

A Hermeneutic Approach to the Composition *The Azalea* (2020)

Abstract

Hermeneutics, the theory and methodology of interpretation, has been originally developed in the realms of theology and philosophy. It is a relatively new discipline in the realm of music, which was introduced in the 19th century. Through interpretation, which is based on ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ analysis, hermeneutics aims to understand the meaning of the text. This hermeneutic approach is adequate to apply to the composition *The Azalea* (2020) by Park & Park. One reason is that this composition is based on the text, namely the poem of Vicar Young Ja Kim (see Table 1).

Among the hermeneutic approaches, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), the German philosopher, emphasizes ‘strangeness and familiarity’ of a text to the reader. For Kim’s poem, the meeting and dialogue between the speaker and the azalea are of significance. For Young Ja Kim, *Jindallaekkot* (the azalea) is a positive image that blooms as the first flower in the spring. *Jindallaekkot* is the flower that she meets in her normal daily life in the spring season. Among them, the azalea that caught the attention of Young Ja Kim is a flower that lived in a specific situation: Its ground is not on the mountains where the azaleas bloom, but on the concrete cement ground, which has little soil. In an interview with the author, she states her pitiful feeling toward the azalea: “How pitiful it is! If the azalea would grow up on the mountain, which there is good soil for the flower, it would not have been suffering.” The meeting between the author and the azalea is a unique experience that nobody else has had. In this context, ‘strangeness’ lies between the author and the reader; however, the poem is clearly written about her situation (1st stanza), meeting with the azalea (2nd stanza), and learning from the azalea (3rd stanza). This kind of story telling in the poem conveys the reader ‘familiarity’, which enables the readers to understand the poem and to search for a meaning for their lives.

In 2020, *Jindallaekkot* of Young Ja Kim was composed for Soprano Solo, SSATBB-Choir, Oboe, Cello, Piano, and Janggu (Korean drum). This composition is characterized by the combination of Korean musical elements with Western music. This paper will examine the combination of musical elements of Korean and of Western music: for example, the use of the Korean folk song *Arirang* and the Korean instrument *Janggu* in the context of a modern piece with other Western elements. Regarding the Korean folk song *Arirang*, the date of its origin is not clear, because it has been transmitted orally. In addition, there are numerous versions and variations in different regions. Nowadays, the Bonjo-Arirang is the most well-known Arirang-version (see Example 1). In the composition *The Azalea*, the song *Arirang* does not appear completely, but motives that are derived from *Arirang* occur throughout the composition. Table 2 shows an overview of the analysis related to *Arirang*. In the composition *The Azalea* (2020), the soprano solo represents the voice of Young Ja Kim. The Table shows the passages, in which the soprano solo occurs (see Table 3). In the

passage mm. 75-85, the soprano solo whispers “Look at it”; thereafter, the various choir parts speak in alternation (see Example 2). Young Ja Kim, whom the soprano solo represents, speaks to other people (the choir). The people, who stand near her or pass by the street, react to her by speaking to each other “Look at it”.

Both in the poem and in the composition, one can recognize the process that the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) states. According to Dilthey, mankind is “an object” of the human studies (*Geisteswissenschaften*). The specific process can be described: experience (Erlebnis) → expressions (Ausdruck) → understanding (Verstehen). The poem *Jindallaekkot* (2015) by Young Ja Kim shows this process: One day, Young Ja Kim paid attention to the existence of the azalea; this is her unique ‘experience’ (Erlebnis). She wrote her experience in a form of a poem; her poem is a kind of her ‘expressions’ (Ausdruck). Young Ja Kim learns to be thankful to God and her neighbors and gains joy in life again. This process of ‘understanding’ shows how Young Ja Kim interprets her own experience with the azalea.

The composition *The Azalea* (2020) also shows the process: The composers get to know Young Ja Kim’s poem *Jindallaekkot*; this is the experience (Erlebnis). The composers set the poem to music; the composition process belongs to the ‘expressions’ (Ausdruck). In this process, Korean and Western musical elements are introduced in order to create a connection between the Korean poem and Western music. The finished composition is a piece of music that illuminates the ‘expressions’ and relates musical elements and ideas ‘to the whole’.

