

“Azalea” and “Wildflowers of the Mountains”:

An Analysis of Four Song Settings on

Two Poems by So-wol Kim

by

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## ABSTRACT

This research project will focus on two poems by the Korean poet So-wol Kim (1902-1934). His poems are admired throughout Korea and are often set by Korean art song composers. This paper will examine four art song settings by composers Sung-tae Kim (1910-2012) and Soon-nam Kim (1917-1986) of two poems by So-wol Kim: “Azalea” and “Wildflowers of the Mountains.” The discussion will examine in detail the varied interpretations and expressions of the texts by each composer. To be clear, the translations of the poems investigated in this paper are poetic renderings and are not meant for performance purposes.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

An art song is a musical genre that combines formally composed music with poetry. In general, accompaniments are composed for piano, but different instrumental configurations are often used as well.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2010), defines a Korean song as one that is sung with traditional Korean instruments such as the *Janggu*, and *Buk*, both of which are popular Korean drum instruments. The *Janggu* is shaped like an hourglass, with one drumhead covered with horsehide and the other with cowhide. It is played ‘sideways,’ with the left hand tapping the side and the right hand clutching a stick which is beaten against the right side. *Buk* is another traditional Korean instrument and looks similar to a barrel-shaped drum.

At its inception, Korean song was defined as vocal music that combined poetry with traditional Korean instruments.<sup>1</sup> However, and despite the popularity of these instruments, Western influences steadily began to infiltrate the compositions of Korean art songs beginning in 1920.

The origins of the Western-influenced Korean art song can be traced to American church hymns. In 1885, American missionaries Horace G. Underwood and Henry G. Appenzeller brought the Christian Bible and hymns to the Korean peninsula when

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<sup>1</sup> “Unesco’s Intangible Cultural Heritage,” Unesco & Heritages, last modified 2010, <http://heritage.unesco.or.kr/category/heritagelist/intangibleheritage-list/>.

introducing Christianity to the Korean people.<sup>2</sup> Underwood translated and edited 117 hymns that he brought from the United States from which he published the first Korean hymnbook in 1894. The hymnal contained eighty-eight hymns with music with an additional twenty-nine hymn texts.<sup>3</sup> These hymns had a considerable influence on the “Westernizing” of Korean art songs. During the late 1890s and into the early 1900s, hymns began to appear with Korean lyrics, a phenomenon that, in part, came out of the political and social changes occurring in the country at that time.

Based on some of the hymns introduced since 1885, Korean composers began to write simple art songs mimicking the musical structure of the piano accompaniments and the vocal lines of Western songs. The Korean composer Nan-pa Hong (1897-1941), a violinist, conductor, and educator, composed the song “Bongseonhwa” (“Garden Balsam”) in 1920, and it is considered to be the first Korean art song.

However, many scholars believe that Sung-tae Kim (1910-2012) was the first composer to use the term “Korean art song,” and it is widely accepted that he popularized the role of the piano in his compositions. Music critics often treat Sung-tae Kim’s three works, “The Horse,” “Sea,” and “Beyond the Mountains,” each composed in 1937, as the first Korean art songs.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, despite these disparate opinions, most people still seem to recognize “Bongseonhwa” as the first Western-influenced Korean art song.

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<sup>2</sup> Young Ja Shin, “The Influence of Protestant Hymn on the Formation and Development of Korean Art Song,” *The Music Research* 43, no. 0 (December 2009): 109-134.

<sup>3</sup> So Un Oh, “Hymns by Underwood,” Korean Hymn Research, last modified March 26, 2019, <https://blog.daum.net/osowny/15972906>.

<sup>4</sup> Young Hwan Kim, “A Study on the First Art Song in South Korea,” *Music and Ethnicity* 20 (October 2000): 253-287, [https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc\\_id=41051485#div\\_reference](https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc_id=41051485#div_reference).



In April 1920, Nan-pa Hong composed a short violin work entitled “Aesu” (“Sorrow”) that was included in his first short novel *Cheonyeohon (A Maiden’s Soul)*. Around 1925, the poet Hyung-jun Kim set the text to Nan-pa Hong’s original violin score which became known as “Bongseonhwa.”<sup>5</sup>

From 1910 to 1945, Japan denied Korea its sovereignty, causing great social discord. During this period, Japan banned all political activities by Koreans and thoroughly suppressed all activities that could raise national consciousness. The Japanese also prevented the use of books that taught Korean culture and history, and also banned the use of the Korean language, both orally and in print. Many Korean people, however, continued to speak Korean as an act of defiance, and composers and poets continued to write Korean-based music and poetry.

Hyung-jun Kim’s nationalistic fervor is clearly expressed in the text of “Bongseonhwa.” The text implies that even though Korea now withers under the Japanese colonial rule, its ethnic soul will soon revive as if by a sunny spring breeze.

Many Korean composers such as Nan-pa Hong, Jae-myung Hyun (1902-1960), Du-nam Cho (1912-1984), Tae-jun Park (1900-1986), Soon-nam Kim (1917 -1986), Dong-jin Kim (1913-2009), and Sung-tae Kim were influential by the rise of Korean art songs. The poetry set by these composers during the Japanese colonial period instilled in the Korean people a feeling of independence and unity; the words comforted those who had lost freedom in their homeland. After the liberation of Korea, these same songs were sung with joy and gratitude; they represented the aspirations of the people during a very

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<sup>5</sup> Myung Ki Kim, “Ethnic Soul Burned with Flames,” *Dongyang Daily*, July 26, 2015. <http://www.dynnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=270067>.

dark time in their country's rich history. Among the many poets of the era, So-wol Kim (1902-1934) is the most widely known, thanks in no small part to his remarkable ability to express national sentiment.<sup>6</sup>

From the years 1922 to 1944, over 140 songs were composed with settings of over fifty of So-wol Kim's most influential poems. Two highly popular poems by So-wol Kim, "Azalea" and "Wildflowers of the Mountains," were set by no less than twelve composers.<sup>7</sup> Two song settings of each of these poems by the composers Sung-tae Kim and Soon-nam Kim are the main focus of this paper. More specifically, this paper will examine the varying approaches to the settings of the text.

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<sup>6</sup> Bok Joo Jung, "A Study on the Structural Interrelationship between the Poetry and the Music of the Korean Art Song Settings Set to So-wol Kim's 'Chohon,'" *Music and Ethnicity* 10 (October 2007): 137-165, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/SearchDetailView.do?cn=KINX2008007399&sysid=nhn>.

<sup>7</sup> Jung Sook Shin, "Approaching Korean Art Songs-Focusing on the Songs of Poems," (master's thesis, Seoul National University, 1981).

## CHAPTER TWO

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF KOREAN ART SONG

A traditional Korean song in a historical context is defined as a song that is accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble, and which is usually composed of three distinct sections; beginning, middle, and final. When, in the past, the class system existed in Korea from 1392 to 1896, these songs were sung only by the elite.<sup>8</sup> The traditional Korean song consists of a simple melody nominally supported by traditional instruments. Today, Korean traditional songs are sometimes listed with Korean art songs when referencing Korean vocal works, but in reality, they comprise two different categories of song, and their respective roots differ as well.

Western civilization began to have a direct influence on Korean culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which caused shifting perceptions in music. As mentioned in chapter one, the first innovations were the hymns introduced by American missionaries Horace G. Underwood and Henry G. Appenzeller in 1885.<sup>9</sup> In 1894, Underwood published the first hymn set with Korean text using Western musical notation. Another American missionary, William M. Baird, lived in Korea for forty years from 1891 to 1931. He established the *Soongsil* School in 1897, where he taught hymn singing, introduction to folk songs, and music theory. Baird's actions had a significant impact on Korean culture, since no musical education institution existed in Korea prior to that time. As hymns

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<sup>8</sup> Bang Song Song, *Hankyoreh Music Dictionary* (Gyeonggi-do: Bogosa, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Shin, "The Influence of Protestant Hymn," 109-134.

became a popular vocal genre, Korean composers began to set Korean secular lyrics to Western melodies. These more secular songs were called *Changga*.

The earliest *Changga* appeared in 1896 and served as the model for the structure of early Korean art songs. The texts for these songs were usually uplifting and often contained subtle anti-Japanese sentiments.<sup>10</sup> An early composer of *Changga* was In-sik Kim (1885-1962). His first work, “Hakdoga,” was written in 1905. Historians and critics have identified In-sik Kim as a pioneer in the adaptation of Western musical techniques with the traditional Korean song during a time when music teachers and educational institutions were few in number. One of In-sik Kim’s important students was Nan-pa Hong, the composer of the first Korean art song “Bongseonhwa.”<sup>11</sup> *Changga* gradually disappeared at the beginning of the 1920s, making way for the early forms of the Korean art songs.

