

108 Yangun-no, Haeundae-gu, Busan City, Korea  
82-51-749-7651

**Mirinae Little Theater (Small size)**

129-14 Sajik-3-dong, Dongnae-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-504-2544

**Theater Kamagol (170)**

18-22 Geojye-dong, B1, Yeonjye-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-868-5955

**Theater of Kyungsung University:****Concert Hall(449), Small Theater(220)**

110-1 Daeyeon-3-dong, Nam-gu, Busan City,  
Korea  
82-51-620-4114

**Yeongdo Culture and Arts Center:****Bongrae Hall (451), Jeolyoung Hall (188)**

25 Sinjungni-gil, Yeongdo-gu, Busan City, Korea  
82-51-419-5561

**Gyeongsangbuk-do Province****Andong Citizen Hall (884)**

344 Myeongnyun-dong, Andong City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-840-6550

**Cheonma Arts Center (1,889)**

214-1 Dae-dong, Gyeongsan City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-53-810-1527

**Gimcheon Culture and Art Center:**

**Main Hall (937), Small Hall (192)**  
500-1 Samnak-dong, Gimcheon City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-420-7820

**Gumi Art Center:**

**Main Theater (1,211), Small Theater (360)**  
75 Songjeong-dong, Gumi City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-451-3040

**Gunwi Art and Center (457)**

155 Dongbu-ri, Gunwi County, Gyeongsangbuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-54-380-6871

**Gyeongsangbuk-do Cultural for Students:**

**Main Theater (1,146), Small Theater (173)**  
Mt. 255 Yangdeok-dong, Buk-gu, Pohang City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-245-7715

**Mungyeong Culture and Art Center:**

**Main Hall (884), Munhee Art Hall (310)**  
118 Jeomcheon-dong, Mungyeong City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-553-3214

**Pohang Arts Center:**

**Main Hall (982), Small Small (266)**  
230 Saneop-no, Nam-gu, Pohang City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-272-3033

**Sungju Art and center (822)**

45 Seongsan 9-gil, Seongju County,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-933-6912

**Uiseong Arts and Sports Center (1,060)**

516 Jungni-ri, Uiseong County,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-830-6236

**Uljin Culture and Arts Center (492)**

Mt. 97 Samyul-ri, Uljin County,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-789-5450

**Yeju Culture-Art Center (531)**

Mt. 43 Seongnae-ri, Yeongdeok County,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-730-7771

**Daegu Metropolitan City****Bongsan Cultural Center:**

**Gaon Hall (448), Space Laon (100-120)**  
133 Bongsan-Munhwageori, Jung-gu, Daegu,  
Korea  
82-53-661-3081

**Daeduk Cultural Center(575)**

275 Apsan Beltline, Nam-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-622-0703

**Daegu Culture and Arts Center (1,008)**

187 Seongdang-dong, Dalseo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-606-6114

**Deogu Cultural Center (454)**

717 Dangsang-no, Seo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-663-3081

**Daegu Cultural Center For Students (1,441)**

11 Changsan-no, Dalseo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-550-7188

**Daegu Metropolitan City Bukgu Culture And Arts Center (494)**

75 Guam-no, Buk-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-665-3081

**Daegu Opera House (1,490)**

15 Hoam-no, Buk-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-666-6000

**Dalseogu Advanced Culture Center (450)**

722-1 Janggi-dong, Dalseo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-667-3081

**Donggu Arts and Sports Center (1,165)**

100 Mangu-Gongwon-no, Dong-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-951-3300

**Keimyung Art Center (1,954)**

2800 Dalgubeol Blvd., Dalseo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-580-6605

**Suseong Artpia:**

**Yongi Hall (1,167), Muhak Hall (324)**  
50 Muhak-no, Suseong-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-666-3300

**Daejeon Metropolitan City****Chungnam National Univ. Jeongsimhwa International Cultural Center:**

**Main Hall (1,817), Small Hall(450)**  
220 Gung-dong, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon, Korea  
82-42-821-8085

