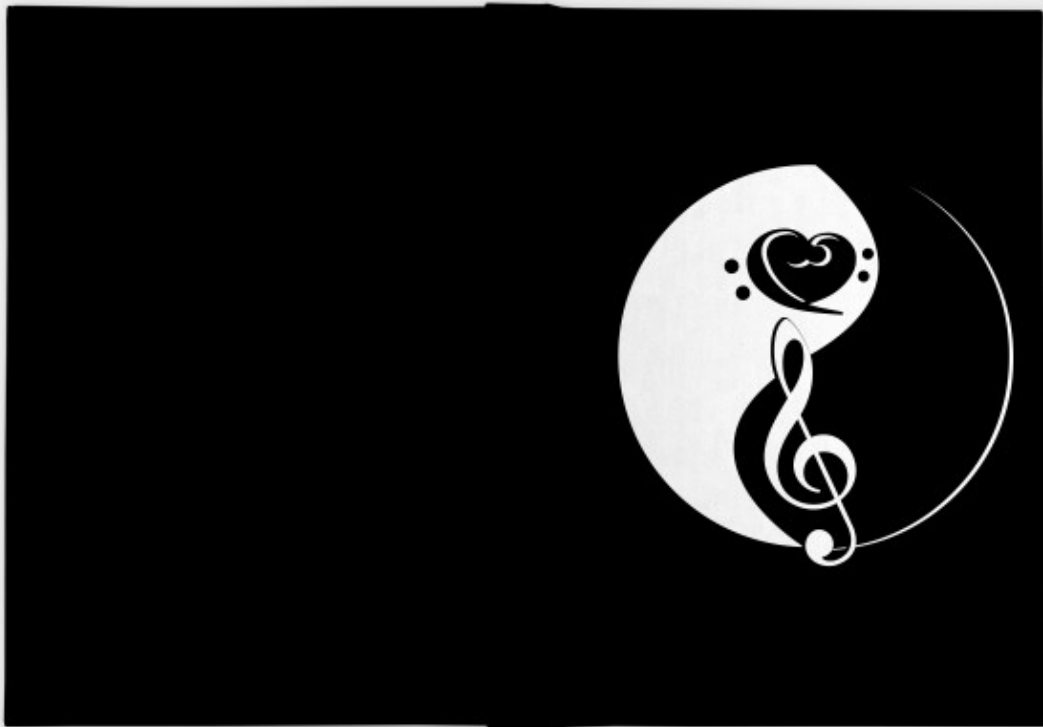


The Borderless Ends of the East and the West

Master Project



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Abstract

The Borderless Ends of the East and the West

Since the Japanese Occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953), Western Classical music has been prevailing South Korea due to the promotion of Western influence by both Japanese and Korean political leaders. Two significant South Korean contemporary composers Isang Yun (1917-1995) and Unsuk Chin (1961-) have been arisen from this.

Best known for blending Eastern and Western elements in his music, Yun was a composer who took an active role in the attempt of the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. On the other hand, Chin is considered as one of the most accomplished composers today. Following her studies with György Ligeti, she has expanded her musical language also in the more modern genre of electronic music, and producing music that bypasses categorisation of any nation's ethnomusical characteristics.

The project aims to explore and demonstrate the mergence of Korean traditional influences in their music. The recognition of both of the composers' bi-cultural memoirs is included in the analytic investigation of their piano works, Yun's *Fünf Klavierstücke* and Chin's *Piano Etude No. 4 "Scalen"*.

The thesis is accompanied by the artistic practices and the project includes a lecture-recital as a result of the method of "research-analysis-practice".

Key words: Korean composers, Eastern influences, Western influences, Korean traditional music, Isang Yun, Unsuk Chin, piano music

Norsk Abstract

Siden den japanske okkupasjonen av Korea (1910-1945) og Korea-krigen (1950-1953), har vestlig klassisk musikk vært rådende i Sør-Korea. Grunnen til dette er at både japanske og koreanske politiske ledere fremmet vestlig påvirkning. To betydelige sørkoreanske samtidskomponister Isang Yun (1917-1995) og Unsuk Chin (1961-) har hentet sin inspirasjon også fra denne påvirkningen.

Mest kjent for å blande østlige og vestlige elementer i musikken sin, var Yun, en komponist som tok en aktiv rolle i forsøket på gjenforeningen av den koreanske halvøya. På den annen side regnes Chin som en av de mest dyktige komponistene i dag. Etter studiene med György Ligeti har hun utvidet sitt musikalske språk også innen den mer moderne sjangeren elektronisk musikk, og produserer musikk som unngår å vise til enkeltnasjoners etnomusikalske sætrekk.

Prosjektet tar sikte på å utforske og påvise sammensmeltingen av koreanske tradisjonelle påvirkninger i musikken deres. Anerkjennelsen av begge komponistenes bikulturelle memoarer er inkludert i den analytiske undersøkelsen av deres pianoverk, Yuns Fünf Klavierstücke og Chins Piano Etude nr. 4 «Scalen». Avhandlingen er ledsaget av den kunstneriske praksisen i form av en forelesnings-recital, som tar sikte på å avdekke noen av disse påvirkningene gjennom metoden "forskning-analyse-praksis".

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Introduction

The project aims to explore the borders of Eastern and Western traditions in music. It lays its foundations in the three research questions that develop from a wider curiosity into a more narrow topic of research. These questions are:

In what ways can different cultures be adapted in classical music?

What makes Eastern music “Eastern” in the language of Western classical music?

What Eastern traditional influences can be discovered in compositions by Isang Yun and Unsuk Chin, who led bi-cultural lives?

Two prominent South Korean contemporary composers — Isang Yun (1917-1995) and Unsuk Chin (b.1961) — are the main topic of research. Isang Yun was a composer who faced consequential challenges of recent Korean history, therefore held a political voice through his works. His interest lied in blending the cultural dimensions in his music. Recognised through winning several prestigious awards, Unsuk Chin is considered nowadays as one of the most significant Korean-born composers alive. Her study with Ligeti has brought much influence in her works, which she developed into her unique compositional approach. As both composers Yun and Chin migrated to Germany, they have led bi-cultural lives that affected their compositions. The aim is to discover any merngence of Korean influences primarily in their piano music, *Fünf Klavierstücke* and *Etude no. 4 “Scalen”*, both of which are written in the Western compositional writing. One purpose of the project is to bring awareness of these two South Korean composers and their works, as well as to investigate how the two cultures are brought together in a united form of music. This is carried out through the method of research — analysis — practice.

The first chapter lays the project with a context by introducing the Eastern musical elements found in the Western composers’ works. It also describes briefly the Korean traditional music and philosophies, especially regarding Taoism, a philosophy much embedded in the Korean culture. This chapter then discusses the history of Western music in Korea since the beginning of the 20th century to gain an understanding of the circumstances in which the two composers were born. The second chapter is the investigation of the biography of Isang Yun and Unsuk Chin, as well as analyses of their piano works, *Fünf Klavierstücke* and *Etude no. 4 “Scalen”*. A part of my project is the artistic practices, by introducing and performing these works in a lecture-recital (documentation [link found on p. 51](#)) that accompanies the thesis. The last chapter of the thesis discusses the consequential artistic reflections of the performative aspect as well as the whole project, leading to a conclusion.

Both composers works are limited to the piano works in the purpose of this study, represented in *Fünf Klavierstücke* and *Etude no. 4 “Scalen”* in particular, in order to obtain a closer look at each composers’ works. These works are analysed concurrently with research and artistic practices, all processes which feed one

another. The special focus of the analysis will be attended with the Korean traditional philosophies and music, alongside the composers' biographical sources of suggestions.

Increasing number of interests both in Isang Yun and Unsuk Chin's music can be seen in other recent publications and dissertations. A doctoral dissertation by Hae Young Yoo, *Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers* (2005) investigates works of two Korean women composers: Jiesun Lim's *Spiritual Dance* and Unsuk Chin's *Piano Etudes*. Yoo reflects these works in relation to the historical background of modern Korea, in order to provide context of presenting female composers in the situation. She therefore treats Unsuk Chin's *Piano Etudes* more in the general context, instead of focusing on analysis of specific etudes. *A Study of Unsuk Chin's Piano Etudes* by Soo Kyung Kim, is another doctoral thesis on the topic of Chin's etudes, in which she examines each etudes more closely through analysing with respect to formal structures, unique harmonic language, and rhythmic virtuosity. She also provides performative suggestions alongside her analyses. *Isang Yun and the Hauptton Technique* (2012) by Sinae Kim discusses Isang Yun's compositional works through the main interest of *Hauptton*. *Isang Yun's Piano Music: Fusion of East and West in Twelve-tone and Atonal Contexts* (2015) is an article by Chaekyung Moon in which the two twelve-tone works by Yun are discussed through the topic of twelve-tone technique as the basis of the analysis. A recent study *Five Pieces for Piano by Isang Yun and Piano Etude No.1 by Unsuk Chin* (2020) by Inhye Cho puts these two composers and analysis of these works together in discussion with a knowledge of historical context, but treats each pieces with an independent understanding from one another.

Chapter 1: Historical Background

1.1 Eastern Musical Elements in the Western Classical Music

Even though there has been a perpetual interchange in the musical cultures between the East and the West, the conscious acceptance and inclusion of Eastern musical elements in the Western music was clearly expanding from the late 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The Paris World Exposition in 1889, the year which marked the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution, was a significant event that in some ways reshaped the course of Western music to come. Many Western composers encountered music from all around the world, and the influence remained in their music in one form or another.

Gamelan

Claude Debussy (1862-1918), amongst many others were fascinated by the Javanese Gamelan, orchestra usually consisting of 60 or more instruments (such as bronze gongs, drums, wooden flute, two-strangled fiddle, etc.). Four principal elements of gamelan music are timbre, tuning, polyphonic layering, and rhythmic structure,¹ the characters of which he frequently included in his works. He especially conceptualised Javanese music to be based on counterpoint in its multilayered structures, and in rhythmic detail.² In connection to the Javanese philosophy, ethnomusicologist Judith Becker describes its large structures as well as the elaborative subdivisions³:

This regularity and order . . . reflects the orderly universe. Traditional gamelan music both sanctioned and was sanctioned by heaven, resulting in a musical conservatism manifested by the rigid adherence to four-beat units, which may be either multiplied or subdivided, . . . a musical relationship that has remained fixed for a thousand years or more.