“Bongseonhwa” became famous in 1942 when the noteworthy soprano Chun-ae Kim (1919-1995) sang it during a concert in Japan. The song became a standard piece in her repertoire and a favorite of Korean audiences.<sup>12</sup>

Since Korean composers were writing art songs during the Japanese colonial period, many of these compositions often contained nationalistic and enlightening texts that reflected the historical situation and expressed the sorrow of losing one’s personal and national identity. However, the relationship between the text and the melody was

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<sup>10</sup> Kyung Chan Min, “Sixty Years of Korean Art Song History,” *Music Dong-A*, September 1985, 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Eun Kyung Park, “The Study of Korea’s First *Changga* Composer In-sik Kim,” *Music and Ethnicity* 19 (April 2000): 1-3, [https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc\\_id=10874818](https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc_id=10874818).

<sup>12</sup> Kyung Chan Min, “Chun-ae Kim,” The Academy of Korean Studies, last modified 1998, <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0010756>.

sometimes unclear, and accompaniments seemed subordinate to the melodies, which typically repeated the voice line without any musical independence.

Important Korean composers of the Japanese occupation period included Nan-pa Hong, Tae-jun Park (1900-1986), Ki-young Ahn (1900-1980), and Jae-myung Hyun (1902-1960). The 1920s were a formalization period for Korean art songs, which in addition to Nan-pa Hong's "Bongseonhwa" (1902), also included "Thinking of Friends" (1922) by Tae-jun Park, Ki-young Ahn's "Missing for Gangnam" (1929), and "Homesick" (1922) by Jae-myung Hyun.

In the 1930s, Korean art songs gradually began to incorporate more Western musical forms. Important composers of this generation include Dong-sun Chae (1900-1953), Heung-ryul Lee (1909-1980), Du-nam Cho (1912-1984), Sae-hyung Kim (1904-1999), Dong-jin Kim (1913-2009), and Sung-tae Kim (1910-2012), all of whom championed these newly found foreign ideals.

Of these composers, Dong-sun Chae was the most prominent composer of the 1930s. Chae brought a higher musical maturity to his works and is best known for his through-composed compositional style. Prior to the advent of Chae's works, only strophic compositions existed, and this inventive shift brought new structural complexity and nuance to the genre.

Dong-sun Chae's musical activities began in 1932, and three of his most popular songs are "Missing you," "In My Mind," and "Sea." He was careful in his choice of poetry, preferring freer poetic verse rather than standard rhyming texts. Most of Dong-sun

Chae's songs are constructed in a non-strophic fashion, many of which were premiered by his sister Sun-yeop Chae, a highly regarded soprano of the era.<sup>13</sup>

Sung-tae Kim, a composer who studied music with Dong-sun Chae, wrote three art songs in 1937: "The Horse," "Sea," and "Beyond the Mountains." These three songs have great significance in the history of Korean music because the composer was the first to use the term "art song" to identify a piece. Although Nan-pa Hong's song "Bongseonhwa" is considered the first Korean art song, Sung-tae Kim was the first composer to consciously and descriptively use the term "art song." One can see in these three songs an increased importance in the piano part.

In 1936, the first Korean art song cycle was composed by Sae-hyung Kim. *The Long Way* is a collection of four songs based on the poetry of G. M. Gilbert: "My Heart Bound to You," "Even If All Happiness is Mine," "Goodnight," and "Oh, a Blessed Burden." He translated G.M. Gilbert's lyrics into Korean and published the four songs in 1936 as the first Korean art song cycle.

Musical performances of Korean art songs became plentiful and popular in the 1930s, including performances by Dong-sun Chae in an art song recital in 1931 and in a creative art song concert hosted by the *Dong-A* newspaper in 1939. In March 1939, the *Kyung-sung* Central Broadcasting Station began airing art song recitals on a regular

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<sup>13</sup> Kwang Soon Kim, "A History of Korean Art Songs," *The Music Research* 7 (1989): 11, [https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc\\_id=37247425](https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc_id=37247425).

basis.<sup>14</sup> With the emergence of the record industry, art songs became more easily accessible to the public.

After the liberation of South Korea in 1945, Korean art songs began to diversify. The history of Korean art songs during this period may be classified into two categories; one that maintained the status-quo, and another that welcomed progressive thought.

Sung-tae Kim's "Wildflowers of the Mountains" was composed in 1946. The highly popular art song spurred younger composers to set the words of the admired poet, So-wol Kim (1902-1934), in their music. "Wildflowers of the Mountains" is of the progressive category which faithfully conveys the meaning of the lyrics through word painting combined with a piano part that is much more than mere accompaniment.<sup>15</sup>

Composers, including Isang Yun (1917-1995), Soon-nam Kim (1917-1986), Kun-woo Lee (1919-1998), as well as Sung-tae Kim, began adding Korean traditional music features to their art songs. Songs including "Go'pung-uisang" ("A Traditional Attire") by Isang Yun, "Wildflowers of the Mountains" by Soon-nam Kim, and "Gold Grass" by Kun-woo Lee faithfully use traditional Korean instruments such as *Janggu* and traditional rhythmic motives such as patterns based on triplet figures.

On Sunday, June 25, 1950, at four o'clock in the morning, the Korean War began when, without warning, North Korea invaded South Korea. China and the Soviet Union supported North Korea while the United Nations forces fought for South Korea. The Korean War became an international conflict involving UN forces and a Chinese-backed

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<sup>14</sup> Jin Kyu Na, *Commentary on Korean Art Songs: Focusing on Historical and Poetic Musical Analysis* (Seoul: Taesung, 2003), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, "A History of Korean," 17.

North Korean Army. It lasted for three years before the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953.

The war had an enormous effect on Korean society including its rich musical heritage. The ever-evolving art songs of the 1940s began to wane in favor of popular art songs that were easily accessible to the public, and similar in style to the art songs of the Japanese colonial period whose text also spoke of despair but with the hope of a restored nation.<sup>16</sup> After the armistice of 1953, some South Korean composers on the faculties of domestic universities began to write again, while others returned home from studies abroad and started to work in earnest.<sup>17</sup> Three of the most important composers of the 1950s were Yong-ha Yoon (1922-1965), Woon-young Na (1922-1993), and Soon-ae Kim (1920-2007).

Soon-ae Kim is noteworthy because she is the first notable female composer in South Korea who earned her professional music education from the United States and Europe.<sup>18</sup> With a love for poetry, the art song seemed a natural attraction for her. Soon-ae Kim wrote over one hundred songs including a published collection called *Soon-ae Kim Art Songs* in 1953. She also composed “Song of April” in the same year and like most composers of the 1950s, her compositions tended to be popular in style.

Because of the social and economic turmoil in South Korea during the war, composers sometimes veered toward accessible melodies that were attractive and

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<sup>16</sup> Kim, “A History of Korean,” 29.

<sup>17</sup> Young Mi Shin, “A Study on the Traditional Musical Elements in Korean Art Songs,” (master’s thesis, Gongju National University, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Hyun Kyung Chae, “Soon-ae Kim’s Kagok: Searching for ‘Originality,’” *Music and Culture* 1, no. 17 (2007): 66, doi:10.17091/kswm.2007..17.63.



memorable to audiences. Most modern compositional techniques, especially those experimenting with dissonance, were shunned by Korean composers.

South Korea has been economically and politically stable since the 1960s, an environment ripe for musical evolution. As South Korea sought stability, so too its people became more conscious of their quality of life, and a desire for more refined art songs.

The compositions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were regarded as old, outdated, and in need of modernization. Inspired composers wrote with a new voice and wholly engaged in experimental techniques. Composers such as Sang-gun Lee (1922-2000), Hoe-gap Jung (1923-2013), Byung-dong Baek (1936-present), Il-nam Jang (1932-2006) and Young-seop Choi (1929-present) presented modern-style art songs that followed contemporary Western musical trends including aleatoric techniques as well as minimalism.

Among the many composers of this era, Byung-dong Baek stands out as one of the most influential. Even today, he remains at the center of South Korea's experimental contemporary music scene. Byung-dong Baek has composed several art songs including "Swamp" in 1957, "The Death of a Girl in Budapest" in 1960, "Red Pomegranate" in 1962, and "In the Crematorium" and "In the Darkness and Time" in 1968.