**CMS Expo Art Hall (1,105)**

1 Expo-ro, Doryong-dong, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon,  
Korea  
070-8110-7458

**Daejeon Culture and Arts Center:**

**Art Hall (1,546), Ensemble Hall (647)**  
396 Mannyeon-dong, Seo-gu, Daejeon, Korea  
82-42-610-2222

**Daedeok Culture Center Art Hall (210)**

304 Sintanji-ro, Daedeok-gu, Daejeon, Korea  
82-42-627-7517

**Woosong Art Center (1,300)**

155-3 Jayang-dong, Dong-gu, Daejeon, Korea  
82-42-6229-6363

**Ulsan Metropolitan City****Hyundai Art Center:**

**Main Hall (962), Small Hall (212)**  
110-1 Seobu-dong, Dong-gu, Ulsan City, Korea  
82-52-235-2100

**Uiju Culture and Arts Center (387)**

376-1 Cheonsang-ri, Uiju County, Ulsan City,  
Korea  
82-52-248-3270

**Ulsan Bukgu Culture and Arts Center (482)**

1010 Saneop-no, Buk-gu, Ulsan City, Korea  
82-52-219-7400

**Ulsan Culture Art Center:**

**Main Theater (1,484), Small Theater (472)**  
200 Beonyeong-no, Nam-gu, Ulsan City, Korea  
82-52-275-9623

**Gyeongsangnam-do Province****3.15 Art Center:**

**Main Theatre (1,182), Small Theatre (485)**  
135 Samho-ro, Masan-iwon-gu, Changwon City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-286-0315

**Geochang Education Culture Center (771)**

216-5 Kimcheon-ri, Geochang County,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-940-3531

**Gimhae Arts and Sports Center:**

**Maru Hall (1,464), Nuri Hall (540)**  
1131 Nae-dong, Gimhae City, Gyeongsangnam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-55-320-1234

**Gyeongnam Culture and Arts Center (1,564)**

215 Gangnam-ro, Jinju City, Gyeongsangnam-do  
Province, Korea  
1544-6711

**Hadong Cultural & Arts Center (678)**

23 Guncheong-ro, Hadong County,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-880-2114

**Haman cultue & Arts Center:**

**Main Hall (497), Small Hall (140)**  
249-1 Dohang-ri, Haman County,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-580-3613

**Sacheon Culture And Art Center:**

**Main Hall (850), Small Hall (192)**  
471 Samcheonpo-Daegyo-ro, Sacheon City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-831-2460

**Sancheong-gun Culture and Arts Center:****Main Hall (497), Small Hall (156)**

80 Maechon-ri, Sancheon County,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-970-6481

**Sungsan Arts Hall (1750)**

2 Yongho-dong, Uichang-gu, Changwon City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-268-7900

**Tongyeong Citizen's Center:****Grand Theatre (880), Small Theater (290)**

29 Nammang-Gongwon-gil, Tongyeong City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-648-8417

**Yangsan Culture Art Hall The Grand Performance Hall (834)**

874-1 Nambu-dong, Yangsan City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-379-8550

**Jeju-do Province****Jeju Art Center (1,184)**

898-8 Ora-2-dong, Jeju City, Jeju-do Province,  
Korea  
82-64-753-2209

**Jeju Cultural Center Theater:****Main Hall (892), Small Hall (200)**

89 Donggwang-no, Jeju City, Jeju-do Province,  
Korea  
82-64-710-7605

**THEATER FESTIVALS****Seoul Metropolitan City****Art dream Festival**

Wujeong Tower, 8th Fl., 8-1 Myeongnyun-dong 2  
ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-745-5862

**Asia Theater Director Workshop**

46-3 Myeongnyun-dong, #202, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-765-7500

**Assitej Korea Summer Festival**

Wujeong Tower, 8th Fl., 8-1 Myeongnyun-dong 2  
ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-745-5862