Gamelan compositions consist heterophonic texture. The music is based on a 'nuclear' theme, which is elaborated in different parts simultaneously in multiple layers. Oftentimes, the timbre of the instrument determines the character and the register of this thematic elaboration, which Debussy utilised in his orchestral works.⁴

Unlike Debussy, Anton Webern (1883-1945) was not particularly exposed to any Eastern influences in the early years of his career. However, some of his compositional methods share similarities to the gamelan technique. Whether consciously or not, his employment of musical structures in a motivically elaborated way

¹ <https://symposium.music.org/index.php/52/item/22-claude-debussys-gamelan#one>

² Wen-Chung, *Asian Concepts and the 20th Western Composers* (1971). 212.

³ <https://symposium.music.org/index.php/52/item/22-claude-debussys-gamelan#one>

⁴ Wen-Chung, 212.

— textures clearly defined in regard to aspects such as articulation, timbre, register, timing and rhythm — especially brings a reminder of the gamelan. Furthermore, his treatment with the distinct features of individual tones is much in sync with the Eastern philosophy, the concept of which will be elaborated in chapter 2.⁵

Indian music

Concerning serialism, the method primarily used by Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), the twelve-tone system and its function has many parallels to the Indian *raga*.⁶ *Raga* is a collection of pitches in Indian music that can be compared to scales or modes in Western music. However, the Indian *raga* does not only concern pitch, but also carries specific formulae for the use of them. This carries a certain resemblance of the twelve-tone technique, where the method is presented in a fixed series of notes (row), which forms the whole structural basis. This twelve-tone was a technique much favoured by Isang Yun, and he blends the technique with Taoistic philosophies in his composition, *Fünf Klavierstücke* (1958).

While *raga* considers the melodic elements of Indian music, *tala* — literally meaning a 'clap, tapping one's hand on one's arm'⁷ — is the rhythmic structure that determines its time unit, groupings as well as stresses of notes. This scheme of *tala* is one of the most important basis of Olivier Messiaen's (1908-1992) rhythmic concepts.⁸ One of his fundamental principles described in *The Technique of My Musical Language*, "rhythms with added value" was inspired by the *tala* concept in which polyrhythmic and polymetric systems present subdivisions of the time units. His first systematic implementation on this concept can be seen in *Quatuor pour la fin des temps* (1941).⁹

Eastern Philosophies

John Cage (1912-1992) is a substantial exemplary Western contemporary composer who constructed his works in the musical philosophy and practices of the East. He was also inspired by Eastern percussion instruments, and first utilised the prepared piano in his work *Bacchanale* (1938), in which the timbre resembles percussion instruments from the gamelan.¹⁰ He was deeply captivated in Zen Buddhism philosophy around the 1950s, and many of his later works reflect this meditative idea. His interest of 'nothingness' led obsession

⁵ Ibid, 214.

⁶ Ibid, 217.

⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tala_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tala_(music))

⁸ Mirjana Simundža, *Messiaen's Rhythmical Organisation and Classical Indian Theory of Rhythm (II)*, (1988), 53.

⁹ Wen-chung, 218.

¹⁰ Wen-chung, 222.

with the concept of silence. This can be mostly noted in his ground-breaking composition, *4'33"* (1952), the topic about which he said, "Silence is not acoustic. It is a change of mind, a turning around."¹¹

1.2 Eastern (Korean) Traditional Music and Philosophies

Taoism philosophy

In Korea, philosophy has been shaped by a number of religions and philosophies over the years. The main influences derive from Taoism, Shamanism, Buddhism and Confucianism, shared in Chinese traditional philosophies. Robert Provine explains that, "Taoism defines issues of life that are based on the individual and nature, human minds and physical selves, vitality and creativity."¹² This philosophy was in much of Isang Yun's interest, as most of his works have been rooted in Taoism according to himself. He explains his thoughts on Taoism:

Taoism is not a religious medium, but is a philosophical and spiritual attitude. . . . *Tao* in Chinese is interpreted as 'Path' (Weg), yet *Weg* in German is not enough to express the extraordinary meaning [of *Tao*]. In Taoism, men and the universe exist in the huge absolute being [referred to as 'the one' in the *Tao Te Ching*]. In addition, there is a huge being in Taoism, and it makes movements without discontinuation. This movement goes far away and makes its return [to its original state]. Although 'movement' (Bewegung) exists ceaselessly, it is also 'stillness' (Nichtbewegung) because of its [recurrent] returns. . . . The movement happens inherently. [*Tao*] is the spirit and anima of a man, which represents a small unit of the microcosmos. . . . The principle of Taoism represents four main components in the universal space, and one of them is the human being.¹³

Derived from Taoism, one important concept that Yun deploys, is the balance of two polarities: yin and yang. The earth and heaven are one of the main symbols of yin and yang, but yin often is referred to as feminine, gentle, negative, passive, cold, weak, dark elements, whilst yang is compared with masculine, hard, positive, warm, strong, light elements. Within Taoistic approach, all creations in the universe are derived from this balance.¹⁴

¹¹ <https://www.themarginalian.org/2012/07/05/where-the-heart-beats-john-cage-kay-larson/>

¹² Provine, *Music Online: The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music 7*, s.v. "Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics," Routledge, (2001). apud. Lee, *Isang Yun's Musical Bilingualism*, (2012), 15.

¹³ [trans.] Yun and Sparrer, 나의 길, 나의 이상, 나의 음악 (My way, my ideal, my music), 28–29. apud. Lim, *Cultural and Political Overtones in Isang Yun's Works for Piano*, (2019), 161.

¹⁴ Lee, *Isang Yun's Musical Bilingualism*, (2012) 16.

Korean Traditional Music

Korean traditional music can be categorised into two groups: classical or court music for the higher class (*Jongak* or *A-ak*) or folk music for “common people” (*Sogak* or *Minsogak*).¹⁵ The music for the higher class (*Jongak* or *A-ak*), has influences from Chinese music including court music and confucian rituals. Music for the common people (*Hyang ak/Sogak* or *Minsogak*) expanded especially in the second half of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897). It ranges from sophisticated art songs to farmer’s songs or lullabies, and carries an “authentic expression of the national identity” over elite traditions, therefore is a more appreciated genre in Korea overall.¹⁶ The following paragraphs convey a few examples of Korean traditional music.

Hyang ak (also known as *Sogak*), is music for a small orchestra of winds, strings and percussion, has origins from the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C. - 668 A.D.). It is typically accompanied by traditional folk dances in Korea. It also implements similar heterophonic textures of displaying simultaneous elaboration of the theme, as the gamelan. This texture has a resemblance to European Medieval music, where the ‘nuclear theme’ in this context is translated as the *cantus firmus*.¹⁷

Within the category of *Minsogak*, *Pansori* is a form of musical entertainment inherited from the 18th Century in Korea. It is a musical storytelling performed by a singer and a drummer (often using Janggu, described in p. 16). The definition of *Sori* means “sound” in Korean, but relation to Korean traditional music, this term more closely refers to ‘meaningfully produced sounds’, whereas *Pan* is often interpreted as a “song composed of varying tones”¹⁸. In *Pansori*, each phonetic sound resembles sound in nature, and at the same time, an expression for specific emotions.¹⁹ The way this sound is portrayed (using ornaments, pitch bending, glissandi, etc.) emphasises on the tone production, a distinct feature of Eastern music. This genre also has an improvisatory character, where the sounds are continuously flowing.

Emphasis on Single Tone

Traditional Korean music practice shares roots to the Chinese traditional music in the way “single tone is musical entity in itself, (and) that musical meaning lies intrinsically in the tones themselves.”²⁰ Therefore, great emphasis is placed upon production and control of tones, often involving elaborate articulations or

¹⁵ Yoo, *Western music in modern Korea: A study of two women composers*. (2005), 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁷ Ishida, N., *The textures of Central Javanese gamelan music: Pre-notation and its discontents*, (2008), 475.

¹⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pansori>

¹⁹ *Pansori: South Korea’s Authentic Musical Storytelling*, (2017) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kt7YdXsWzg>

²⁰ Li Chi, chap. 19, compiled by Tai Sheng (first century B.C.), apud. Wen-Chung, 216.

ornaments, tone coloring, pitch bending, fluctuations in intensity, glissandi, vibratos or tremolos. Regarding this concept, Yun describes:

While in European music the concept of form plays a decisive, and notes become significant only when a whole group of them are related horizontally as melody or vertically as harmony, the thousands-year-old tradition of Eastern Asiatic music places the single note, as a constructive element in the foreground. In European music only a series of notes comes to life, so that the individual note can be relatively abstract, but with us the single note is alive in its own right..”²¹

Single notes exist with secondary notes, which act as an ornamentation (either a prefix or a suffix), and these secondary notes move around the (centre) main note. This is the basis for the *Hauptton* (main-tone) technique, which Isang Yun has first brought into the West, and is employed in all of his works.

1.3 Western Influences on South Korean Music

Korean music has developed rapidly with diverse cultural influences from the beginning of the 20th century. The colonisation by Japan (1910-1945) had a great impact in the Westernisation process, due to the forced adaptation of Japanese culture (and the prohibition of Korean culture), which also included Western cultures, since Japan was influenced by Western cultures earlier than China and Korea.²² Japanese educational system also included musical training that was imposed to Koreans in this regime.

Moreover, as a result of the Korean War (1950-1953) which shortly occurred after the liberation of the Japanese Occupation, South Korea became very poor and vulnerable that it had to extensively depend on Western countries for humanitarian assistances. This meant being exposed to their education and culture and having to accept it. Korean musicologist Gang-suk Lee comments that, “Contemporary Korean lieder cannot be considered ‘Korean music’ since they are written completely by taking advantage of Western- style musical materials (in scales, rhythms, harmony, etc.) except for Korean lyrics”.²³ These two radical historical events of Korea since the beginning of the 20th century, the Japanese Occupation and the Korean War, therefore had a significant impact on shaping the current music scene in South Korea.

²¹ Yoo, *Isang Yun: His Compositional Technique as Manifested in the Two Clarinet Quintets*, (2000), 41.

²² Oh, (2022) *Modernization or Westernization? Japan’s Cultural Transformation* <https://historyofyesterday.com/modernization-or-westernization-japans-cultural-transformation-9fe3d6aedaf3>

²³ Choi, *Modernity as Postcolonial Encounter in Korean Music*, (2019) 47.