His art songs are generally divided into two groups. One is based on soft and lyrical melodic lines that emphasize the ethereal atmosphere created by beautiful poetry. The second group focuses on experimental compositional techniques including atonal and aleatoric music in an attempt to dramatize the text. "The Death of a Girl in Budapest," "Red Pomegranate," and "In the Crematorium" are prime examples of this second

group.<sup>19</sup> Noteworthy in these compositions are the use of shifting meters, the absence of clear tonal centers, and highly chromatic melodic lines.

Experimental compositions have been highly regarded in the tight-knit Korean music community, but they have in large part alienated a large body of listeners who prefer the more melodic popular style. It is important to note that Il-nam Jang's "Bimok" ("Lindera Erythrocarpa Makino Plant"), an art song in a popular style was successfully used as the background music for a popular television drama "Wedding March." This was televised on the TBC Korea broadcasting network in 1976, a media giant that began to exert considerable influence on the dissemination of Korean art songs.

In the 1970s, Korean art song composers seemed to revert back to the early part of the century in their compositional technique. Many composers wrote art songs that combined traditional folk songs with that of late romantic tonal harmonies. Composers began to juxtapose piano sounds with that of traditional Korean musical instruments. Important works of this era include Kyung-hwan Baek's (1956-present) "Geomundo Sailor's Song," and In-pyeng Jeon's (1945-present) "A wardrobe Taryeong" (*Taryeong* connotes a traditional Korean ballad). Composers attempted to imbue their musical compositions more firmly with Korean colors, and the art song form became an excellent medium through which to display the unique heritage and traditional nuances of the country.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kim, "A History of Korean," 34.

<sup>20</sup> Hee Jin Jung, "Chronological Research on Korean Art Songs," (master's thesis, Yeungnam University, 2008), <http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T11411407>.

From a social standpoint, the interest in art songs increased during this decade. Various art song collections appeared and considerably more music concerts were programmed. Helping to further this phenomenon, the Seoul's Sejong Center for the Performing Arts was completed in April 1978, providing a magnificent performance space not only for Korean art song recitals but also for concert performances of South Korea's orchestral, chamber music, and opera repertoire. Sejong Center for the Performing Arts is a music venue mainly dedicated to the performances of classical works and is one of the premiere performance halls in Seoul that attracts both world class orchestras and performers. Of considerable note was the performance by leading Korean classical singers of twenty-four art songs by Korean composers at the opening ceremony of the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts.<sup>21</sup>

The music magazines, *The Auditorium* and *Music Dong-A*, were launched in the early 1980s, and events in the music world and many classical music performances were subsequently introduced to the public through this medium. Late in the decade, the ban on art songs written by blacklisted composers who had defected to North Korea such as Soon-nam Kim (1917-1986), Kun-woo Lee (1919-1998), and Ki-young Ahn (1900-1980) was lifted.

From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present, the works of Korean composers continue to increase. This includes not only experimental contemporary art songs, but also familiar art songs based on simple melodic lines — songs that awaken memories of

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<sup>21</sup> Na, *Commentary on Korean*, 42.

the early art song form from the turn of the century by the composers who still occupy their rightful place in the history of Korean art songs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SO-WOL KIM

So-wol Kim, one of South Korea's most noteworthy poets, was born on August 6, 1902. So-wol is a pseudonym; the poet's given name is Jung-sik Kim. So-wol's father went insane when the poet was only two years old, creating an uncertain environment for the small child. Mistreated by his grandparents and mother, So-wol's early years were full of tremendous stress. To cope with the stresses of the family environment and the depressing social situations during the Japanese colonial period, So-wol Kim turned to poetry as an escape, studying earnestly with his life mentor, Eok Kim (1896-unknown).

Eok Kim was the first to publish a poetic translation of what he called *The Struggle of Suffering*, a collection of seventy-seven French poems. He not only wrote poems, but also translated French and Russian poetry into Korean, and played an essential and crucial role in the field of Korean literature. Eok Kim saw the brilliance in So-wol's writings and made every effort to further his career. Under Eok Kim's continual guidance, So-wol built a career as a poet from the early age of nineteen years. Although his writings were widely known, he still lived a terribly detached life, almost disconnected from society and suffering from severe health issues and habitual drinking. Sadly, at the age of thirty-three, So-wol Kim took his own life on December 24, 1934 by overdosing on opium.

In 1920, the literary magazine *Creation* published So-wol Kim's first five poems: "A Spring of a Wandering Man," "A Raindrop of the Night," "Last Day's Anxiety," "Missing You," and "Spring River." A common theme in his early works is that of

personal pain, as can be seen in poems including “Architrave,” “Healthy Sleep,” and “Refresh Morning.” Another theme in his works is that of life’s agonies as displayed in poems such as “Sleeping Song with His Arm under His Head,” “Money Song,” and “The Steepest Mountain.” So-wol Kim published *The Azaleas*, a collection of 126 poems in 1925. He published several single poems in the literary journals *Kaeb yok* and *Youngdae*, and in all, he wrote a total of 270 poems during his short life.

A common thread in the works of So-wol Kim is that of loss and the dramatic sentimental expressions surrounding a volatile family environment and the generally harsh feelings about life in the colonial era. Sorrow and the fleeting nature of life enveloped his works, and the difficulties of the dismal social situation that pervaded every aspect of Korean culture became the focal point for his later works.<sup>22</sup> After the publication of *The Azaleas*, So-wol Kim’s interests mainly focused on the various aspects and conditions of the Korean people in colonial times. The poet turned away from the vague expression of personal emotions and increasingly explored the development of thematic consciousness, describing in-depth the national situation through his words.<sup>23</sup>

In works such as “Wildflowers of the Mountains,” “Gold Grass,” “Seeing the Moon,” and “The First Skirt,” the poet depicts the lives of people and nature. Through the texts, he provides the reader with insight into the principles of life — something created must one day disappear. He describes love in his poetry, including poems like “Azalea,”

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<sup>22</sup> Mi Ae Yu, “So-wol Kim’s Study: Focused on Nature and Reality Perception,” (master’s thesis, Myongji University, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Sun A Kwon, “So-wol Kim Poetry Study: Focusing on the Correlation between Rhythm and Meaning,” (master’s thesis, Sungkyunkwan University, 1992).

“I Did Not Know Before,” “Far Later,” and “I Cannot Forget.” The poet writes about a range of experiences: various encounters, separations, states of loneliness to which all living beings are subjected, and reflections on the principles of love that bring beings together but eventually end in separation such that we are again left alone.

Beyond human love, many of his poems contain moving references to people’s love for their country under the colonial period; the sentiments of the Korean people at that time was represented by the traditional Korean emotion, *Han*. The term *Han* is a type of sadness or grudge which is a dominant characteristic of Korean culture. The connection between the concept of *Han* and Korean identity is based on the stereotype of sorrow that emerged from the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. So-wol Kim’s poems are still admired because they intimately convey the long-established emotion of the Korean people in a singular and exacting fashion.

So-wol Kim’s works influenced not only the public but also other emerging composers to the extent that many Korean art songs are set to his poetry. He was remarkably adept at employing sophisticated language, and although his poems seem to flow freely, they are nevertheless constructed in a strict format.<sup>24</sup> So-wol Kim’s command of the language has earned him an excellent reputation among many critics and composers. The poet Chun-su Kim evaluated So-wol’s poetry and observed that he meticulously attended to the details of the Korean language. The music critic Jong-ho Yu

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<sup>24</sup> Jung Ja Seok, “A Study of Tangible Consideration on the Korean Art Songs by So-wol Kim,” (master’s thesis, Keimyung University, 1978).

said that So-wol Kim's instinctual sense of language is a hallmark of his works, and this particular and laudable ability made him an admired representative poet of Korea.<sup>25</sup>

Most of So-wol Kim's poems focus on the topics of life, parting and death of loved ones, and of loss of country. The poet especially dwells on the profound and willing resistance of Korea and its people who had not been able to stand up to the horrible tragedy that emanated from and was forced upon them by Japan. His poems are characterized by their emphasis on the negative and sad emotions of human strife that are revealed through various life situations. However, the poet instills in his works a sense of hope, elaborating on the willingness to transcend and overcome these trying and obsessively morose sentiments and situations. The literary critic, In-hwan Kim said,

So-wol Kim conveys dramatic situations with appropriate atmospheres. His poetry projects subjective emotions according to the circumstances. So-wol Kim's works are a mixture of love and death.<sup>26</sup>

So-wol Kim gives voice to dramatic configurations and gestures, thus allowing the reader to feel a more genuine sense of emotional expression. He also uses a conversational approach in his writings which, when combined with a cultural backdrop gives his poetry more realism.<sup>27</sup> During the occupation, those who felt empty, lonely, and

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<sup>25</sup> Young Joong Ju, "The Sublime Aesthetic of Kim So-wol's Poetry," *Korean Poetic Research*, no. 28 (2010): 70, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15705/kopoet..28.201008.003>.