**Daehangno festival**

Daehak Bldg., 6th Fl., 1-145 Dongsung-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3674-0471

**Gwacheon Hanmadang Festival**

6-2 Jungang-dong, Gwacheon City, Gyeonggi  
Province, Korea  
82-2-504-0945

**Hi Seoul Festival**

517 CheongGye Cheon-ro, Dongdaemun-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3200-7000

**Physical Theatre Festival**

16-56 Myeongnyun-dong 1 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-764-7462

**Seoul Fringe Festival**

564-35 Yeonnam-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-325-8150

**Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival**

Office of Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival,  
129-208 Dongsung-dong, 3rd Fl., Jongno-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3673-5575

**Seoul Theater Festival**

Wonder Space Theater, 3rd Fl., Hyehwa-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-765-6502

**The Beseto Theatre Festival**

17-16 Yeouido-dong, Yongdeungpo-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-727-0910

**The Korea Theatre Festival**

1-117 Dongsung-dong, #401, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Korea  
82-2-744-8055

**The Seoul Performing Arts Festival**

Seokma Bldg., 4th Fl., 1-89 Dongsung-dong,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-3673-2561~4

**The World Festival of National Theaters**

14-67 Jangchung-dong 2 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-2-2280-4114

**Other Localities****Ansan Street Arts Festival**

817 Gojan-dong, Danwon-gu, Ansan City,  
Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-481-4000

**BIPAF (Busan International Performing Arts Festival)**

1589-231 Beomcheon-dong, Busanjin-gu, Busan,  
Korea  
82-51-802-8003

**Busan Children's Play Festival**

Citizen Hall, 3rd Fl., 830-31 Beomil-dong,  
Dong-gu, Busan, Korea  
82-51-645-3759

**Busan Citizen Theatre Festival**

Citizen Hall, 3rd Fl., 830-31 Beomil-dong,  
Dong-gu, Busan, Korea  
82-51-645-3759

**Busan Theater Festival**

Citizen Hall, 3rd Fl., 830-31 Beomil-dong,  
Dong-gu, Busan, Korea  
82-51-645-3759

**Changwon International Festival Of Artistic Performance**

Daewu Dept. Store, #1602, 28 Sinpo-dong 2 ga,  
Masanhappo-gu, Changwon City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-240-6151~2

**Chuncheon International Mime Festival**

531 Monjit Theatre, 531 Yoja-dong, Chuncheon  
City, Gangwon Province, Korea  
82-33-252-4575

**Chuncheon International Theatre Festival**

73-2 Okcheon-dong, Chuncheon City, Gangwon  
Province, Korea  
82-33-241-4349

**Daegu International Musical Festival**

DIP Wing, #205, Daemyeong-3-dong, Nam-gu,  
Daegu City, Korea  
82-53-622-1945

**Daegu Theatre Festival**

Culture and Art Center, Yeryen Wing, 3rd Fl.,  
Seongdang-1-dong, Dalseo-gu, Daegu, Korea  
82-53-606-6334

**Daejeon Theatre Festival**

14-1 Seonhwa-dong, Jung-gu, Daejeon City,  
Korea  
82-42-223-0060

**Gimcheon National Theater Festival for Family**

17 Gamho-dong, 2nd Fl., Gimcheon City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-435-8279

**Gomanaru Local Theater Festival**

Chungnam Theatrical Association, 167-3  
Ogwan-ri, Hongseong County,  
Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
82-41-855-3295

**Gwang-ju International Performing Arts Festival**

328-16 Uam-dong, Buk-gu, Gwangju City, Korea  
82-62-611-1265

**Gwang-ju Theatre Festival**

Mt. 34-1 Uam-dong, Buk-gu, Gwangju City, Korea  
82-62-523-7292

**Gyeongsangnam-do Theatre Festival**

5-5 Dongseong-dong, Jinju City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-746-7411