For the reader and audience, this process (experience [Erlebnis] → expressions [Ausdruck] → understanding [Verstehen]) should be ‘re-constructed’ or ‘re-experienced’, which is considered as ‘the highest form’ of understanding. The ‘re-constructing’ or ‘re-experiencing’ is an important hermeneutic process. In order to re-construct or re-experience the poem *Jindallaekkot* (2015), the background of the poet and the origin / the content of the poem will be discussed in this paper. Through this process, we will be able to understand how meaningful the poem is to the poet and to us, “which in turn widens the horizon of our own limited lives”.

The use of hermeneutics is meaningful both for the analyst and for the reader/audience. One reason is that the goal of this paper is to bring ‘meaning’ to both groups – the analyst and the reader/audience. The musical ‘meaning’ can be varied, depending on people and their abilities. Nevertheless, music and analysis can be more closely connected by searching for ‘meaning’. Since ‘meaning’ is combined with communication and experience, musical analysis and our life can interact with each other, by searching for ‘meaning’.

Table 1. *Jindallaekkot* (The Azalea) by Young Ja Kim

Korean	English Translation
<p>추운 겨울에 일을 밖에서 하다보니 손발이 실이고 참으로 곤하다. 인생이 이런 거지 산다는 것이 쉬운일 아니야.</p> <p>저기 저기보세요. 콘크리 구조물 속에 진달래 피었다. 너나 나나 고통이 심하니 원망도 해본다.</p> <p>너는 원망도 안하고 모두를 반기구나 나도 너를 닮아서 항상 감사한다. 아름다운 진달래꽃 너를 보러 찾아왔구나 너를 만나 기쁘다 다시 만나자. 안녕! 감사해.</p>	<p>I work outside in the cold of winter. I am tired and my hands and feet are cold. Is that life? It is not easy to live like this.</p> <p>Look at it, the azalea, it blooms between stones! You and I both suffer from pain, and I complain.</p> <p>But you don't complain, you greet everyone. Following your example, I want to give thanks. Beautiful azalea, I came to look at you. I am glad to see you. See you later! Goodbye! Thank you!</p>

Example 1. *Arirang*

아리랑

♩ = 66 중모리/세마치 겸기민요

아 - 리랑 - 아 - 리랑 - 아라--리- 요 ---

아 - 리랑 - 고 - 개 - 로 - 념 - 어간 다 -

나 를 버 리 고 가 시 는님 - 은 ---

십 - 리도 - 못 - 가 - 서 - 발 - 병난 다 -

Table 2. Analysis Related to *Arirang*




Measure (Part)	Choir/Instrument	Motive	Scale
mm. 1-3 (Introduction)	Cello	Motive 1 (from <i>Arirang</i> , mm. 1-3) 	G-A-C-D-E Pentatonic Scale Key signature with 1 Flat
mm. 7-15, 20 (Introduction)	Choir + Cello	Motive 2 (first three tones of <i>Arirang</i>) 	Aeolian Scale in D: D-E-F-G-A- Bb-C-D Key signature with 1 Flat
mm. 108-110 (Part B)	Cello	Motive 1	C-Db-F-G-Ab Aeolian Scale in F: F-G-Ab-Bb-C-Db- Eb-F
mm. 115, 117- 121 (Part C)	Cello, Oboe, Piano	Motive 2 Inversion of Motive 2 (m. 120) in the oboe	G-A-C-D-(E) Pentatonic Scale Key signature with no accidentals
mm. 134-139 (Part C)	Oboe	Motive 2 + Motive 3 (from <i>Arirang</i> , mm. 13-16) [slightly modified in m. 136] 	C-D-F-G-A Pentatonic Scale Key signature with 1 Flat
mm. 146-181 (Part C)	Choir + all instruments, except Janggu	Motive 1 (mm. 178-179) in the cello Motive 2 Inversion of Motive 2 (mm. 157 and 166) in Soprano 2 Augmentation of Motive 2 (mm. 158-165) in the choir	Db Major / Ionian in Db: Db-Eb-F- Gb-Ab-Bb-C-Db

Table 3. Passages, in Which Soprano Solo Occurs

Part	Measures	Text
B	75-85	Look at it,
	86-94	the azalea, it blooms between stones!
	98-108	You and I both suffer from pain, and I complain.
C	122-128	But you don't complain, you greet everyone.
	129-139	Following your example, I want to give thanks.
	140-146	Beautiful azalea, I came to look at you.
	156-160	I am glad to see you.
	170-176	See you later!
	177-181	Thank you!