<sup>26</sup> In Hwan Kim, "Theater and Poetry," in *Imagination and Perspective* (Seoul: Moonji Publishing Company, 1993), 30.

<sup>27</sup> Hyun Ja Kim, "Dramatic Structure and Aesthetic Distance of So-Wol Kim's Poems," *Korean Literary Theory and Criticism* 6, no. 4 (2002): 250-260.



anxious found So-wol Kim's writings irresistible — a means to cope with emotions and feelings motivated by the sorrowful circumstances in South Korea.

The poet's most famous poem, "Azalea," was published in June 1922 in the literary magazine *Kaebiyok*. However, in 1925, after several revisions, the poem was reinserted and republished in his collection, *The Azaleas*.<sup>28</sup> "Azalea" has been set by many composers and is arguably one of So-wol Kim's foremost compositions.

"Azalea," consists of four stanzas, each containing three lines. The poem speaks of an individual whose lover has departed, without any promise to return. The individual states "I will endure sadness and wait for the lover to come back." The narrator sprinkles azalea flowers on the path that the departed lover takes in hopes of a reunion. On the surface, the content seems to show a simple breakup and a hopeful return of the lover, but the implied meaning of the text is something much deeper. The narrator of this poem, who spreads azalea flowers on the path, refers to the people of Korea, and the departed person represents the country of Korea. The loved one (Korea) has vanished, but the narrator (the Korean people) awaits, hoping that the loved one will return, all the while maintaining dignity and strength above the heartfelt sadness.

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<sup>28</sup> Hye Jin Lee, "A Study on the Relationship between Poetry and Music through the Art Song 'Azalea,'" *Romantic Music* 12, no. 2 (2000): 55-59.

진달래꽃

Azalea

나 보기가 역겨워  
가실 때에는  
말없이 고이 보내드리오리다

When you hate to see me,  
And if you feel like leaving me,  
I will gently let you go without any words.

영변에 약산  
진달래꽃  
아름 따다 가실 길에 뿌리오리다

From Yongbyon's Yaksan, (Mountain)  
I will bring an armful of azaleas, and  
I will scatter them on the path you'd go.

가시는 걸음 걸음  
놓인 그 꽃을  
사뿐히 즈려 밟고 가시옵소서

On your way, one step after another,  
Upon azaleas lain before you,  
Please tread softly as you're going away.

나 보기가 역겨워  
가실 때에는  
죽어도 아니 눈물 흘리오리다

When you hate to see me,  
And if you feel like leaving me,  
I will never shed tears.

Example 1: "Azalea" by So-wol Kim.<sup>29</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

In the first stanza, the narrator expresses sorrow with the understanding that a loved one is departing. The writer offers a blessing for the loved one by picking azalea flowers from the mountain and spreading them on the path taken by the departing lover. The third stanza speaks of stoic love. The final stanza establishes the narrator's

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<sup>29</sup> Sang Hee Lee, "Azalea," in *Korean Culture through Flowers* (Gyeonggi-do: Nexus Books, 2004), <https://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=1837269&cid=42924&categoryId=42924>.

willingness to let go of his/her loved one without resentment, and at the same time, suggest the possibility of a greatly desired reunion.

Another poem, “Wildflowers of the Mountains,” was published in the literary magazine *Youngdae* in 1924. Subsequent to its first public exposure, it was re-published in 1925 in So-wol Kim’s book of collected poetry *The Azaleas*, and became one of his most representative works.

“Wildflowers of the Mountains” contains four stanzas. The poet gracefully conveys birth and death through the use of nature metaphors. He expresses the loneliness of existence through flowers, which bloom in the mountain and over time, fall off their stems. Metaphorically, the speaker reveals the fundamental solitude of life as it is experienced through natural phenomena.

산유화

Wildflowers of the Mountains

산에는 꽃 피네

Flowers are blooming in the mountains

꽃이 피네

there the flowers bloom

갈 봄 여름 없이

Autumn, spring, and summer through

꽃이 피네

there the flowers bloom

산에

In the mountains,

산에

In the mountains,

피는 꽃은

blooming flowers

저만치 혼자서 피어 있네

Far away, flowers bloom alone

산에서 우는 작은 새여

Little birds crying in the mountains,

꽃이 좋아

they love flowers

산에서

The birds live in the mountains

사노라네

because they love flowers

산에서 꽃 지네

Flowers are falling in the mountains

꽃이 지네

there the flowers fall

갈 봄 여름 없이

Autumn, spring, and summer through

꽃이 지네

there the flowers fall

Example 2: “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by So-wol Kim.<sup>30</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

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<sup>30</sup> Young Min Kwon, “Wildflowers of the Mountains by So-wol Kim,” *The Life of New Language* 9, no. 4 (1999): 138, [https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc\\_id=128958083](https://academic.naver.com/article.naver?doc_id=128958083).

The first stanza speaks of creation comparing it to the appearance of flowers that bloom in the spring, summer, and fall. In the second stanza, the poet compares the solitude of existence with wildflowers of the mountains. The final line, “Far away, flowers bloom alone” exemplifies loneliness and speaks of the psychological distance between the flower and the speaker. The third stanza mentions the nature of all creatures yearning to communicate like birds perched on the stems of flowers. Images of death and the fleeting nature of life fill the final stanza. Like a well-wrought song cycle, the poet strikingly illustrates life’s journey from birth to death.

The poem alludes to the discontinuities of all existences.<sup>31</sup> The flowered mountain changes through the season and represents both a place of birth and extinction. By depicting flowers blooming in the distance, it seems to imply that all beings are destined to live in isolation. The destiny of humanity and nature is the spatial and temporal distance between existences that live alone in this world, and the poet believes that the fundamental essence of all beings is loneliness.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Se Young Oh, “Colonial Situation and Discontinuous Life,” in *Korean Romantic Poetry Study* (Seoul: Ilgisa, 1997), 314.

<sup>32</sup> Jae Hong Kim, *Study of Korean Modern Poets* (Seoul: Ilgisa, 2007), 34-35.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUNG-TAE KIM

Sung-tae Kim was born on November 9, 1910. His Japanese name is Kaneshiro Hijiritai, but he is known better by his pen names *Akseok* and *Yoseok* in Korean, meaning a stone who sings music. He was born to a devout Christian family and grew up listening to hymns from a young age. He studied violin with Nan-pa Hong and Ho Choi when he entered junior high school. Sung-tae Kim was a self-taught composer having received very little formative professional music education in Korea. He attended the Seoul's *Yonhee* College where he met the composer Jae-myung Hyun. In 1934, Sung-tae Kim published the *Bird, Bird, the Blue Bird*, a collection of twenty children's songs. After college, Sung-tae Kim continued to perform on the violin and sang tenor in a local men's choir, but decided to focus his musical efforts as a composer after he listened to a lecture given by composer Dong-sun Chae. At that time in Korea, it was difficult to receive a proper education due to Japanese interference, so he traveled to Japan to study.<sup>33</sup> In 1935, he entered the Tokyo High School of Music (the current Japanese national music school) as a composition major, and it is noteworthy that he is the first Korean to study music composition in Japan.<sup>34</sup> After studying in Japan, Sung-tae Kim returned home and taught students at the *Kyungsung* Nursery School where he also served as a conductor. Together with Jae-myung Hyun, Sung-tae Kim participated in the establishment of the

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<sup>33</sup> Sung-tae Kim came from a well-to-do family who had the financial means to send him to the best music schools even if it meant to study in imperial Japan.

<sup>34</sup> Sae Gi Lee, "Listening to Senior Artists: A Master of Music That Has Always Humbly Defended the Artist's Expectations and Pride," *Arco*, November 2000.

College of Music at the Seoul National University. He was the first Korean composer to use the term “Korean art song” with three works composed in 1937: “The Horse,” “Sea,” and “Beyond the Mountains.” In 1955, he studied music theory and contemporary composition techniques at Indiana State University. Toward the end of his life, he worked as a professor of music at the Seoul National University where he wrote over fifty art songs. Sung-tae Kim passed away on April 21, 2012 at the age of 101.