Chapter 2: Biographies and Analyses

Isang Yun

2.1 Biography of Isang Yun

Naturally, the artist grows in his tradition and among his people. However, I try to express the essence of Korean music, the philosophical, aesthetic, and acoustical elements through appropriate means because Korean music as itself cannot be received in the Western society.²⁴

Isang Yun (1917-1995) was one of the pioneers of Korean classical music. He is best known for blending East-Asian and Western-European elements in his music. He was born at a time when Korea was under the Japanese Occupation (1910-1945), with severe cultural suppression that included prohibition of the use of Korean language, and distortions and alterations of cultural heritages. His upbringing was in the Southern province in Korea, Tongyeong, which to this day is a famous place for preservation of Korean traditional music. With these influences, he naturally learned the values of the Korean tradition and its importance of preservation. He was exposed to the Buddhist Temple bells, monks voice and rituals singsong by Shamans, Korean traditional instruments, fiddle, drums, etc. which all contributed in shaping his later mature compositional style.

At a young age, he first encountered Western music through music classes and Protestant churches near his home. His first violin lessons were with his neighbour who played the instrument as a hobby. Yun as a boy, said to himself, “why should I sing and play only what others have written down in notes? Why don’t I myself write music?”, and began writing his own music.²⁵ His first premiered work was a simple song arranged for a small orchestra, which was played as an interlude in a cinema in Tongyeong.²⁶

After his high school in 1935, despite his father’s disfavour, he moved to Seoul to continue with his Western music studies. He then moved to Osaka for composition and cello education under

²⁴ Kim, *Isang Yun’s Life and Music*, *The Journal of Music and Country* 11 (1996), 25. apud. Yoo, *Isang Yun: His Compositional Technique as Manifested in the Two Clarinet Quintets* (2000), 45.

²⁵ Byeon, *The Wounded Dragon* (2003), 56. apud. Kim, *Isang Yun and the Hauptton Technique* (2012), 5.

²⁶ Kim, *Isang Yun and the Hauptton Technique*, (2012), 5.

the condition that he would study business as his major. However, he returned to Korea before the outbreak of the Pacific war in 1941 to participate in the anti-Japanese resistance. There, he was imprisoned for two months, because of his compositions that were written in Korean — since this was strictly forbidden during the Japanese Occupation. Even after his release, he was chased down constantly, meaning that he was forced to live an insecure life with a fake Japanese name.

With the joy of Korean liberation taking place in August of 1945, followed the tragic national division of territory between the north and the south. Also, Yun's health declined significantly by this time due to the previous living conditions, as he was hospitalised with tuberculosis. With some recovery, he worked for the cultural centres and schools as teacher, composer, and cellist. He married Suja Yi in 1949, who was a teacher in Korean literature at the same school. Shortly after their marriage, the Korean War (1950-53) broke out. The South Koreans were unprepared for this sudden attack from the North. Yun held a strong conviction as a Korean nationalist, and opposed to join the army to fight for the Korean War:

I would always join the war against Japanese invasion, yes, but not a civil war. I could not believe that the conflict could not be resolved peacefully. I did not understand this dreadful assassination of our own people. So I did not want to fight.²⁷

Yun pursued with his involvement in music even during the war, after having avoided to join the military with the help of his friends. He founded the Association of Korean Composers with other few composers in Busan (the second largest city in South Korea), in attempting to keep alive the musical activities throughout these circumstances.

After the Korean War, he moved back to Seoul and worked as a lecturer at the Seoul National University, where he realised that his knowledge in the Western Classical Music did not go beyond the music of Ricard Strauss and Paul Hindemith, which he self-studied in the national libraries. Therefore, he decided to go to Europe to study further, so he moved first to Paris for a year, and then to Berlin in 1957. At the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, he began his studies with Boris Blacher in composition as well as with Josef Rufer, a student of Arnold Schoenberg, with whom he learnt the techniques of the Viennese school (including the twelve-tone technique). He also attended the Darmstadt International Summer Course in 1958, and became acquainted with other contemporary composers such as John Cage, Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. He was

²⁷ Byeon (2003), 91. apud. Kim (2012), 7.

fascinated by the diverse approaches from these composers, as well as some of their tendencies to break away from serialism. With this fascination and his struggles caused by it, he explained:

I was fascinated with the experiment. A whole broad spectrum of new possibilities. But [I was] very confused also. I had to ask myself where I was, and how I should move on: whether I should compose in a radical way like these people who belonged to the avant-garde, or should I do it my own way according to the Eastern music tradition. It was an important decision.²⁸

In a letter to his wife, he explained his conscious decision of keeping his compositional identity in the East-Asian style as he wanted to write music based on Taoism philosophy.²⁹

Regarding Taoism (“Tao” literally meaning “the Way”), the philosophy was organized by philosophers from China, such as Lao-tzu (604-531 B.C.) and Chuang-tzu (365-290 B.C.). It vastly influenced the way of thinking for both Chinese and Koreans. It can be more accurately described as a philosophy rather than a religion, as it has no ritual or temple, which is a different case for example with Buddhism and Confucianism. Taoism views existence in relation to two opposites: Yin and Yang. Yin correlates with negative things such as darkness, water, death, cloud, passivity, weakness, destructiveness, entropy, etc., whereas Yang relates to positive things such as light, fire, life, sun, activity, strength, creation, energy, etc.

The two compositions that he wrote with the twelve-tone technique were the *Fünf Stücke Für Klavier (Five Pieces for the Piano)* (1958) and *Musik für Sieben Instrumente (Music for Seven Instruments)* (1959), which were both accepted to be performed in the Darmstadt Contemporary Music Festival. In 1966, his work *Reak* (1966) premiered at Donaueschingen which brought him much recognition internationally. This work in particular, displayed a combination of Western techniques and expressions of Korean court music in Yun’s own musical tools such as the ‘*Haupttontechnik*’ (main tone technique), and ‘*Hauptklangtechnik*’ (sound-complex technique).

Relating to the *Haupttontechnik*, Yun describes his musical philosophy:

While in European music the concept of form plays a decisive, and notes become significant only when a whole group of them are related horizontally as melody or vertically as harmony, the thousands-year-old tradition of Eastern Asiatic music places

²⁸ Byeon (2003), 104-5. apud. Lim, *Cultural and Political Overtones in Isang Yun’s Works for Piano* (2019), 91.

²⁹ Kim (2012), 10.

the single note, as a constructive element in the foreground. In European music only a series of notes comes to life, so that the individual note can be relatively abstract, but with us the single note is alive in its own right. Our notes can be compared to brush strokes as opposed to pencil lines. From beginning to end each note is subject to transformations, it is decked out with embellishments, grace notes, fluctuation, glissandi, and dynamic changes; above all, the natural vibration of each note is consciously employed as a means of expression. A note's changes in pitch are regarded less as intervals forming a melody than as an ornamental function and part of the range of expression of one and the same note. This method of treating individual notes sets my music apart from other contemporary works. It gives it an unmistakably Asiatic color, which is evident even to the untrained listener.³⁰

As in his explanation, single notes are often played with ornamentation of secondary notes, which are prefix or a suffix. Secondary notes move around the *Hauptton* as the centre point, and this makes the key feature of the *Haupttontechnik*.

After his visit to North Korea in 1963 for the purpose of which was to see a famous cultural monument, *Sashindo*, the South Korean Secret Service abducted more than 190 Korean intellectuals in 1967, who were living in Europe for espionage for North Korea that included Yun and his wife. He was given a life sentence in prison. With a protest petition addressed to Chung-Hee Park, the South Korean president at the time, signed by 181 prominent musicians including Karajan, Stockhausen, Carter, Ligeti, he was released after 2 years of imprisonment and torture. A part of their petition said:

Isang Yun has been recognized as a prominent composer not only in Europe but also in the world. His goal is to combine the excellent tradition of Korean music with the trends of Western music. Therefore, we must look at him as an important mediator who introduces Korean culture and art to the outside world. Without him we would know but little of your culture. There has previously not been anyone who could teach us the pattern of thoughts of Koreans through his artistic efforts. And we, petitioners, want you to understand our wish that the president give Isang Yun, who is seriously ill, freedom and would allow him to get well and to work again. We need Isang Yun for the international music sphere. To us, he is the most important person as a mediator between the East and the West. We cannot trade

³⁰ Yoo (2000), 40-41.

for him anything as an ambassador of Korean music. (.....) The money that we collected will be used for his hospital fee and for rearing his children.³¹

Even in his imprisonment, he continued to write music, and his comic opera *The Butterfly Widow* (1968) was extremely well-received in Europe despite the circumstance.

After his release in 1969, he was appointed in Hanover Hochschule für Musik as a composition professor, and then moved to Hochschule für Musik in Berlin where he worked between 1972 and 1987. His operatic work *Sim-Tjong* (a story based on a Korean legend) was commissioned from the Munich Olympics Committee to be performed in 1972, which became a success and brought him even more international recognition.

Several attempts were made for plans for him to go back to South Korea and for his music to be performed there, but many political challenges obstructed him from carrying out his plans. While his music was being frequently performed in North Korea, in the South, performances of his music were banned until 1982. He also made several attempts for his works to be performed by a joint orchestra by musicians from both North and the South, in the hope of a reconciliation between the two Koreas, but political tensions stopped his endeavours. He died in Berlin in 1995, unfortunately having no opportunity to return to his home country beforehand, but leaving behind works that resonated in Koreans with his wish for reunification. It is written on his gravestone:

...He bore a burden of national division and he showed his devotion to his country all his life. My husband, Isang Yun, could never return to the country that he loved so much. He left the world as he shook off his nation's pain and suffering. He left with everything I have. I give my mind and only ardent heart to the spirit of my husband.

As missing my husband ³²

31 Lee. *Nae Nampyon Yun Isang (My Husband Isang Yun)*, 294.

³² Ibid, cover page.

2.2 Analysis of *Fünf Klavierstücke (Five Pieces for the Piano)* (1958)

When Yun composed, he often kept Korean traditional instruments in mind, and he states that because it is hard to find an instrument that is similar to the piano in the Korean tradition, it was a challenge to compose especially for piano. Because he wrote this piece in the phase when he was occupied with serialism, only few Eastern elements are integrated. Even so, some Korean elements are still present, such as the pentatonic scales and passages of imitation of Korean traditional instruments. Many irregular and rapid rhythmic passages are reminiscent of Korean percussive instruments, like the Janggu (shown in image 1), an hourglass-shaped drum that has two sides, played with different rhythms on both sides using both hands. The dualism concept of yin and yang is also conveyed, featured in various ways in different movements.



