

PANSORI & NEW TECHNOLOGIES: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHAN E. PARK

Professor Chan E. Park is an innovator of theatrical *pansori* for transnational audiences and the originator of bilingual *pansori*, a development and reworking of *pansori* storytelling that includes singing in Korean and delivery of narrative parts (*aniri*) in English and/or alongside English subtitles (for more information, see Park 2003: 245-272).

A first articulation of Park's current thinking on the intersections of *pansori* and technology appeared in a section of her chapter 'Beyond the "time capsule": recreating Korean narrative temporalities in *pansori* singing'. It read:

Today, I continue training with a set of my teacher's recordings. And the thoughts and ideas from learning and practice substantiate my written research. I have taken part in several theatrical or musical productions of *pansori* as innovative adaptation, but my sense of innovation is discovery in my teacher's recorded voice: if you can do a vocal doubling of a phrase you could not do yesterday, that is innovation for me. By engaging this partial archive of the work of an intangible cultural asset, I am able to renew my affiliations, albeit in a meditated way, with a *pansori* community, past, present and future.

(Park 2019: 176)

The following interview took place in June 2019, within the context of developing the article '[Between preservation and renewal: reconsidering technology in contemporary pansori training](#)' (Thomaidis 2019)—and we invite you to read this entry alongside that piece.

Konstantinos Thomaidis (KT): *In what ways has the use of technology (for example, professional CDs or DVDs, amateur recordings, blogs, sur- or sub-titling, YouTube, websites etc) impacted contemporary pansori training?*

Chan E. Park (CP): Recordings are essential tools for all learners. A learner makes own recordings of his or her teacher, during lessons.

From experience, professional CDs or DVDs, YouTube, should largely be for those amateur listeners not affiliated with teacher and school of learning, but take active interest as a fan, researcher, hobby, or self-study. And everyone seeking the professional field news or updates, or personal embellishments also browse on YouTube.

Blogs, I do not have, so am not qualified to speak about it. I tend to think, however, those younger generation practitioners perhaps use social media to exchange news and promote their own achievements rather than to enhance their training.

The concept of subtitling came into use in and around 1987, to the best of my knowledge. I happened to have provided the first English subtitles for the Song of Chunhyang produced by the National Changgeuk Company in 1987. Today, all professional singers making international appearances are aware of the critical importance of good subtitles to go with their presentations. For them, subtitles add to their *presentation*, rather than *training*.

KT: *In what ways has such technology impacted contemporary pansori performance?*

CP: Given the historical reality, without the advancements in recording technology (and consumption), *pansori* singing may not have survived as much as it has.

KT: *Do you think that the use of technology for pedagogic purposes (voice training) is more suited towards preserving or renewing pansori?*

CP: Both.

Renewal of *pansori* must first start with preservation.

KT: *Have you used such technology as a trainee? Or teacher? Or performer? If yes, could you describe a case of such use that exemplifies your approach?*

CP: Yes, yes, and yes.

First, my teacher is no longer living, yet I have continuously been depending on his recordings to review and re-review, re-re-review, and further.

In essence, he lives to continue to teach me through his recordings.

Listening to them thousands of times, I cultivate closer listening of his artistry as structural entity, the understanding of which is mine to reproduce within the boundary of my own vocal expressiveness.

In repeated listening, the obscure and the unidentifiable textual and acoustic elements often become clearer, suddenly or gradually.

KT: *In the past, the use of technology (for example, recordings) has been criticised as leading to mere imitation (‘photographic sound’/sajinsori) rather than creative mastery of the genre. Do you agree/disagree? Do you think such critique is fair or limited?*

CP: True, and this was my own limited observation during the earlier stages of training. Outwardly, it does feel and look like you’re photocopying. But consider the process of learning a new language: it starts with sampling and ‘photocopying’ your teacher’s articulation and mannerism. The language one day becomes yours to use, and you speak, listen, write, and comprehend in your own way.

People who sees only the ‘photocopying’ need to go further into the process of training, continuously.

KT: *Do you have any final thoughts to share on the issue of using technology in pansori training, either within or outside Korea?*

CP: Recording technology, despite the loss of oral culture, is a saving grace when it comes to the pedagogical field of traditional singing.

References

Park, C.E. 2003. *Voices from the Straw Mat: Toward and Ethnography of Korean Story Singing*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.

Park, C.E. 2019. Beyond the ‘time capsule’: recreating Korean narrative temporalities in *pansori* singing. In: M. Evans, K. Thomaidis and Libby Worth, eds., *Time and Performer Training*. London and New York: Routledge. 172-78.

Biogs

Chan E. Park is the author of *Voices from the Straw Mat: Toward an Ethnography of Korean Story Singing* (University of Hawai'i Press 2003), and currently professor of Korean Literature and Performance at Ohio State University. Park has innovated numerous bilingual and theatrical pansori including: *In 1903, Pak Hungbo Went to Hawai'i* (2003); *When Tiger Smoked His Pipe* (2003); *Shim Chong: A Korean Folktale* (2003); *Alaskan Pansori: Klanott and the Land Otter People* (2005); *Song of Everyday Chunhyang* (2008); *Hare Returns from the Underwater Palace* (2013).

Konstantinos Thomaidis is Senior Lecturer in Drama, Theatre & Performance at the University of Exeter. His books include *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience* (Routledge 2015, with Ben Macpherson) and *Theatre & Voice* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017). He co-founded the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*, the Routledge Voice Studies book series, and the Sound, Voice & Music Working Group at TaPRA. He is Artistic Director of Adrift Performance Makers.

Further Links:

<https://youtu.be/VGD9JUhofII>

<https://deall.osu.edu/people/park.2274>

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/beyond-time-capsule-chan-park/e/10.4324/9781351180368-18>

<https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/voices-from-the-straw-mat-toward-an-ethnography-of-korean-story-singing/>