Sung-tae Kim made significant contributions to the development of classical music in Korea, but was unable to escape the controversy associated with being considered a pro-Japanese composer. Born in the Japanese colonial period, he conducted the performances in honor of the victory of the Japanese army in 1942, and is said to have led the national dissemination of Japanese national songs.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the pro-Japanese list published by the Seoul National University in 2008 includes Sung-tae Kim’s name.<sup>36</sup>

Sung-tae Kim’s representative art songs include “Dongsimcho Flower,” “Forgotten,” “Azalea,” “Wildflowers of the Mountains,” “Parting Song,” and “One White Lily.” His art songs are motivically structured and allude to natural subjects including flowers, the sea, mountains, and seasons. He admired So-wol Kim, having set many of his poems to music.<sup>37</sup> Jum-duk Kim said of the composer,

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<sup>35</sup> Institute of Ethnic Problems, *A pro-Japanese Dictionary* (Seoul: Minjok, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Ho Jin Cho, “Seoul National University Announces Twelve Pro-Japanese Characters,” *Ohmynews*, April 7, 2005, [http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/View/at\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0000247516](http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000247516).

<sup>37</sup> Kim, “A Comparative Study of Korean Songs.”

Sung-tae Kim's songs are modestly refined without the composer's personal assertions; his settings are emotionally passionate and highlight the elegant images found in the poetry.<sup>38</sup>

Sung-tae Kim composed approximately fifty art songs, over one hundred nursery rhymes, ten instrumental works, over twenty dances, over twenty plays, and many arrangements of Korean traditional folk songs.

He composed "Azalea" in 1948. The song is thirty-six measures long and consists of three distinct sections in C minor - E-flat Major - C minor. The score of "Azalea" follows in example 3.

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<sup>38</sup> Jum Duk Kim, "Sung-tae Kim," in *Korean Song History* (Seoul: Gwahaksa, 1989), 33-34.



# 진달래꽃

김소월 작시  
김성태 작곡  
(1947)

M.M. ♩ = 72 (애끊는 정을 가지고)

*mp*

나 보기가 역겨 -  
When you hate to see

*f* *p*

위 가 - 실 때 - - - 에 - 는 말  
me, and if you feel like leaving me, I

*pp* *p*

없 - 이 고 - 이 보 - 내 드 - 리 오 - 리 다  
will gently let you go with-out any - - - words

10 *mf dolce* *cresc.*

영 변 의 약  
From Young byon's Yak

13 *p*

산 전 달 - - 래 - - 꽃 아  
san, A za - - le - - as I

16

를 따 다 가 실 길 - - 에 - - - - - 뿌 리 오 리 -  
will bring and scatter them on the path you'd

19 *accel. cresc.* *f* *mf* *p*

다 가 시는 걸 음 걸 음 놓 인 그 꽃 - 을 - 사 뿐 이 즈 러 밟 고 가-  
 take. One step after another u - pon A za le as - - lain before you please tread softly as

19 *accel. cresc.* *f* *mf* *p*

3

23 *a tempo* *poco rit.* *mp*

- 시 음 소 서 나  
 you are going away. When

23 *a tempo* *poco rit.*

26 *a tempo* *f*

보 기 가 역 겨 - 워 가 - 실 때 - - 에 -  
 you - hate to see - me, and if you feel like leaving

26 *a tempo* *f*

3 3

Example 3: “Azalea” by Sung-tae Kim.<sup>39</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

The form of the song is ABCA<sup>1</sup>, preceded by a short two-measure prelude as shown in example 4.

Prelude	A	Interlude	B	C	Second Interlude	A <sup>1</sup>
Measures 1-2	Measures 3-9	Measures 10-11	Measures 12-19	Measures 20-23	Measures 24-25	Measures 26-36

Example 4: The form of “Azalea” by Sung-tae Kim.

<sup>39</sup> Jung Eun Kim, “Study of Korean Art Songs in the 1940s,” (master’s thesis, Suwon University, 2004), <http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T9942864>.

The main rhythmic motive in “Azalea” is shown in example 5.



Example 5: Rhythmic pattern in “Azalea” by Sung-tae Kim.

“Azalea” begins in 4/4 time, but briefly changes to 3/4 time in measure 14 with an immediate return to the original 4/4 time.

A noteworthy trait in the piano accompaniment is the rhythmic oscillation between duplets and triplets. The composer also utilizes the interval of a third both in parallel and as repeated notes, especially in the A and A<sup>1</sup> sections. In section B and C, the harmonic flow is fulfilled through simple arpeggiation with the piano doubling the melody creating a hollow yet reminiscent sound. At the final cadence, the third degree of the tonic chord is omitted, and the fourth degree is used instead, creating an unresolved effect.



Example 6: The final cadence of “Azalea” by Sung-tae Kim.

Sung-tae Kim emphasizes the word “azaleas” by lengthening the value of the pitches on which it is sung. The word “azaleas” appears twice in the entire piece, the first occurrence being at measure 13. Not only does the composer stretch the word “azaleas” over one and a half measures but he briefly changes the meter for added stress. In section C, the word “azaleas” appears again at measure 20 where the melodic line is the most rhythmically active. This measure seems to be the high point of the song. Also, an *accelerando* and *crescendo* in measure 19 intensify the drama culminating in the loudest measures of the piece.

Sung-tae Kim takes liberties with So-wol Kim’s text, repeating many of the words to maximize the poet’s lyrical expression. For example, in measures 30 to 36, the word “never” is repeated three times despite the single occurrence in the poem. The final iteration of “never” on a descending subdominant triad C - A-flat - F brings the song to a dramatically sad close.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, in measure 32, the piano imitates the vocal melody of measure 31, thus increasing the lyrical tension even more.

Sung-tae Kim composed “Wildflowers of the Mountains” in 1946. The song is in G-flat Major and is thirty-nine measures in length.

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<sup>40</sup> Jung Eun Kim, “Study of Korean Art Songs in the 1940s,” (master’s thesis, Suwon University, 2004).

# 산유화

Wildflowers of the mountains

김소월 작시  
김성태 작곡  
(1946)

MM. ♩ = 76 (민요풍으로, 아름답게)

산에는 꽃피네 꽃이피네피  
Flowers are blooming in the mountains there the flowers -

네 가을여름없이꽃이피네 bloom  
Au-tumn spring and - summer through, there the flowers bloom

산에산에... 피는꽃은  
In the mountains - In the mountains blooming flowers

15 *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

저 - - - 만 치 혼 - 자 서  
Far - - away Far - away

19 *mf* *pp*

피 - 어 있 - - 는  
Flo - - wers bloom - - ing

*meno mosso e largamente*

22 *f* *p*

산 에 서 우 - 는 작 은 세 - 여  
Little - birds cry - ing in the moun - tains

*meno mosso e largamente*



*piu mosso e leggiero*

*mf*

꽃 이 좋아 산 에 서 사 - 노 라 네  
 The birds live in the moun - tains cause they love - flo - wers

*mf*

*piu mosso e leggiero*

*a tempo*

*mf* *pp* *mf*

산 에 는 꽃 - 지 네 꽃 - 이 지 - 네 지 네  
 Flowers are falling in the moun-tains there - the flo - - wers fall

*mf a tempo* *pp* *mf* *pp*

*pp*

갈 - - 봄 여 름 없 - 이 여 름 없 - 이  
 Au - - tumn spring and the sum - mer through and the sum - mer through

*pp*

Example 7: “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.<sup>41</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

Sung-tae Kim’s setting of “Wildflowers of the Mountains” is in an ABCA<sup>1</sup> form:

Prelude	A	B	Interlude	C	A <sup>1</sup>
Measures 1-2	Measures 3-10	Measures 11-20	Measure 21	Measures 22-28	Measures 29-39

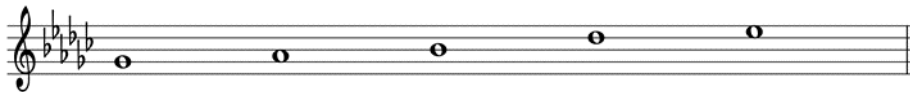
Example 8: The form of “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.

The song is in 3/4 meter, and the two main rhythmic motives used are shown in example 9.

Example 9: Rhythmic patterns in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.

<sup>41</sup> Gagok Movement Headquarters, “Wildflowers.”

The vocal melody is developed around *Pyeongjo*, a traditional Korean musical scale that can be likened to a pentatonic scale. The main notes used are G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and E-flat, with a F passing tone appearing once in measure 7 and again in measure 33. If the five pitches G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and E-flat, are lowered a diminished fifth degree, they become C, D, E, G, and A, the basic form of *Pyeongjo*. It should be noted that *Pyeongjo*, unlike the pentatonic scale, always begins on C. Sung-tae Kim's intent in using *Pyeongjo* is not only to create an evocative mood but also to combine both Western musical techniques with that of traditional Korean folk song idioms.



Example 10: The principal notes used in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.