Image 1: Janggu

FIRST PIECE

This piece has two main sections with different tempo markings *Adagio*, *grazioso* and *Andante*, marked with a double line in between them. As the piece has no bars or a time signature, it implies a more improvisatory interpretation. The presence of the ‘yin and yang’ notion is prominent especially through the rapid arpeggiated passages followed by long held notes/chords in this piece.

The first section *Adagio* is in three units, which are divided up with fermatas. With the middle unit being the most dramatic in character, the outer units point towards (introduces) and comes

away (concludes) from this. This is shown both in the ascending pitch as well as dynamics, where the general dynamic level rises towards the peak point, which is marked with *fff*, and with the constant diminuendo heading to the end of this section. The interpretive choices for these three fermata lengths would require consideration in the rhythmic and dynamic inclination or declination of the phrases that come beforehand. I would consider the first fermata as perhaps the shortest, as the introductory quality of the first phrase somewhat requires more flow into what is coming next. The second fermata would be a slightly longer as the climactic point has passed, but still suggesting an unresolved tension that will continue to resolve in the following phrase. The final fermata seems to me a resolved statement and need for a longer pause, for which also requires waiting for the sound to disappear. The notes that are presented in the first part is a direct retrograde in the third part, which delivers the ‘complete-ness’ or the ‘whole-ness’ of these three units (ex. 1 and ex. 2, which D# fermata note precedes).

Example 1

Example 2

Ex. 1 & 2, *Fünf Klavierstücke*, I Adagio.³³

Prime row: E - Ab - F# - Bb - A - C - B - Db - G - F - D - D#

First unit starts with a rest, a ‘silence’ — which relates to the Taoism philosophy in which Yun viewed his compositional works as music that has ‘no beginning nor the end’.

My compositional works are expressions of the Tao in the sense that I always seek out the principles of Taoism in the creation of the works. The beginning of my music is actually a continuation of something [invisible] that has already been ringing without sounding.

³³ Yun, I. (1958) *Fünf Klavierstücke*, All examples used are under the copyright infringements of © Bote and Boch Musik

Likewise, the seeming end of my music in fact belongs to the unheard sound of the future, and would continue to ring in the unheard sound.³⁴

Long note followed by the longest note — which is decorated with an ornament — activity quickly increases towards the chord with the fermata through hairpins as well as short detached notes with ornaments that not only helps emphasising the tones but also gestures.

With the wide-span use of the piano right from the start of the second unit after the fermata, it is much more dramatic and the energy is driven forward with quick notes (10-tuplet) leading to a crescendo towards *fff*. After reaching the highest point, tension is rapidly brought down through a diminuendo and declination into the fermata chord, composed of the same notes as the first fermata chord, only with a held-ornament bass D.

With the retrograde version of the prime row, the third unit goes back to the beginning ‘atmosphere’ in the low register, again with longer note values in a faded dynamic. Not only the structural notes in regard to twelve-tone, but also the gestures are mirrored in the similar manner, with in the staccato articulation alongside the ornaments to decorate the triplet, like the beginning. The whole section therefore could be viewed as a symmetrical formation.

The second (Andante) section is more flowing, but also has three fermatas but now proportionately with more weight on the first part. The first part can be viewed as two sides with the increase and the decrease in tempo, the ‘aftermath’ of the first part’s energy. Again, the contour of pitches very much reflect the dynamics and the tension is built also with the accelerando, as well as the interchange of ideas across two hands (ex.3). The highest point of this section is the highly two dissonant chords (shown in the two last boxes of ex.3), which are accented as well as rhythmically emphasised by coming on the 2nd beat of a triplet against 16th notes in the other hand, providing a highly syncopated feeling. These are felt as ‘resolved’ with *ritorno* to andante.

The image shows a musical score for piano, marked 'Andante'. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef). It includes dynamics such as *mf* and *acc.* (accelerando). The score is annotated with several boxes: a blue box highlights a triplet of notes in the treble clef, and a red box highlights a triplet of notes in the bass clef. Other boxes highlight specific chords and ornaments. The score is annotated with various musical symbols, including accents, ornaments, and fermatas.

Ex. 3 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, I Andante. The interchange of two ideas across hands.

The last two ascent notes of the first part (D# and C) are extremely wide-spread across the register, acting almost as a stimulus to what follows: the ‘filling’ motion of the descending arpeggiated figures, starting from *pp* where it left off, into a nuance of a ‘full stop’ with the two-note chords in both hands, which comprises the first two tones of the prime row (E and Ab) in the first section, acting as a reminder. The short phrase that follows is the closing gesture of the whole piece, with an extreme diminuendo to a *ppp*, and a ritardando, and the use of the widest interval between the two hands for the last two notes, using E and C. The bass C resolves the suspension, which not only suggests a harmonic stability, but also displaying the first and the last notes of the prime row displayed in the first section, making it ‘whole’.

SECOND PIECE

The second piece is more traditional in regard to form, as it displays ABA structure. Tempo markings show clear changes in the section: Andantino, espressivo — Allegretto — Andantino. Yun’s use of the twelve-tone technique is more flexible in this movement. The row is divided into four 3-note cells that he uses more freely, rather than following strictly the rules for the twelve-tone, for which the row should be presented in its whole form (ex. 4).³⁵

Ex. 4 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, II Andantino, b. 1-4 (with the first 1/4 bar as bar 1) . Yun’s application of 3-note cells in a free manner.

This piece displays a dialogue between two parts (two hands), as one part moves while the other is held as chords, and with the exchanging of rhythmic motifs in between the hands (ex. 4: 16th notes of the right hand bar 3 and 16th notes of the left hand in bar 4). This can be seen as a more compact relationship of the ‘yin and yang’ that occur almost simultaneously. This dialogue concludes in the united triplet rhythm in bar 4 springing towards the next bar, that consists a new

³⁵ Moon, *Isang Yun's Piano Music/ Fusion of East and West in Twelve-tone and Atonal Contexts* (2015), 180.

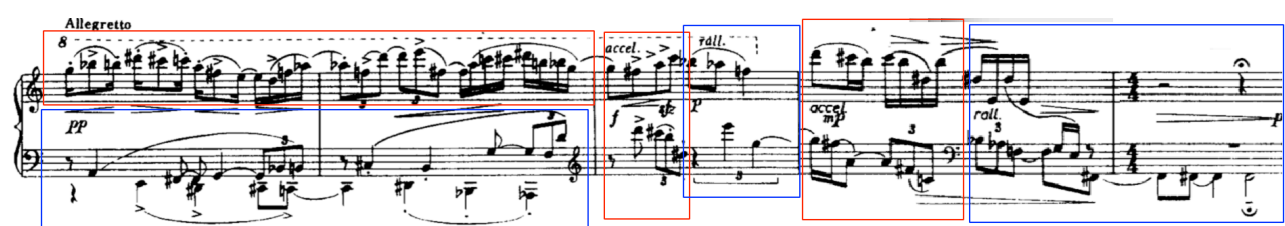
motif. The new motif has shorter rhythmic values in the right hand against a syncopated left hand, as well as an *accelerando* which settles as the hands come together on the final beat with a *ritardando* (ex. 5).



Ex. 5 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, II b. 5 The syncopated rhythm in the left hand which resolves on the last beat.

With the '*A tempo*' in the following bar indicates the beginning of a new phrase, formed by the recognisable gesture of the falling triplet with a minor third and a minor second interval in between, which is present at the beginning (ie. the first 3-note cell). This is the most prominent feature of this piece, conveying a 'sad' and expressive emotion as an outcome.

The second section, *Allegretto* is composed of 4 (and a half) bars, with two contrasting ideas. The first two bars are like the opposite poles between the hands, which are now much further apart, and these movements rhythmically compliment each other in a contrary manner. The following two bars are much closer together in pitch, and the similar descending motion takes place. The abrupt crescendo and short *accelerando* immediately followed by *ritardando*, provides a 'push and pull' effect. It is as if the 'yin and yang' is conveyed separately in the right and left hands in the first 2 bars, whereas in the following 2 (and a half) bars it is shown through the dynamic and tempo markings (ex. 6)



Ex. 6 b. 12-16 Proposition of the ‘yin and yang’ concept, ‘yin’ shown in blue, ‘yang’ shown in red boxes.

Following the first halt in the activity by the fermata, the returned A section shows the fundamental features from the first section, such as the falling triplet figure and the interchange of the triplet and duple (two eighth) notes. The final triplet falls way down to the A in the low register, with the slowed down tempo, in *ppp*.

THIRD PIECE

This piece also has three sections in the form of ABC: Allegro moderato — Poco Andante — Tempo I. Even though the last unit has dynamic and rhythmic resemblance to the beginning of the first section, the notes conveyed here are different. Dynamically, the piece is featured as the most extreme out of the 5 pieces, as it ranges from *pp* to *fff*, but stays predominantly in the higher dynamic level. It is also more rhythmically intensified compared to the first two expressive pieces. The dramatic effect is added also with constant change of time signatures, with Yun’s use of 15 time signatures. Yun’s use of distinctive Korean traditional rhythmic pattern is similarly displayed here. In the journal *Isang Yun's Piano Music: Fusion of East and West in Twelve-tone and Atonal Contexts*, Moon compares a typical Korean traditional rhythm known as *Chungmori*, with the rhythm that is used at the beginning of this piece (ex. 7).³⁶

(b) *Chungmori*

Ex. 7 *Chungmori* rhythm applied in *Fünf Klavierstücke*, III b. 1-4

³⁶ Moon (2015), 184

At a first glance, Korean traditional rhythm could be considered to be based on triple meter. However, one distinct characteristic of the Korean rhythm is that the different qualities of duple and triple meters are simultaneously present and these are interchangeable. Therefore, the notation of the *Chungmori* rhythm shown in Moon's text could be interpreted as the triple meter shown in Yun's music.³⁷

The first section is divided into two parts, to b.1-4 and b.5-13. The first part starts by introducing a new prime row, although not in its entire form. This row appears later in its entirety in b.7, but also used again in the third section in its incomplete form. Here is another example where Yun prioritises his intended overall musical effect over the strictness of the twelve-tone technique rules.