76

S Solo
it, look at it look at

S.
ppp whisper
look at it look at it

S.
ppp whisper
look at it look at it

A.
ppp whisper
look at it look at it look at it

T.
8
ppp whisper
look at

B.
ppp whisper
look at it

B.
ppp whisper
look at it look at

BIBLIOGRAPHY (selected)

- Bent, Ian D. 2001. "Hermeneutics". *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 4 Nov. 2020. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
- _____. Ed. 1994. *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century. Volume II Hermeneutic Approaches*. Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music. Cambridge University Press.
- _____, and Anthony Pople. 2001, "Analysis." In *Grove Music Online*. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
- "Hermeneutics". 2020. *Wikipedia*. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics>.
- "Janggu". 2021. *Wikipedia*. Accessed January 9, 2021. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janggu>.
- "Janggu yeonju (Janggu Performance). Park, Eun-ha". 2021. Accessed February 7, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Otiu9givyQ>.
- Kang, Byoung-Jo. 1999. "The New Interpretation on the folk song 'Arirang'". *The Journal of Korean Modern Literature* 7: 7-23. Accessed January 3, 2021. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00586902>.
- Kim, Hey-jung. 2013. "The Value and the Research Orientation of Arirang from the Perspective of Musicology". *Hangukminyohak* (The Korean Folk song) 39: 139-156. Accessed January 3, 2021. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE02340346>.
- Kim, In Suk. 2010. "Articles on Music and Literature: The aspects of jangdan's operation in pansori". *Korean Discology* 20: 37-46.
- Kim, Jin-hee. 2011. "1920s translating poetry and problems in prototype of the lyric – Lover's Poetics and the dynamics of translation." *Literary Criticism* 42: 117-149.
- Kim, Young Ja. 2015. *The Azalea*.
- Kim, Young Ja. 2020. Telephone Interview with Esther and Sa Ra Park, November 14, 2020.
- Kim, Young-woon. 2011. "A Study of the Formation of Arirang". *The Korean Literature and Arts* 7: 5-55. Accessed January 3, 2021. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE01721648>.
- Lee, Bo-Hyung. 2021. "Arirang". In *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*. Accessed January 9, 2021. <https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/kr/topic/detail/869>.
- Moon, Betty. 2017. "A Study on Contemporary Korean Choral Music Using Arirang Melody". *Journal of Ewha Music Research Institute* (JEMRI) 21/3: 43-90.
- "PA3: Jeongseon Arirang – Voice: Yu Ji Suk (2012, Sinnara CD Recording)". 2021. Accessed February 6, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdO_pYnzWno.
- Park, Esther, and Sa Ra Park. Eds. 2016. "Chanyanggokjip 2016" [Praise Songbook 2016]. Mainz/Germany, 2016.
- Park, Esther and Sa Ra Park. 2020. *The Azalea for Soprano solo, SSATBB Choir, Oboe, Cello, Piano, and Janggu (a Korean drum)*.
- Pyo, In-ju. 2017. "The Symbolic Meaning and Change of Flower in Folk". *The Journal of Honam Studies* 62: 445-488.
- Rahn, Jay. 1983. *A Theory for All Music: Problems and Solutions in the Analysis of Non-Western Forms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Pearsall, Edward. 2012. *Twentieth-Century Music Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Rothfarb, Lee A. 1992. "Hermeneutics and Energetics: Analytical Alternatives in the Early 1900s." *Journal of Music Theory* 36, no. 1: 43–68.
- Schüler, Nico, and Luke Paireepinart. 2021. "Music Analysis: Web-Based Analytical Tools." Accessed January 3, 2021. <http://www.musicanalysis.org/>.
- "Semachi Jangdan (Lee Geum-ju)". 2021. Accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv0arXGUljc&feature=youtu.be>.
- "Song So Hui [Jindo Arirang]". 2021. Accessed February 6, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM0y7JrGh4w>.
- Susanni, Paolo and Antokoletz, Elliott. 2012. *Music and Twentieth-Century Tonality. Harmonic Progression Based on Modality and the Interval Cycles*. New York, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Yang, Ok-gyeong. 2021. "Janggu". In *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*. Accessed February 8, 2021. <https://folkency.nfm.go.kr/kr/topic/detail/6327>.