Example 11: *Pyeongjo*: A traditional Korean music scale

A hallmark of Sung-tae Kim’s compositional style is his use of word painting to convey the meaning of the text. The words “Far away” appear twice in measure 15 and then again in measure 17, between and after which, the composer inserts two measures without a vocal line. These melodic rests, as well as the one in measure 21 after the words “Flowers are blooming alone” in measures 19-20, clearly depict the loneliness of the flower.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece "Wildflowers of Mountains" by Sung-tae Kim. The first system covers measures 15 and 17. The vocal line (treble clef) features the lyrics "Far - away" in two instances, with the Korean text "저 - - - 먼 저" and "흔 - - - 가 서" above. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *pp*. Red boxes highlight the vocal rests in measures 16 and 18, and the melodic rests in measures 19 and 20. The second system shows measures 19 and 20, with the vocal line containing the lyrics "Flo - - wers bloom alone" and the Korean text "피 - - 어 외 - - 는" above. The piano accompaniment continues with *mf* and *pp* markings. Red boxes highlight the melodic rests in measures 19 and 20.

Example 12: “Wildflowers of Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.

The composer captures the essence of falling flowers in measure 29 with a descent in the vocal line from E-flat to B-flat. In addition, Sung-tae Kim further emphasizes dying flowers with the added use of several B double-flats’ in measures 36 to 39, creating a feeling of sinking.

Example 13: Word painting in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.

Sung-tae Kim’s general compositional style followed that of most Korean art song composers of the 1960s, treating the piano more as an accompanimental instrument with only a subordinate role. However, in “Wildflowers of the Mountains,” Sung-tae Kim evokes the dialogue between the piano and the voice with the use of a delayed, improvised doubling of the vocal line in the piano part.

The musical score consists of five systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes the following lyrics and musical markings:

- System 1:**
  - Vocal: *mf* 산 에 는 꽃 - 피 네 *pp* 꽃 - 이 피 - 내 - 기
  - English: Flowers are blooming in the mountains there the flowers -
- System 2:**
  - Vocal: *f* 네 관 - 봉 이 봄 없 - 이 꽃 이 피 - 네 *pp*
  - English: bloom Au - tumn spring and - summer through, there the flowers bloom
- System 3:**
  - Vocal: *mf* 산 에 산 에 - - - - - 피 는 꽃 - 은
  - English: In the mountains - In the mountains bloo - ming flo - - wers
- System 4:**
  - Vocal: *mf* 저 - - - 먼 저 *pp* 먼 - - - 저 서
  - English: Far - - - away *pp* Far - - - away *pp*
- System 5:**
  - Vocal: *mf* 산 에 는 꽃 - 지 네 *pp* 꽃 - 이 지 - 내 - 기
  - English: Flowers are falling in the moun-tains there - the flo - - wers fall

Red boxes highlight specific melodic phrases in the vocal line that are imitated by the piano accompaniment in the following system. These include the phrase "꽃 - 이 피 - 내 - 기" in System 1, "꽃 - 이 피 - 네" in System 2, "피 는 꽃 - 은" in System 3, and "꽃 - 이 지 - 내 - 기" in System 5.

Example 14: Melodic imitation in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae

Kim.

In measure 6, the piano mimics the voice melody of measure 5. Similarly, in measures 16 and 18, the piano imitates the vocal line of measures 15 and 17, albeit in a modified fashion. However, in measure 32, the piano echoes precisely the vocal line in measure 31.

Another characteristic of the piano score is the frequent use of tremolo, which is more prominent in both the A and the A<sup>1</sup> sections. So-wol Kim speaks of flowers blooming and then falling, captured eloquently by the use of tremolos. A tremolo is the oscillation between two notes, similar to that of the never ending cycle of birth and death. In “Wildflowers of the Mountains,” the high note of the tremolo seems to indicate blooming while the low note indicates the falling of the flowers. The lyrics in measures 3-6, and 29-32 are “Flowers are falling.” The underlying tremolo enhances the dramatic image of the blooming and then falling of the flower.

The image displays two musical score excerpts. The top excerpt shows measures 3-6 of a piece. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics in Korean and English: "산 에 는 꽃 - 피 네 꽃 - 이 피 - 내 피" and "Flowers are blooming in the mountains there the flowers -". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a tremolo in the right hand, which is highlighted with a red box. The bottom excerpt shows measures 29-32. The vocal line has lyrics: "내 꽃 - 봄 여름을 이 꽃이 피 - 내" and "Bloom Au - tumn spring and - summer through, there the flowers bloom". The piano accompaniment also features a tremolo in the right hand, highlighted with a red box.

Example 15: Tremolos in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Sung-tae Kim.

Sung-tae Kim is creative in his setting of So-wol Kim’s text. He freely repeats text throughout, the most dramatic repetition being the final iteration of the words “There the flowers fall” in measures 36 to 39. The composer, through repetition, ominously emphasizes the grief of those who live and die in loneliness.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOON-NAM KIM

Soon-nam Kim (1917-1986) graduated from the Seoul's *Kyung Sung* School in 1937 after which he began teaching. More interested in piano and composition, he retired from academic teaching and traveled to Japan in 1938 to further his musical journey. Soon-nam Kim's studies in Japan occurred while Korea was still a Japanese colony. Studying in Japan had its advantages as it allowed him to study modern Western composition before any other Korean composers. However, Soon-nam Kim never forgot the importance of his rich Korean music heritage.<sup>42</sup> After graduating as a composition major, he began his piano studies in 1940. He returned home in 1942 where he launched a proletarian movement in the form of a music organization called *Sungyeonhoe*, which means "to study vocal music."<sup>43</sup> Soon-nam Kim and other musicians in this organization were forced to continue their musical pursuits in secret because of the intolerable social conditions placed upon them by the Japanese empire to which they were required to swear allegiance. When Korea was liberated in 1945, Soon-nam Kim composed the song "The Liberation," which quickly spread, especially among young people. On August 16, 1945, the music organization *Chosun* Music Construction Headquarters opened its doors to many prominent composers including Soon-nam Kim who, at the time, solidified his position as the premiere Korean composer of his generation. He composed fifty art songs between 1945 and 1946, many of which speak of the continuous pain of the country that,

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<sup>42</sup> Mi Ok Kim, "Soon-nam Kim," *Music and Ethnicity* 26 (October 2003): 93, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/SearchDetailView.do?cn=KINX2003134528&sysid=nhn>.

<sup>43</sup> Song, *Hankyoreh*, 161-162.

while liberated, was still mired in confusion. In 1946, Soon-nam Kim composed the “People’s Struggle,” a song about the anger felt toward pro-Japanese officers and the desire for a new and more just world. Because of the radical nature of the song, however, he became known as a left-wing political extremist, and in 1947, he planned to flee the country for fear of incarceration. Soon after, a warrant was issued for Soon-nam Kim’s arrest, and he eventually fled to North Korea in 1948 to avoid prosecution. All of the chaotic experiences of Korea in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century highly influenced Soon-nam Kim’s compositional style. He said,

Music occupies the lives of all humans and it is what connects all of us. It speaks of human intention and sentiment, as well as thought. A true musician understands reality and the yearnings of the human voice.<sup>44</sup>

With this belief, Soon-nam Kim inevitably chose to move to North Korea, leaving behind a complicated situation in South Korea where people still lived in the shadow of Japanese imperialism subsequent to liberation.<sup>45</sup> In 1949, Soon-nam Kim met Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) while attending a Russian commemorative event in Moscow, and in 1952 he traveled to Moscow’s Tchaikovsky Conservatory to take compositional lessons from Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978). However, Soon-nam Kim was required to return to North Korea when the government began to isolate itself and its citizens from the world. In 1955, he was finally deprived of all creative rights by North Korea. In 1958,

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<sup>44</sup> Korean Broadcasting System, “Soon-nam Kim: Singing the Soul of the Nation,” *Modern history of figures*, Directed by Korean Broadcasting System. Seoul, Republic of Korea December 7, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Kim, “Soon-nam Kim,” 93.

he left *Pyongyang* and moved to *Sinpo*, in the South *Hamgyong* province of North Korea, where he died in 1986. In Seoul, South Korea, during the *Haegum* art song festival on October 6, 1988, many of Soon-nam Kim's songs were performed, a moving tribute to one of the foremost art song composers in South Korea.

Soon-nam Kim composed "Azalea" in 1948, the same year that Sung-tae Kim composed his setting on the same text. The song is fifty-one measures in length and consists of three major sections in the following modes: F minor - A-flat Major - F minor.