Prime row: C - B - Db - A - Bb - G - F - F# - Ab - D - D# - E

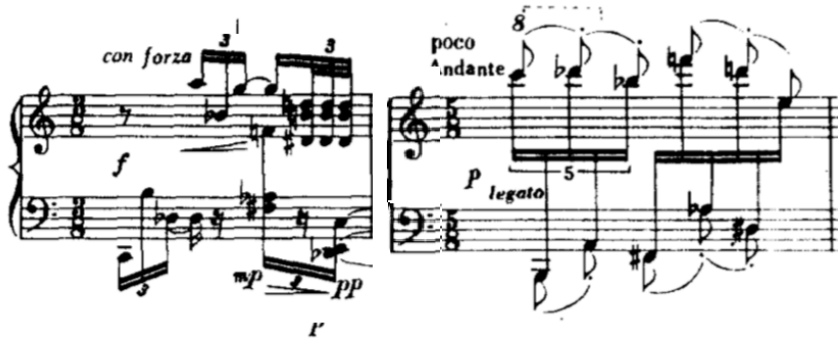
The rising movement in pitch from bar 2 heightens the tension, and the marked *accelerando* leads to a fast rhythmic dissonant chords in the extreme (high) register of the piano. The three increasing dynamic levels (*f-ff-fff*) are mirrored in the last section (Tempo I), as well as the similar rising gestures followed by the fast rhythmic pattern. *Con anima* also exhibits an image of the Janggu drumming gesture (see p. 6), with the notes alternating between hands. These also build the rising gesture towards a high register, in fast motions between hands. The rests in between the notes add to the irregularity of rhythmic nuance. The climactic chord in the 4/4 bar, is central not only to the movement but to the entire piece.³⁸ However, the tension is quickly brought down through the *mp* and *p* notes in the bass during the chord is still held and sounding.

This piece seems to convey the concept of yin and yang through the structure, where the Andante section entails a subordinate balance of activity in comparison to the two outer sections. However, despite the contrasting quality, this section maintains the connection to the outer sections with the exhibition of the prime row (though incomplete, with the missing note G) which was present from the beginning of the piece (ex. 9). Tempo I picks up the activity right from the start, with indications such as *con anima* and *f*, and this is continued until the end.

Ex. 8 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, III b. 1 and 14 displays the prime row, both in its incomplete form.

³⁷ Trans. from Joo, *Isang Yun's <Traditional Attire>: Study of Actual Meter and Rhythmic Characteristics* (2012). 181-182.

³⁸ Lim, (2019). 68.



FOURTH PIECE

This piece presents a constant alternation between two tempi: *Allegro* and *Moderato* (A-M-A-M-A). *Moderato* is marked with half the tempo of the *Allegro* (shown as quarter note = eighth note) alongside changes in the meter, mostly from duple (*Allegro*) to triple (*Moderato*). Prior to the *Moderato* sections are marked with two dashes, indicating silence before an abrupt change of character in the following *Moderato* passages. Both *Moderato* sections start in a softer dynamic (*mp* and *p*) with more ‘lyrical’ gestures such as the legato phrasing, as opposed to the constant 16th notes (and quintuplets) against a more intricately articulated and syncopated left hand notes in *Allegro* sections. *Moderato* sections are more dense in texture (often in 4-part), naturally requiring more time to display the prime row across different voices (ex. 9) than the 2-part texture of *Allegro* sections. *Allegro* sections start with *agitato* (except for the third time, for which *poco più mosso* is marked two bars later) that intensifies tension. The exhibition of ‘yin and yang’ through structure foreseen in the third piece, is even more exaggerated here through these alternating sections. Also like in the third piece, these *Allegro* and *Moderato* sections are interrelated with the new prime row used in this movement (ex. 10).

Prime row: G - Ab - D - Eb - Gb - Bb - B - E - C - A - C# - F



Ex. 9 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 3-4 Showing the 4-part texture, interchanging of voices of the first notes in the new prime row.



Ex.10 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 1-2 Exhibiting the prime row in between repeated notes.

In the three *Allegro* sections, materials are increasingly developed each time, especially in regard to the rhythm. Similar gestures (as described above) are used in all of them, but in the second time dotted rhythm is employed (ex. 11), making it even more ‘agitated’ and leading to a more abrupt ending with a crescendo from *ff*. The last *Allegro* is the longest in length (7 bars as opposed to 2 bars in the first two times). With a *subito p* in bar 18, the new syncopated rhythm in the right hand culminates the rise (in pitch and dynamics) to the last *f* to the climactic bar (b. 19). This bar is displayed with the falling quintuplets consisting of accents in both hands but placed on different beats, making the grouping of 2 and 3 *against* each other. This generates the highest tension before it resolves at the very end of the piece. The tension is brought down with the declination of pitch and dynamics, as well as in the rhythmic nuance. Dotted rhythm of the last two pairs of notes are inverted for the first time (marked with fermatas for both long notes) that suggests a more calming motion (ex. 12).



Ex.11 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 7 dotted rhythm featured in both hands.



Ex. 12 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 19-20 syncopated quintuplets and the inverted dotted rhythm.

Although the piece proposes a rhythmic enhancement in its portrayal, it conveys more diatonic nuances in the harmony in comparison to other pieces. Harmonies in the first *Moderato* section such as the A major chord (b. 3) and Eb major chord (b. 4) are presented (ex. 13).



Ex.13 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 3-4 A major chord shown in blue box, Eb major chord shown in red box.

Other than the Janggu, Yun’s employment of Korean traditional instruments can be seen with the trill in bar 9 which has implications of a traditional woodwind instrument called ‘piri’.³⁹ But this could also be seen as a traditional vocal technique, as the unique singing style in Korean traditional music is often distinguished with heavy vibrato on a long note, with frequent ornamentation and pitch bending. Moon views this trill, with the turn, and grace note as a feature of this singing style (ex. 14).⁴⁰

³⁹ Lee (2012), 99-100.

⁴⁰ Moon (2015), 188



Ex.14 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, IV b. 9 Trill notation

FIFTH PIECE

The fifth piece has three sections with tempo changes: Allegretto - Andante - Allegretto. Although not as rhythmically driven as the previous pieces (III and IV), the alternation of duple and triplets notes (accentuated also with the slur and staccato alternation) provides a certain lively character in this piece. The opening of the piece could be referred to as the *Nodongyo* (which translates as the *Song of Labor*), where solo and collective voices alternate (b. 1-2 and 3-4), that forms ‘a narration of call and response in agricultural scenes’.⁴¹ The chords in bar 2 and 4 (in the left hand in b. 2, in the right hand in b.4) each with separate dynamic markings suggest a percussive accompaniment in quality, such as the *Janggu* which was used as an accompanying instrument in many traditional musical genres involving voice (although not in *Nodongyo*). The percussive motion takes over completely in bar 5 (ex. 15), providing the high-pitched metallic timbre of a *Kkwaenggwari*, an instrument like a small flat gong, made of brass and metal which is played with a stick (shown in image 2).



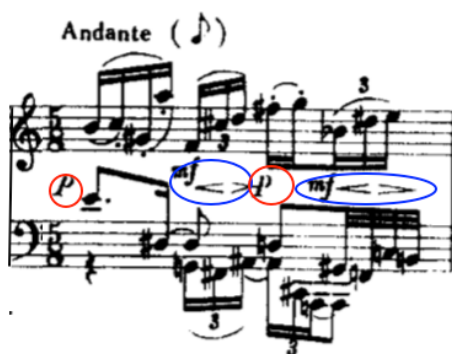
⁴¹ Lim (2019), 73

Ex.15 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, V b. 5 percussive rhythm



Image 2. Kkwaenggari

From bar 6, the texture thickens, which is maintained throughout the next Andante section, in which a three-part texture is conveyed widely spread out the instrument. Rather than representing a structural disparity, this piece contains two ideas more tightly present with each other, such as the alternation of voices (*Nodongyeo*), alternation of rhythms (duplets and triplets), and alternation of *p* and *mf* dynamics suggesting two contrasting ideas (ex. 16).



Ex. 16 *Fünf Klavierstücke*, V b. 10 contrasting dynamics related with duplet and triplet alternation.

Final Allegretto section could be viewed as the coda, and it is the most driven with extreme tension built up to the end. Right from the start of the section, *ff* determines the character of this ending. *Sempre crescendo* with fast triplet notes in the right hand, against the syncopated rhythm in the chord accompaniment (seen in previous pieces) grounds the dramatic effect. The increase of note values to 32nd notes, followed by a very rapid gesture up in both hands (with accents in different

beat of notes, as seen in the quintuplets in *Piece III*, ex.13) towards the pause of silence (marked with fermata) adds to the tension. The last chord recalls the timbre of a *Pak*, another percussive instrument of a six-piece wooden stick which creates the sound of a ‘clap’ (image 3), and was used to signify the beginning or the end of a musical performance.⁴²



Image 3: *Pak*

UnsuK Chin

2.3 Biography of UnsuK Chin

UnsuK Chin was born in Seoul in 1961, shortly after the Korean War (1950-53). With her father being a church minister of a Presbyterian church, she first encountered music through accompanying hymns on the organ for church services. Her first music teachers were her very own parents, who knew the basic music theory and had basic skills in piano playing. As the circumstances in Korea back in those times (and in some ways still is) demanded a lot of money to learn music professionally, it was considered a luxury to pursue a career in performing, which Chin’s family could not afford. She realised this at a young age, and gave up on her dream of being a professional pianist and focused on composition. Even with such passion in music, her teenage years were occupied with making ends meet, through playing for small weddings and looking after her father who lost his health after an accident.⁴³ The most she could do in order to learn music was to sneak into school music classrooms to listen to CD recordings of various classical music, and copying out by hand scores such as Tchaikovsky symphonies. After having self-taught composition, it did not take by surprise for her to fail twice the entrance exam for the Seoul National University

⁴² Moon (2015), 186.

⁴³ Lee, 진은숙, 미래의 악보를 그리다 (2012). 32-39. Translated from Drees, S., *Im Spiegel Der Zeit: Die Komponistin UnsuK Chin* (2011).

(which is still considered as the highest educative institution in the country), for they required that students follow certain musical rules, which nobody has taught her to do.

As far as music is concerned - I discovered it during my early childhood, in the middle of great poorness and at a very difficult time in Korea. From the first moment on, I was immensely fascinated by it (music) and I knew it will become the content of my life. Besides that, I would say that during my time as a student I had role models for my compositions, but it's important early to leave that behind and to search for one's own voice.⁴⁴

Her teacher at the Seoul National University was Sukhi Kang, who studied with Isang Yun in Germany. From Kang, she was introduced to the techniques and trends of the Western post-war avant-garde, which was still not commonly known in Korea at the time. Having won the Gaudeamus Award in 1985, she received the stipend to study in Europe for which she wrote a letter to György Ligeti, asking to study with him.