**Incheon International Clown Mime Festival**  
348-17 Munhak-dong, Nam-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
82-32-772-7361

**Keochang International Festival of Theatre**  
750-3 Hwangsan-ri, Geochang County,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-943-4152

**Korea Mime Festival**  
Blackbox Theater, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
82-33-252-4575

**Miryang Summer Performing Arts Festival**  
78 Gasan-ri, Milyang City, Gyeongsangnam-do  
Province, Korea  
82-55-355-1945-6

**MMAF Mokpo Madang Art Festival**  
Office of Madang Art Festival, 300 Jukgyo-dong,  
Mokpo City, Jeollanam-do Province, Korea  
82-61-243-9786

**Phohang Bada International Theater Festival**  
Daewon Bldg., 3rd Fl., 819-2 Sinheung-dong,  
Buk-gu, Pohang City, Gyeongsangbuk-do  
Province, Korea  
82-54-243-1152

**Puppet Festival Chuncheon**  
327 Simil-ro, Chuncheon City, Gangwon Province,  
Korea  
82-33-242-8450

**SAMJOKO Asia Performing Arts Festival in  
GUMI**  
Art Center DA, 4th Fl., 1032-8 Gumi City,  
Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-54-444-0604

**Suwon Hwaseong Fortress Theatre Festival**  
Suwon Outdoor Concert Hall, 2nd Fl., 1128  
Ingye-dong, Paldal-gu, Suwon City, Gyeonggi  
Province, Korea  
82-31-238-6496

**The Chungbuk Theater Festival**  
217-10 Sajik-1-dong, Heungdeok-gu, Cheongju  
City, Chungcheongbuk-do Province, Korea  
82-43-234-6905

**The Horror Theatre Festival**  
Culture and Art Center, Yeoryeon Wing, 3rd Fl.,  
187 Seongdang-1-dong, Dalseo-gu, Daegu City,  
Korea  
82-53-606-6334

**The Incheon Theater Festival**  
Incheon Cultural Center, 3rd Fl., 7-4  
Sungui-4-dong, Nam-gu, Incheon City, Korea  
82-32-862-9683

**The Jeonbuk Theater Festival**  
Mt. 1-1 Deokjin-dong, Deokjin-gu, Jeonju City,  
Jeollabuk-do Province, Korea  
82-63-277-7441

**THE Peace Theatre Festival in Gwang-ju**  
Gwangju Culture and Art Center, Mt. 34-1  
Uam-dong, Buk-gu, Gwangju City, Korea  
82-62-523-7292

**The Ulsan theater Festival**  
1136-9 Sinjeong-1-dong, 2nd Fl., Nam-gu, Ulsan  
City, Korea  
82-55-266-7081

**Tongyeong Theatre Art Festival**  
68-5 Jungang-dong, Tongyeong City,  
Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Korea  
82-55-644-8962

**UMTF (Uijeongbu Music Theatre Festival)**  
Uijeonbu Arts Center, Uijeongbu-2-dong,  
Uijeongbu City, Gyeonggi Province, Korea  
82-31-828-5892-7

#### ORGANIZATIONS AND ENTITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THEATRE

**ASSITEJ Korea**  
[www.assitejkorea.org](http://www.assitejkorea.org)  
Founded: In 1982  
Address: Wujeon Tower, 8th Fl.,  
Myeongnyun-dong 2 ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-745-5862-3

**Creart Stageart**  
[www.stageart.org](http://www.stageart.org)  
Founded: In March 2001  
Address: Hongseong Bldg., #308, 656-410  
Seongsu-dong 1 ga, Seongdong-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-704-2264

**International Association of Theatre  
Critics-Korea**  
[www.ktheatre critics.com](http://www.ktheatre critics.com)  
Founded: On February 26, 1986  
Address: Soonchunghyang Univ., Division of  
Performing and Media Arts Studies, ATTN: Theatrical  
Dance Major KIM, Hyung-gi, 646 Eupnae-ri, Asan  
City, Chungcheongnam-do Province, Korea  
Tel: 82-41-530-1131