# 진달래꽃

김소월 작사  
김순남 작곡

Andantino

나 보기가 - 역겨워 가실 때 -  
When you hate to see - me, when you feel like

는 말 - 없 - 이 고 이 보 내 드 - 리 우 - 리 다  
leaving me, I will gently - let you go - with - out any - words

나 보기가 - 역겨워 가실 때 - 는 말 - 없 - 이  
When you hate to - see - me, when you feel - like leaving me, I - will gently

16

고 이 보 내 드 - 리 우 - 리 다  
let you go - without any - words

16

*mp*

21

*mp*

영 변 의 약 산 진 달 래 - 꽃 아 름 따 다 가 실 길 여  
From Yongbyon's Yaksan a - za - le - as I'll bring an armful of a - za - le - as

21

*mp*

25

*mf* *mp* *p*

뿌 리 우 - 리 다 - - - 뿌 리 우 리 다 - - -  
I'll sca - tter them on path you'd take, I'll scatter them on path you'd - take

25

*mf* *mp* *p*

29 *mp* *p*

가 시는 걸음 걸음 놓 인 그 꽃 을 사 뿐 히즈 러 밟 고  
 As you make your way one step af - ter a - nother upon a - za - le - as lain be - fore you

29 *mp*

33 *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *rall.* *a tempo*

가 시 읊 소 서 - - - 가 시 읊 소 서  
 tread softly as you're going a - way, tread as you're going a - way

33 *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *(pp)<sup>3</sup>*

37

나 보 기 가 - 억 겨 워 가 실 때 - 는  
 When you hate to - see - me, when you feel - like leaving me

37 *(pp)<sup>3</sup>*

Example 16: “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.<sup>46</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

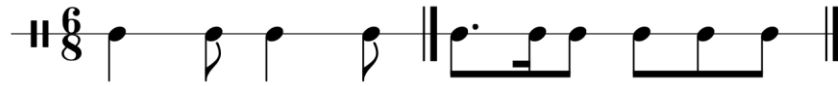
The form of “Azalea” is ABA<sup>1</sup> with a short prelude and postlude:

Prelude	A	Interlude	B	Second Interlude	A <sup>1</sup>	Postlude
Measures 1-2	Measures 3-18	Measures 19-20	Measures 21-35	Measures 36-37	Measures 38-49	Measures 50-51

Example 17: The form of “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.

<sup>46</sup> Kim, “Study of Korean Art Songs.”

The time signature is 6/8, and the main rhythmic motives of “Azalea” are shown in example 18.



Example 18: Rhythmic patterns in “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.

The rhythms of the *Janggu*, a traditional Korean drum instrument, can be heard in the bass clef of the piano part, oscillating between a perfect fourth ostinato figure and either a major second or minor third harmony above.

11  
나 보 기 가 - 억 거 워 가 실 때 - 는 말 - 잃 - 이  
When you hate to - see - me, when you feel - like leaving me, I - will gently

16  
고 이 보 내 드 - 리 우 - 리 다  
let you go - without any - words

Example 19: Ostinato figure in “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.



Although based on traditional Korean rhythmic patterns, the rhythm in the piano part of section A and A<sup>1</sup> are vastly different than those found in part B as seen in example 20. The composer allows the piano to express and emphasize both strong and weak beats throughout.

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Part A and A<sup>1</sup>', is in 6/8 time and shows two rhythmic patterns. Pattern 1 consists of eighth notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Pattern 2 consists of eighth notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. The bottom staff, labeled 'Part B', is also in 6/8 time and shows a single rhythmic pattern consisting of two dotted half notes.

Example 20: Rhythmic patterns in “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.

Because of the use of the pentatonic scale, “Azalea” maintains a traditional Korean sound; the chromatic changes seem to imbue the score with tantalizing colors.<sup>47</sup> The poem consists of a total of four stanzas. However, Soon-nam Kim repeats the first stanza twice, emphasizing the gravity of its meaning. The repetition reveals the speaker’s hesitation to accept the inevitable. The composer treats the last stanza’s “I will never shed tears” as a climax, emphasizing the text with the highest pitch of the song. The repetition of the climax exemplifies the strong desire and willingness of the speaker to endure sadness. The lyrics at the climax are the narrator’s pledge that “the loved one will leave,

<sup>47</sup> Kim, “A Comparative Study.”

but I will not cry.” Given the historical context, the text might also convey the willingness of a people to endure without despair even though there is no promise that a country may regain its sovereignty.

42 *mf* 죽 어 도 아 니 눈 물 - - - 흘 - 리 우 - 리 다 죽 어 도 아 니 눈  
I - will ne - ver ne - ver shed - tears - - I - will ne - ver

43 *p*

44 *mp*

45 *mf*

46 *p*

47 *pp*<sup>3</sup> 물 - - - 흘 - 리 우 - 리 다  
ne - ver - shed - te - - ars.

Example 21: The structural climax of “Azalea” by Soon-nam Kim.

Soon-nam Kim composed “Wildflowers of the Mountains” in 1947. The song is thirty-seven measures in length and is in the key of G-sharp minor.

# 산유화

Wild flowers of the mountains

김소월 작시  
김순남 작곡

Adagio

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features a piano introduction with a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the piano introduction, ending with a *pp* and *rall.* marking. The third system (measures 7-9) begins with a vocal line marked *p* and *a tempo*, with lyrics in Korean and English. The piano accompaniment continues below the vocal line.

산 유 화 는 꽃 피 는 데 꽃 이 피 네 . . . . .  
Flowers are blooming in the mountains there the flowers bloom

11

꽃이 피네 가을 봄 여름 없이  
there the flowers bloom Autumn spring and summer through-

*pp* 3

14

꽃이 피네 - - - 꽃이 피네  
there the flowers - bloom, there the flowers bloom

*rall.* *Piu mosso*

*pp* 3 *mp*

17

산에 산에 피는 꽃은  
In the mountains blooming flowers

*mp*

20

저 - 만 치 혼 차 서 피 어 있 네  
far a - way, flo - wers bloom a - lone

23

산 에서 우 는 작은 새 여 꽃 이 좋아  
Little - birds cry - ing in the mountains, they love flowers

*pp* *p*

26

산 에서 사 노 라 네 산 에 - 깎  
the birds live in the mountains. Flowers are falling

Tempo 1

*rall.* *p*

*rall.* *pp*

29 꽃 - 지 - 네 꽃 이 지 네 - - 꽃 이 - 지 네  
in the mountains there the flowers - bloom, there the flowers bloom

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 29-31. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line features a melodic line with lyrics in Korean and English. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

32 갈 봄 - - 여름 없 - 이 꽃 이 지 네 - -  
Autumn spring and summer through there the flowers - fall

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 32-34. The key signature remains three sharps and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line continues with lyrics in Korean and English. The piano accompaniment features chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

35 꽃 이 - 지 네 Humming  
there the flowers fall

35 *pp* *ppp*

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 35-37. The key signature is three sharps and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics 'Humming' and 'there the flowers fall'. The piano accompaniment features chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with dynamic markings *pp* and *ppp* and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

Example 22: “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.<sup>48</sup> English translation by Juhee Seo.

<sup>48</sup> Kim, “Study of Korean Art Songs.”

Soon-nam Kim’s “Wildflowers of the Mountains” consists of three sections in the following form:

Prelude	A	B	A <sup>1</sup>
Measures 1-7	Measures 8-15	Measures 16-27	Measures 28-37

Example 23: The form of “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.

The original poem consists of four stanzas. However, Soon-nam Kim combined the second and third stanzas, essentially creating an ABA<sup>1</sup> form. The second stanza speaks of a flower that blooms alone in the mountains as a metaphor for a lonely person. Within the third stanza, the poet speaks of these lonely flowers who often communicate with the birds. Unlike the original poem that emphasizes the loneliness of existence, the composer focuses more on the nature of beings who want to communicate with each other, even in solitude.

Many who have analyzed the original version aver that the second stanza’s strains of loneliness are the core of So-wol Kim’s poem. For example, Jae-hong Kim states that the second part talks about the spatial and temporal distance between living beings. He also posits that the poet feels that the essence of all beings is fundamental loneliness.<sup>49</sup> Dong-lee Kim opines that the eternal distance between nature and humans is the depiction of a flower that blooms alone in the distance.<sup>50</sup> Chun-soo Kim considers

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<sup>49</sup> Kim, *Study of Korean*, 34-35.