Even though Chin claims that Ligeti was her biggest influence as a composer, she also mentions that it was not easy studying with him, who was often over-critical. He demanded so much originality from his students as well as from himself, and asked her to discard her previous compositions when they first met.⁴⁵ The impact remained in her for three years in which she could not compose anything due to having self-doubts, and struggled to find her own voice in her compositions.

After her studies with Ligeti, she moved to Berlin in 1988 where she worked at an electronic music studio in the Technical University. This significantly contributed her to develop her interest in composing electronic music, and composed *ad Infinitum* (1989), an electronic work in which she shows the difference between writing for electronic music and acoustic instruments.⁴⁶ Her developed style in this genre also led her to create some of her most well-known works such as *Xi* (1998) using electroacoustic sounds.

During her struggles to find her voice, Ligeti encouraged her to be known with as much music from different places in the world and historical periods as possible.⁴⁷ This led her to be inspired by the Gamelan music, one other significant influence in her compositional works. She included these inspirations from the Gamelan in some of her core works, such as the *Violin Concerto*

⁴⁴ Interview. <http://usasiains-articles.tripod.com/unsuk-chin.html>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Yoo, *Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers* (2005), 151.

⁴⁷ Yoo, 59.

(2001) (with which she won the Grawemeyer Award in 2004), *Piano Concerto* (1997) and *Double Concerto for Prepared Piano, Percussion and Ensemble* (2002).⁴⁸ Also in this *Double Concerto*, she mixed acoustic and electronic sounds. “I tried partly to create an illusion of a single ‘Super Instrument.’ In this, I was inspired by the Gamelan orchestra. But this attempt also has parallels with my work with electronics. In both media I attempt to blur the differences, the boundaries between the ‘Natural’ and the ‘Artificial’.”⁴⁹

Apart from working as a composer-in-residence in Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra between 2006 to 2017, she has been based in Berlin. Since 1995, her works have been exclusively published by Boosey and Hawkes. Amongst Chin’s many other achievements, her recent highlights include winning the Bach Prize in 2019 and Léonie Sonning Prize in 2021. Chin has been appointed Artistic Director of the Tongyeong International Music Festival from 2022, a festival in Korea which was created to commemorate Isang Yun as a composer.

Chin considers Isang Yun’s music as very “Eastern”. In her interview with Drees, she says, “Yun has brought many of Korean traditional elements onto the European avant-garde musical language, and fortunately the blend has been very successful.”⁵⁰ As Yun was born in 1917, when Korean traditional music was still much more present, he was more opportune to be influenced by this tradition. Due to the prohibition of Korean culture by the Japanese Occupation (1910-1945), the traditional music of Korea has been much lost in its use by the time Chin was born. Not only that, the Korean War (1950-53) had an impact in a way that South Korea was put in a position to be hugely dependant on humanitarian assistances from Western countries such as the US. By this, it was inevitable that Koreans had to accept Western education as well as their music and culture, without having the time to slowly fuse in the Western influences *onto* their traditional music. Therefore, her musical language can be considered to have been formed as a ‘new’ language in the Western style from the start.

In an interview for promotion of Philharmonia Orchestra’s European premiere of her work *Le Chant des Enfants des Étoiles (The Song of the Children of the Stars)* (2015-6), she claims that she is familiar with traditional music of Korea as well as other Eastern countries, but she does not specifically write in a style of “Western” or “Eastern”. For her, “Music is music. I come from Korea and I know all the traditional music from Korea and other countries, and this is also a part of my

⁴⁸ Kim, *A Study of Unsuk Chin’s Piano Etudes* (2012), 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 10.

⁵⁰ Lee, 진은숙, *미래의 악보를 그리다* (2012). 43. [Translated] from Drees (2011).

music. It is not obvious, you can't see it directly, but somehow all of these influences are in my music."⁵¹ Regarding her music, musicologist Paul Griffiths also states, "Her music makes no parade of national flavor"⁵² She utilises diverse musical resources, instead of bringing focus to the traits from her national background. At the Léonie Sonning Prize ceremony 2021, she said, "My goal has been to write music that cruises boundaries and it's available for different people, regardless of their ethnic or social background."

This universal approach from Chin can also be viewed in her frequently performed piece *Gougalōn* (for Ensemble) (2009/2011), as her search for timbres are not restricted to any tradition. Depicting sceneries of streets from her childhood, she uses common Western instruments to bring out eastern sounding sonorities, and sometimes directly using Asian instruments. Regarding this work, *Backtrack* mentions: 'Chin successfully pairs a typically German love of the grotesque with an Asiatic sound world, to hilarious effect'.⁵³

⁵¹ Philharmonia Orchestra (2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFEnF24tY20>

⁵² Kim (2012), apud. Paul Griffiths, "In Focus: an Introduction to the Music of Unsuk Chin"

⁵³ Derks (2019), *Unsuk Chin: grinning teeth and false magic in Gougalōn*

2.4 Analysis of *Piano Etude No. 4 “Scalen”* (1995, rev. 2003)

Chin’s only solo piano compositions are the set of 12 piano etudes, of which only 6 have been currently published. Chin mentions that the piano is the instrument for which she has the most affection, but also composing for piano is the most stressful compared to any other instruments due to its distinctive qualities and practical problems.⁵⁴ She initially intended to write the set of twelve etudes in a short period of time, following the examples of European forerunners such as Chopin, Liszt, Scriabin, Debussy, and Ligeti. But more recently, she expressed that she wants to compose the rest of the etudes after her style has matured.⁵⁵ Like the etudes by other European composers, she follows the traditional sense of the genre in a way her etudes also display virtuosity and technical challenges. Nevertheless, her style spans out conventional and modern techniques in unique ways in her etudes.

The fourth etude “Scalen” (first completed in 1995 and revised in 2003), referring to *scales*, is based on a mixture of whole-tone and chromatic scales. Her employment of overtone scales in some of her other etudes could be seen to have been inspired from Messiaen’s use of overtone scales⁵⁶. However, she develops it further in her etudes and mixes them with whole-tone and chromatic notes as in the case of the fourth etude. Her way of employing harmony is frequently considered to construct around a controlling ‘pitch center’⁵⁷. This anchor pitch is the core of gravity that connects the whole piece together.

In this etude is displayed three distinctive musical ideas. These are the:

1. Scalic motions
2. Intervallic leaps/jumps
3. Fast cluster chromatic sliding chords

She utilises these ideas to a musical narrative through the etude.

⁵⁴ Cho, *Five Pieces for Piano by Isang Yun and Piano Etude No. 1 by Unsuk Chin* (2020), 51.

⁵⁵ Kim, (2012), 14.

⁵⁶ Yoo, (2005), 96.

⁵⁷ Whittall, *Unsuk Chin in Focus, Meditation and Mechanics* (2000), 22.

There is no indicated time signature, but the rhythm is in compound meter, alternating irregularly between 2 or 3 beats (of dotted eighth note) per bar. This irregularity of rhythm can be viewed to have been inspired by works of Ligeti, stemming from Bartok's use of folklore rhythm, mainly the *Aksak*. This term translates from Turkish to "limping" or "stumbling," and is characterized by combinations of uneven beats combining units of two and three, such as 2+3 or 3+2.⁵⁸

The section division of this piece seems quite clear, as Chin marks the ends of the sections with fermatas and gives tempo changes for new sections: they are divided as 3 sections and a coda.

- first section: 1-97
- second section: 98-124
- third section: 125-149
- coda: 150-end

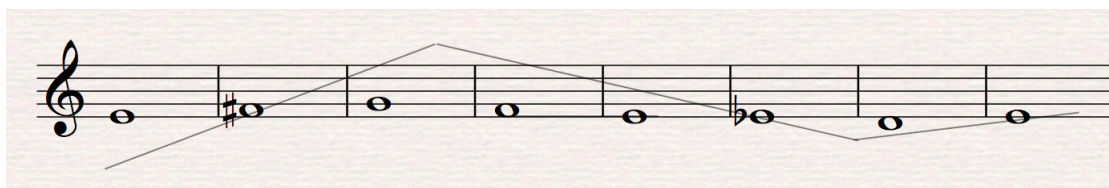
The First Section (b.1-97)

This section is divided in 3 units. The first unit of this section (b.1-14) has a distinct texture where the mixture of whole-tone and chromatic scales are accompanied by the long held notes on either hand that is not playing the scale. The contour of the scales ascend and descend in motion through three phrases in this unit, where the third phrase is the longest (b.1-3, b.4-6, b.7-14). Each scale itself is not systematic. The third phrase contains intervallic leaps in between, but the basic shape of the contour is the same as the first two phrases: the right hand initiates the scale to ascend, and then on the descending motion, the left hand takes over in this direction and turns back to a short ascend again before the next phrase starts (ex.17.1). Therefore, the exchange of hands in the final 'ascend' motion also indicates the beginning of a new phrase. The ending notes of phrases here are doubled by the first note of the next phrase, in effect, creating a blending and a 'seamless' effect.

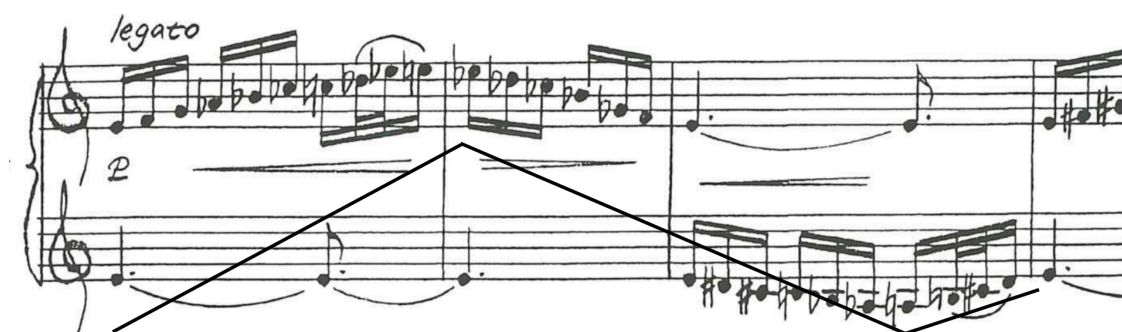
The tonal idea of this section — although not 'tonal' in a traditional sense — bases around the note E (the 'controlling pitch', which is described above). We can observe that the scale builds from the note E and the end of this unit ends with the note E. The long held notes also mark E-F#-

⁵⁸ Kim, (2012). 20.

G-F-E-Eb-D-E, revolving around the E, creating a ‘melody’ of its own. This outlining contour of the ‘melody’ line reflects the scalic motions that will be seen throughout the piece (ex.17.1).