**KADT(Korea Association of Drama Therapy)**  
[www.kadt.or.kr](http://www.kadt.or.kr)  
Founded: In June 2005  
Address: Palace Officetel, #201, 1316-4  
Seocho-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-3478-0975

**KASM(Korea Association of Stage Manager)**  
[www.kasm.kr](http://www.kasm.kr)  
Founded: On January 19, 2009  
Address: 17-5 Seongsan-1-dong, Mapo-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-324-6703

**Korean Actors Association**  
[www.kactor.or.kr](http://www.kactor.or.kr)  
Founded: In 1991  
Address: Samyeong Bldg., 3rd Fl., 135  
Ihwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-764-5086

**Korea Association of Performing Arts Producers**  
[www.kapap.co.kr](http://www.kapap.co.kr)  
Founded: On May 24, 2004  
Address: ATTN: The Korea Association of  
Performing Arts, Wonder Space Theater, 3rd Fl.,  
163-24 Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-741-1204

**Korean Centre of the ITI (International  
Theatre Institute)**  
<http://perform.kcaf.or.kr/iti>

Founded: On Jan 24, 1958  
Address: Hanyang Art Theatre, Hanyang  
University, 17 Bunji, Haingdang-dong,  
Sungdong-gu, Seoul 133-791, Korea  
Tel: +82-2-2220-0789

**Korea Mime Council**  
[www.komime.net](http://www.komime.net)  
Founded: In 1990  
564-35 Yeonnam-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-0502-160-8000

**Korea Musical Theatre Association**  
[www.koreamusical.org](http://www.koreamusical.org)  
Founded: In January 2006  
Address: ATTN: The Korea Musical Theatre  
Association, COEX Artum, #611, 159  
Samseong-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-6002-7720

**Korea Small Theater Association**  
[www.smalltheater.or.kr](http://www.smalltheater.or.kr)  
Founded: On Dec. 29, 2000  
Address: Daehak Bldg., 6th Fl., 1-145  
Dongdung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-3674-0471

**Korea Teachers' Theater Association**  
[www.ktta.org](http://www.ktta.org)  
Founded: On Jan. 28, 1985  
Address: Goryeo Academy, #407, 437-3  
Ahyeon-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 016-765-5000

**Korea Theatre Directors Association**  
[www.tdak.or.kr](http://www.tdak.or.kr)  
Founded: In 1987  
Address: 46-3 Myeongnyun-dong 1 ga, #202,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-765-7500

**Korea Play Wright**  
[www.kpw.or.kr](http://www.kpw.or.kr)  
Founded: In 1969  
Address: Bukhan Mountain Dream Castle, #1505,  
448-2 Beon-dong, Gangbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-2269-0535

**Korean Theater Studies Association**

[www.ktsa.or.kr](http://www.ktsa.or.kr)

Founded: In March 1975

Address: Dongguk Univ., Division of Theatre, 26  
Pil-dong 3 ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 018-202-3904

**Korean Theatre Artist Association**

[www.kostat.or.kr](http://www.kostat.or.kr)

Founded: On August 15, 1987

Address: 180-155 Bongcheon-dong, Gwanak-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-31-639-5961

**National Theater Association of Korea, Inc.**

[www.ktheater.or.kr](http://www.ktheater.or.kr)

Founded: In 1963

Address: 1-117 Dongsung-dong, #401,  
Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-744-8055

**Performing Arts Management Association of Korea**

[www.artsmanagement.or.kr](http://www.artsmanagement.or.kr)

Founded: In 1992

Address: Daeseong Bldg., #705, 17  
Yeouido-dong, Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-785-6843

**Seoul Theater Center**

[e-stc.or.kr](http://e-stc.or.kr)

Front | Address: 137 Daehang-no, Jongno-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-743-9333