<sup>50</sup> Dong Lee Kim, “So-wol Kim,” in *Literature and Humans* (Seoul: Chungchun Publishing, 1952), 47-59.

the second stanza as the heart of the poem, elaborating that the poet was attempting to describe the distances that exist in the world, and that people can never be reached, all by using the image of solitude.<sup>51</sup>

Soon-nam Kim modulates from G-sharp minor to B Major in m.16, perhaps requesting that the audience imagine a bird that approaches and sits on a flower, perfectly balanced. The composer combines two stanzas with melodies identical to those in part B, emphasizing the interaction between the flower and the bird. If the emotions expressed in the poem exemplify solitary distances and profound thoughts, Soon-nam Kim seems to have attempted to escape the loneliness of the poem by expressing the existence of harmonious living in music.

The key signature of four sharps generally would be regarded as E Major or C-sharp minor. However, the art song does not revolve around either key. The overall sense is of G-sharp Phrygian. The music briefly modulates to the relative key, B Major, in the middle portion and then returns to G-sharp Phrygian. Although G-sharp Phrygian should have five sharps, A-sharp never appears throughout the song.

In fact, Soon-nam Kim composed this art song based on a five-note scale called *Pyeongjo*, a traditional Korean music scale, similar to Sung-tae Kim's composition set to the same poem. Soon-nam Kim further uses repetitive rhythms, arpeggios, parallel chords, sustained tones, and call and response forms in the piano accompaniment. The composer emphasizes the piano, which plays an important collaborative role in helping to emote the passion of the text, rather than simply supporting the vocal melody. Part A uses

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<sup>51</sup> Chun Soo Kim, *A Criticism of Poems* (Seoul: Songwon Munhwa Publishing, 1971), 183.



call and response, a musical form in which the second phrase mimics the first phrase, establishing an intimate conversation between the voice and the piano — one can hear the piano echoing the vocal line as if from the mountains.

8 *p* *a tempo*  
 산에 - 는 꽃 - 피네 꽃이 피네 . . .  
 Flowers are blooming in the mountains there the flowers bloom

11 꽃이 피네 Autumn spring and summer through-  
 there the flowers bloom

14 *rall.* *Piu mosso*  
 꽃이 피네 there the flowers bloom, there the flowers bloom  
 there the flowers bloom

Example 24: Call and response in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam

Kim.

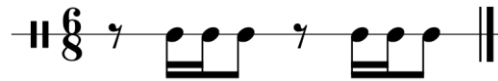
In the prelude of section A, the piano accompaniment foreshadows, albeit subtly, the opening vocal line. The flow and the arch of piano lines seem to depict mountains. For example, the melody line begins on D5 and then descends to G4 before catapulting to G6, as if depicting an alpine scene.



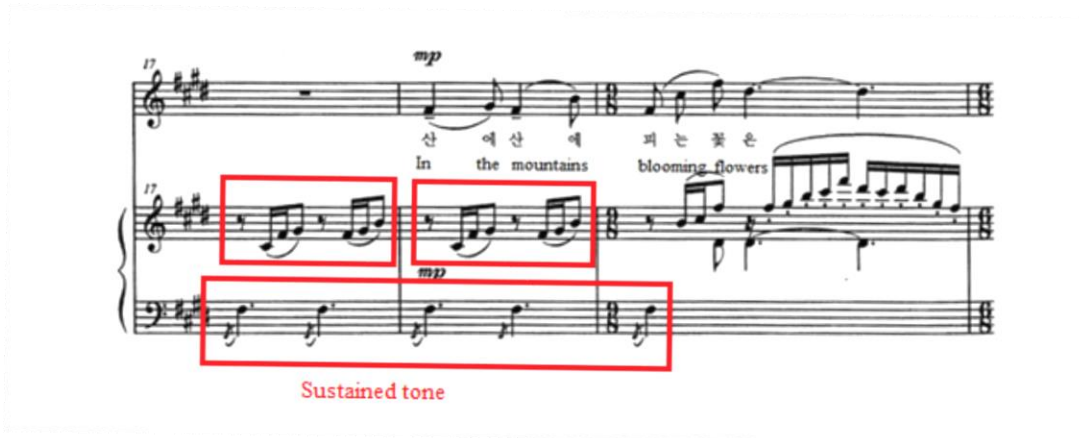
Example 25: Prelude of “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.

The composer’s use of ethnic Korean colors is subtle, but very present. In part B, a sustained tone is used in the bass clef, over which the main accompaniment pattern

envelopes a rhythm closely associated to the *Gayageum*, a traditional Korean stringed instrument.



Example 26: Rhythmic pattern of part B in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.



Example 27: A motivic pattern used in part B in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.

The ending of Soon-nam Kim’s composition is vastly different from Sung-tae Kim’s interpretation. One of the more obvious distinctions is that Soon-nam Kim adds humming to the last two measures of his work. This is a unique expression by the composer that is not found in So-wol Kim’s poem. The final two measures of music may be interpreted in two ways. The first is the phenomenon of flowers blooming and falling

continuously. This image is rather difficult to express with written notation, but clearly articulated by the insertion of humming. The humming seems to emanate from the composer’s imagination, which then circulates through the music. A second interpretation is simply to allow the singer an opportunity for imaginative vocalization. The humming portion has the highest note of the entire song. A singer’s vocalization of the last two measures may indeed imply shouting from the mountain tops.



Example 28: The use of humming in “Wildflowers of the Mountains” by Soon-nam Kim.

The soprano Su-mi Jo, known throughout the world, said this about “Wildflowers of the Mountains”:

Soon-nam Kim pursues perfection in his music; each word harmoniously set with appropriate musical colors. “Wildflowers of the Mountains” is beautifully melodic and will remain in your heart forever.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Korean Broadcasting System, “Soon-nam Kim.”

“Wildflowers of the Mountains” is based on a simple melody with a rhythmic motive akin to those played by traditional Korean musical instruments. From the prelude to the finale, the composer faithfully emphasizes the text by indicating the outline of a mountain in the piano as well as the multi-faceted aspects of nature in the humming portion in the final two bars.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Sung-tae Kim and Soon-nam Kim were contemporaries, and both composers wrote unique song settings of So-wol Kim's poems "Azalea" and "Wildflowers of the Mountains." "Azalea" expresses the speaker's patience at the unexpected departure of a loved one. The text represents the hearts of Koreans during a long period of social disturbance and discord. "Wildflowers of the Mountains" compares the loneliness of life to flowers. The poet speaks of solitude and extinction of creation in a straightforward and sober manner.

In "Azalea," both composers fashion their composition using traditional Korean triplet rhythmic patterns, and both demarcate their settings into an ABA<sup>1</sup> format: A (minor) - B (Major) - A<sup>1</sup> (minor). However, whereas Sung-tae Kim's piano writing is merely accompanimental and subordinate to the vocal line, Soon-nam Kim's piano writing plays a more prominent role in the composition by the insertion of an ostinato figure based on a traditional Korean drum instrument (*Janggu*) rhythmic pattern.

In "Wildflowers of the Mountains," both composers incorporate *Pyeongjo*, a traditional Korean music scale, into their compositions. Sung-tae Kim's song is in the form ABCA<sup>1</sup>, while Soon-nam Kim uses the form ABA<sup>1</sup> by combining the second and third stanza of the poem (B and C) into one section. Both composers utilize call and response as a means of connecting the piano line with that of the voice line. Both composers take liberties with the text by means of repeating single words or whole phrases.

In the 1920s, composers of the early Korean art songs sought to mirror the emotions of the Korean people under Japanese imperialism. Similarly, from the late 1940s onward after the division into the North and the South, art song consistently enveloped sentimental and ethnic Korean colors as a way to regain Korean identity. Moreover, in pursuit of a higher art — *Heilige Kunst*, according to German Romanticism — Korean art songs developed into a form in which poetry, voice, and piano intertwined peacefully as a single artistic entity.

The relatively short history of Korean art song is one of tradition, transition, and acceptance. In its youth, composers of Korean art song proudly embraced traditional Korean concepts of music including the use of traditional instruments like the *Janggu* and the *Buk* along with traditional Korean scales such as *Pyeongjo*. And even though Korean composers writing during the middle and latter portions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century increasingly began to accept new trends in Western music including atonality, minimalism, and aleatoric music, the grounding roots of traditional Korean art song were never forgotten.

The political and cultural milieu during this period, including events surrounding Japanese imperialism, the Korean War, and the continuing conflict between North and South Korea, have profoundly influenced the makeup of Korean musical thought. Tradition, patriotism, and nationalism are hallmark themes used by Korean poets and composers, and these elements are readily seen in the works of So-wol Kim, Sung-tae Kim, and Soon-nam Kim. Their creative acceptance of Western musical trends is noteworthy, but their ability to assimilate these nouveau ideas with their beloved Korean heritage is far more enriching and inspiring.

Because of the narrow scope of this paper, further research is recommended detailing other art song settings on poems by So-wol Kim.



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