Ex.17.1 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*”, the melodic contour through long held notes.

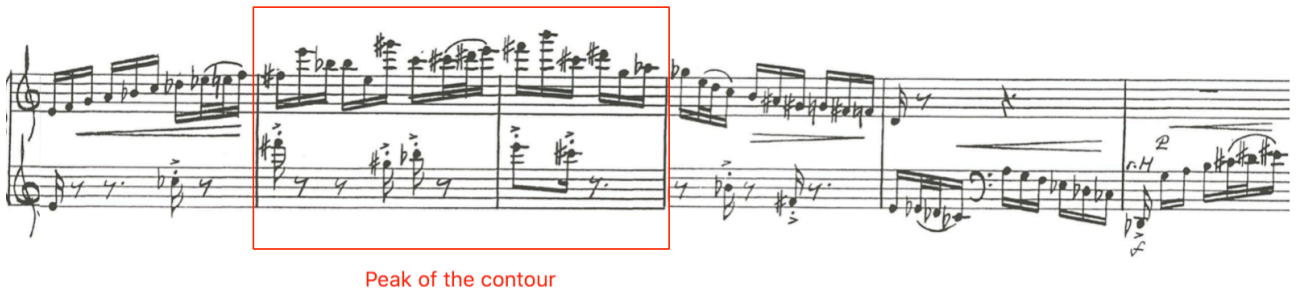


Ex. 17.2 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*”, b.1-3 scalic contour⁵⁹

The second unit (b.15-37) starts where the new texture is introduced, no longer having long held notes in the accompanying part. The leaps in the left hand with accented notes indicate this apparent texture change. Most frequently, the left hand notes together with the note in the right (in scale) make a vertical interval of a major second, or unison (or 8th). The accented notes are spaced out with big leaps, making the left hand to cross over the right hand at places, making an ‘interweaving’ effect between the two motions.

The scalic contours are extended, as the three phrases are more prolonged than in the first unit (b.15-20, b.21-26, b.27-36). We observe the contour becoming less straight-forwarded motion of a scale (stepwise or chromatic), and increasingly incorporates more complicated leaps in the peak point of the contour before descending (Ex. 18).

⁵⁹ Chin, U. (1995, rev. 2003). *Piano Etude no. 4 “Scalen”*. All examples used are under the copyright infringements of © Boosey & Hawkes Publisher.



Ex. 18 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*”, b15-20 showing the leaps in the peak of the contour

Also, the contour schema (ascending — descending — ascending and new phrase taken over with another hand) is disrupted in the last phrase of this unit in bar 36, as the rests indicate the end of the phrase and the new phrase is taken over in the left hand with the lowest bass note F# that initiates the ascending motion (ex. 19)



Ex. 19 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*”, b.33-40 showing the contour no longer continues in the same ‘schema’ as before

The notable rhythmic pattern that was prominent from the beginning (16th-2x32nd-16th notes), now also occurs in the left hand (b.31) alongside of the scale. This progresses to both hands playing scales simultaneously for the first time (b.33) followed by the first appearances of rests, which in result makes the texture suddenly sparse. The *sfz* note marking both the beginning and the end in b. 37 bridging the second and the third unit, is a feature that is repeatedly used in the unit that follows (ex. in b.69, 74, 78, 83).

The third unit (b.38-97), is an elaboration of the materials that have been used in the first two units, and is the longest unit of the first section. From bar 38 until 57, the phrase is no longer determined by a straight motion of ascending and then a descending curve, but instead, there are

subtler points of descending *through* a collection of ascending motion scales and leaps. Bars 41-57 display this type of wider cell of descending motions (ex. 20): A-G-F#-E and C#-B-A-G-E. A slight hint of a climactic point here could be seen as the highest point both in register and dynamics, in bar 54, before rapidly descending through leaps — this gesture is intensified into a more distinctive climactic point in b.90. The newly introduced rhythm of 4x32nd notes (first seen in b. 42) accompanies the sliding chords in the right hand (16th notes here, which gradually become replaced with 32nd notes as the section develops), also as in the following phrase (ex. 21).

Ex. 20 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.41-57 wider cell of two descending motions

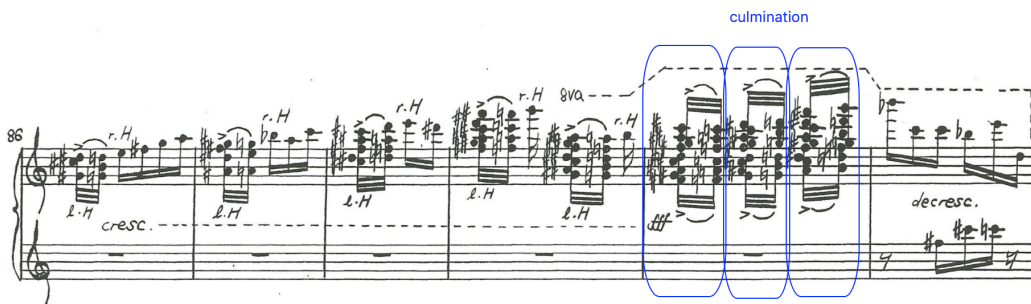
Ex. 21 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.58-78 accompanying 32nd note figures

The following bars 58-96 comprises of 5 phrases, marked by scalar motif in dynamic *p*, with ends marked with *sfz* bass note. The phrase lengths are very irregular: 11,6,4,5,13 bars long - where the outer phrases are the longest.

The several already presented elements evolve increasingly: the ascending scalar motions constantly being interrupted by sliding chromatic chords in the left hand before reaching the peak of the scale contour, and the falling gesture is helped with the 4x32nd note accompaniments in the left hand (discussed in ex. 21). The rhythmic placing and the number of times this interrupting gesture occurs varies, although it is always in the rhythmic diminution (the interruptions become closer together throughout each phrase). This narrates the dramatic effect towards a culminating point. Also, the gradual unification of this interruption that is now played simultaneously in both hands (first time appearing *once* in b.73, then *twice* in the next two phrases, in b.76 and 77, then b.81 and 82 — ex. 22.1) reaches its peak in b.90, in the *three* sliding pair of dense chords in succession, in extremely high register of the piano, emphasised by the *fff* dynamic before the final descend into complete silence (ex. 22.2).

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system (bars 68-73) shows a right-hand melodic line with ascending scalar motifs and a left-hand accompaniment of sliding chromatic chords. The second system (bars 75-77) continues the melodic development with more complex chordal textures. The third system (bars 80-82) features a climactic section with dense chords in the high register, marked with a fortissimo (fff) dynamic. Blue circles highlight specific chordal structures in the right hand across the different systems.

Ex. 21.1 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.69-85 cluster chords in both hands



Ex. 22.2 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.86-91 the culmination point

The Second Section (b.98-124)

This section indicates a more ‘lyrical’ interpretation compared to the outer sections. The tempo is slightly slower, and it is marked with *tempo rubato*. The sliding chords are now decorated with grace notes, providing an arpeggiated effect. First tenuto signs appear, contributing to the more expressive and rubato gesture, like a recitativo: they suggest a slight *lingering* of timing on these notes. Although much shorter than the first section in terms of length, this section is divided in two units.

The first unit (b.98-107) with the introduction of these arpeggiated chords are held underneath more clear contoured scale motions (than the previous parts), which is of texture that reminiscences the beginning. However, the tonal centre seems to have shifted. The distinctive *sfz* bass notes that were used to signify either the beginning or the end of a phrase in the previous section, is now placed on the note A, initiating an A locrian scale to start this section (ex. 23.1).



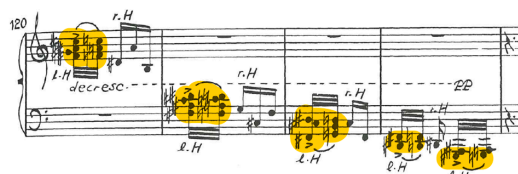
Ex. 23.1 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.97-98 *sfz* bass and the A locrian scale

The long held chords and the harmonic implications also revolve around A, suggesting an A (minor) tonality (ex. 23.2). This in effect has a subdominant relationship with the E, the ‘controlling pitch centre’ of the piece.

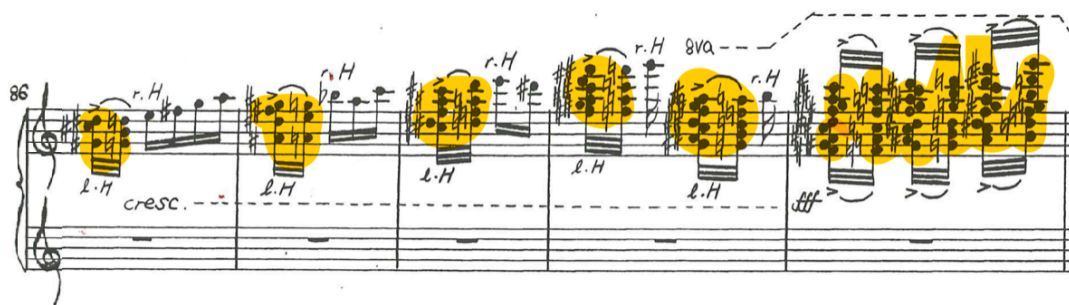
The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 99, is marked 'tempo rubato'. It features a right hand (r.H.) with a melodic line and a left hand (l.H.) with long-held chords. Red letters 'E' and 'C' are placed below the left hand's chords. The second system, starting at measure 104, continues the piece. It shows the right hand playing a melodic line and the left hand playing a series of chromatic chords. Red letters 'D' and 'A' are placed below the left hand's chords. Dynamics like 'f' and 'r.H.' are indicated throughout.

Ex. 23.2 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.99-108 implied harmonic progression

Unlike the irregularity of phrasing lengths in the previous section, the second unit (b. 108-124) starts with a sequential-like phrase of 4 and 4 bars (second time lower), although not in the strict sense of the term ‘sequence’, as the notes are not repeated exactly. The eight bar phrase that follows displays two different materials in ascending and descending motions. It consists of scale motions going up in both hands, but with the right hand now displaying chromatic sliding chords as *part* of some notes of the scale. The *crescendo* from *p* to *ff* helps the dramatic effect. The descending motion occurs through the left hand playing the chromatic chords down with the combination of the leaps. Increasing *frequency* of the ‘interrupting’ chords (with shorter distances between them) creates an illusion of a conflict between two opposites, chord and scale. The sliding chords to a certain degree become to overpower the scale (Ex. 24.1). This gesture of rhythmic diminution of cluster chords resembles the end of the previous section but in the *opposite direction*, where the effect used to intensify ascending motion (Ex. 24.2).