**The Federation Of Artistic and Cultural Organization of Korea**

[www.yechong.or.kr](http://www.yechong.or.kr) | Founded: On Nov. 5, 1961 |

Address: 1-117 Dongsung-do ng, Jongno-gu,  
Seoul, Korea | Tel: 82-2-744-7871

**The Federation of Korea Cultural Center**

[www.kccf.or.kr](http://www.kccf.or.kr)

Founded: In 1962

Address: Seongu Bldg., #1202, 51-1  
Dohwa-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-704-2311

**The Korean Cultural & Arts Centers Association**

[www.kocaca.or.kr](http://www.kocaca.or.kr)

Founded: On November 8, 1995

Address: ATTN: The Association of Arts Centers in  
Seoul, Seoul Arts Center, Calligraphy Art Museum,  
3rd Fl., 2406 Nambusunhwan-no, Seocho-gu,  
Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-586-1994~5

**The Seoul Theater Association**

[www.stheater.or.kr](http://www.stheater.or.kr)

Founded: In December 2003

Address: ATTN: The Seoul Theater Association,  
Wonder Space Theater, 3rd Fl., 163-24  
Hyehe-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-765-7500

**ARKO(Arts Council Korea)**

Homepage: [www.arko.or.kr](http://www.arko.or.kr)

Founded: In 1973

Address: 26-1 Guro-dong, Guro-gu, Seoul,  
(152-050). Korea  
Tel: 82-2-760-4500

**Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation**

Homepage: [www.ggcf.or.kr](http://www.ggcf.or.kr)

Founded: In 1997

Address: Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation, 1116-1  
Ingye-dong, Paldal-gu, Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do  
Tel: 82-31-231-7200

**KAMS(Korea Arts Management Service)**

Homepage: [www.gokams.or.kr](http://www.gokams.or.kr)

Founded: In 2006

Address: B1 Daehangno Arts Theater, 1-67,  
Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, (110-809), Korea  
Tel: 82-2-708-2271

**SFAC (Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture)**

Homepage: [www.sfac.or.kr](http://www.sfac.or.kr)

Founded: On March 15, 2004

Address: 517 Cheonggyocheon-ro,  
Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: 82-2-3290-7000

**KIM Jung-hyo**

Theatre Critic  
Professor, Ph. D., Keimyung University,

## An Overview of Korean Performing Arts Theatre in Korea

First Edition : Dec. 2010

Published by  Korea Arts Management Service

Supported by  MCST

Cooperated with Korean Association of Theatre Critics

**Publication** PARK Yong-jae | President of Korea Arts Management Service

**Coordination** WOO Yeon | Director of International Development Dept.  
PARK Ji-sun | Manager of International Development Dept.  
YOO Byung-eun, LIM Su-bin

**Contributing writers**

AHN Chi-woon, CHANG Hye-jeon, CHOI Sung-hee, KIM Hyung-ki, KIM Jung-hyo, KIM Ki-ran,  
KIM Myeong-hwa, KIM Nam-seok, KIM Seon-uk, KIM So-yeon, LEE Jai-myung, LEE Mee-won,  
LEE Sun-hyung, LEE Tae-Ju, PAEK Rora, SHIM Jae-min, SHIM Jung-soon, SHIN Hyun-sook,  
SONG Min-sook, YANG Hye-sook, YOO Min-young

**Translation** T&L Korea

**Design/ Print** TOGA Design

Copyright©2010 by Korea Arts Management Service

B1/B2 Daehangno Arts Theater, 1-67, Dongsung-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-809, Korea

T +82 (0)2 708 2271

F +82 (0)2 708 2243

[www.gokams.or.kr](http://www.gokams.or.kr)

[www.theapro.kr](http://www.theapro.kr)

※ All contents of this book is accessible on theApro.kr

ISBN : 978-89-961946-3-7 93680

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for brief quotations for reviews or for scholarly essays and books, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Our Special thanks go to all the participating theatre groups, photographers who provided material for this publication.