Ex. 24.1 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.115-123 rhythmic diminution of sliding chords in descending motion



Ex. 24.2 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.86-90 rhythmic diminution of sliding chords in ascending motion towards culmination

The Third Section (b.125-149)

Following only a bar of a rest (without a fermata this time), the third section could be seen as one last big wave of the piece with the tempo at its quickest (192 dotted quaver beats per minute). The scalic motions are no longer apparent (no stepwise nor chromatic movements to form a clear ascending or descending motions), but the intervallic leaps are intensified even more with unison gestures (though not always in pitch but in gestures) in both hands. The surges of waves are no longer provided with clear scalic contour motions, but instead with leap gestures in both hands with the help of dynamics of crescendi and decrescendi (ex. 25). These waves occur against arpeggiated chords which are now rolled *inwards* now in both hands. Hence the chord interruptions are felt even more abrupt. The emphasised chords (either with articulation or dynamic marking, or both) followed by *subito p* dynamic magnifies to the electrifying effect. The whole section is driven towards

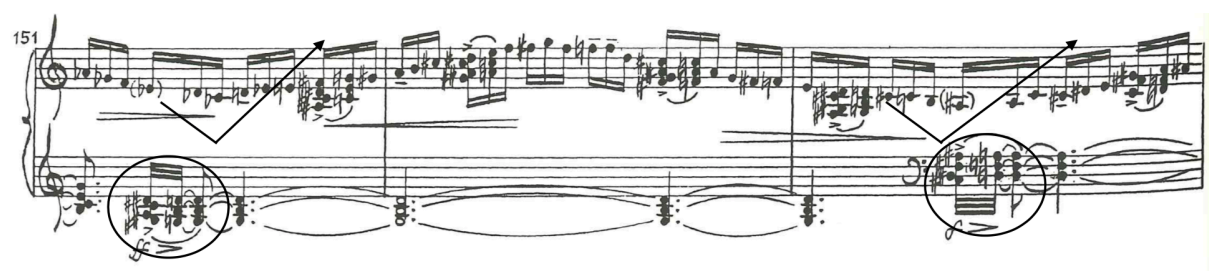
the climactic passage in bar 146, where the highest pitch of the rolled chords are marked *fff*. This is followed by another *subito p* passage that increases dynamics leading to the coda section.



Ex. 25 Etude no. 4 “Scalen” b.125-128 surges of waves shown through leap motions in both hands and hairpins

The Coda (b.150-156)

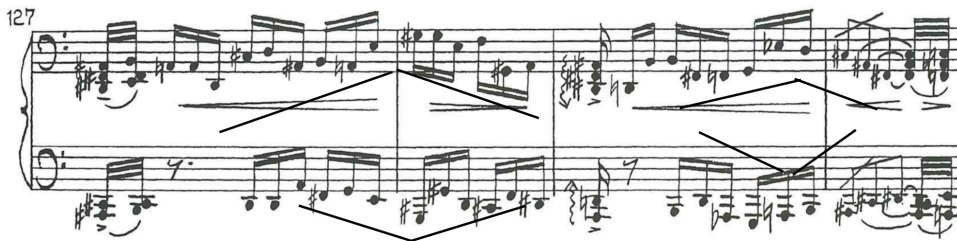
The coda brings back ideas that were featured in the previous sections. It is again, in a more relaxed tempo as the second section, but is now marked *tempo molto rubato*. Similar to the beginning, scales are accompanied by long held notes in the left hand, but this time with the sliding chords replacing single notes that were shared between the hands (texture of the first unit of the first section). From the performative perspective, it carries a much more malleable nuance than the beginning, as the phrases now carry across the bar lines. The coda is overall divided into three phrases in succession without a clearly defined beginning or the end. However, the division is felt by the left hand chords that initiates the change of motion of the scales in the right hand. (Ex. 26) The cluster motion is also included inside the scale (as shown previously in b.117), hence smoothing out the ‘interrupting’ effect. The chords in the left hand leads the dynamic diminution, progressively from *fff* to *pp*. This dynamic brings the piece to an end, through with the prolongation of the rhythmic values between the ‘interrupted’ chord motifs, providing a natural *ritardando* alongside the indication.



Ex. 26 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*” b.151-153 left hand chords initiating the change of motion of the right hand

Overall Structure

Although the structure of this piece cannot be categorised in a specific musical form, the divided sections carry connections with each other. The first section, which is the longest, introduces motivic ideas that develop in later sections. The second section with the *tempo rubato* with more added expressive indications — such as the tentutos on repeated notes, and the integration of chords as part of the melodic line, creating a smoothness result in between parts, seem to be reflected in the coda section, even though it uses the fundamental idea of scalic and the sliding chords that derives from the first section. The third section has similarities to the third part of the first section, in a way the build up against the rolled chords are increasingly emphasised and dramticised towards the end of the section. The introduction of the ‘leaps’ in larger intervals firstly seen in the first section now drives this third section forward, creating waves in the low register of the piano with dynamic changes, in either unison or contrary motion against both hands, creating a ‘growling’ effect (Ex. 27.1 and 27.2).



Ex. 27.1 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*” b.127-130 waves in contrary motion



Ex. 27.2 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*” b.131-132 waves in similar motion (unison)

Technical and Interpretive Challenges

Fingering

The first technical challenge this piece presents in the performative aspect, was the agility it requires from the pianist in order to play the motions of the scale and leaps in a smooth and an even manner without unwanted accents. In this regard, finding the right fingerings to play the whole piece was an initial concern in the practical process. Having in mind the tempo instructions that are given on the score, the choice of fingerings would sometimes change as the passages became more fluent reaching closer to the ideal tempo, as it sometimes required a different type of action: the direction of a phrase change with a faster tempo, meaning the physical grouping of notes in the hand has to consist more notes in one motion. Sometimes, a faster jump had to be prioritised over a comfortable reach (stretch) of larger intervals in order to minimise the movement required for a faster tempo — choosing the fingering that will keep the hand in the same position without the thumb to go underneath (change of hand position) (ex. 28). Other times, the quickness of the tempo also required a sequential fingering (using same fingers for phrases that are written in a sequential motion) in order to simplify the hand gestures at fast speed (especially note the left hand fingerings in ex. 29).



Ex. 28 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*” b.15-17 fingering change



Ex. 29 Etude no. 4 “*Scalen*” b.61-64 sequential fingering

The pairs chromatic chords, a prominent idea in this piece, were also used with the same fingering in both chords most of the time, in order to create the ‘sliding’ effect as well as for efficiency of the movement (note that fingering shown in ex. 13 was altered in the final stages of practice).

Pedal

Chin does not indicate any pedal markings in this piece. However, due to the nature of this etude implementing largely chromatic and scale motions in *p*, the choice of pedalling had to be dealt with much care in order to not ‘blur’ the notes as well as to keep the range of dynamics in control. Majority of the piece therefore, was chosen to be played without the use of the damper pedal in order to bring maximum clarity of notes at a fast tempo. The dynamic markings with surges of crescendi and decrescendi were helped with a gradual pressing and lifting of the pedal (although never fully down in the scalic passages), as well as the *sfz* bass notes to create a more *subito* effect. The chromatic ‘interruption’ chords were played also with slight use of pedal, not only because they are marked with slurs, but also because they are nearly always marked with an accent.

CHAPTER 3: ARTISTIC REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

3.1 Overall Experience

Through the project, I wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of works by the two substantial Korean composers Isang Yun and Unsuk Chin, and to combine the knowledge with the practical interpretation on the piano for a more dimensional understanding. The key interest was in the Eastern characteristics embedded in the two works, and to investigate whether these can be translated into the language of Western classical music. As I have left my home country (South Korea) at an early age, in many ways I have missed the opportunity to learn about my own nation's traditional music. This curiosity combined with my involvement in classical music has led me to research on this topic.

The process involved three parts: research, analysis and practice. The research process delivered a foundation on what to search for in my analysis. It opened my eyes in a lot of aspects, and gave the project a contextual meaning as well as providing a perspective of what was relevant and significant. The historical dimension of how other composers were influenced by different traditions in both East and the West, especially presented this knowledge. Also, through research about Korean traditions, philosophies and history, I gained more understanding of the past and the current scenery of classical music in Korea, therefore the language of the two Korean composers. The investigation about Yun and Chin in their biographies was an extensive part of the process that also contributed to this understanding.

The analysis procedure provided a solid premise for my interpretations. Musicians are generally required to have an analytic eye for the pieces they play, in order to understand and give meaning to the music. Nevertheless, to put a similar weight onto the analytical process as much as the performative one, and to portray my understanding of the piece in this thesis was a great approach to gain a dimensional perspective. In most cases during the process of analysing Chin's *Etude "Scalen"* and Yun's *Fünf Klavierstücke*, the findings gave a direction for my interpretation of the piece, and opened up many possibilities to base the interpretations upon. These provided me with more conviction of my thoughts of the piece, leading to more artistic freedom as a result.

Leaving aside the obvious practical time-management challenges of combining artistic and academic endeavours, the most challenging aspect of my entire project was to grasp the definition of Eastern music in relation to the Western music, and to find them in the works of Chin and Yun that correlates to one another. At the initial stage of the project, I was questioning the direction of the process especially with the particular pieces I have chosen, since they both stand much in the Western frame of musical writing. However, the more I researched and analysed, the more I figured ways they are fundamentally connected and relevant.

3.2 Research, Analysis and Practice

The research was a pointer to what to keep in mind in the analytic process. Key features of findings on the Eastern traditional music included:

1. Emphasis on single tone: a) *Hauptton* Technique, b) ‘pitch centre’
2. Dualism concept of ‘yin and yang’
3. Taoism philosophy - ‘Tao’ with no beginning or end
4. Timbre of Korean instruments
5. Korean ‘rhythm’

Even though the procedure of the project was not always carried out chronologically (research-analysis-practice), the three processes reinforced each other and intersected in some ways. The research provided a tool for the analysis, but also the analytic findings pointed towards what to research for. The analytic process assisted and confirmed my interpretation as a pianist, but the experience of the practical realisation on the piano helped greatly to my analysis as well. This also addressed some of the topics of research, which conversely backed up my choices of interpretation.

1a. Emphasis on single tone in Yun’s *Fünf Klavierstücke*

On the surface, the twelve-tone technique used in this piece might arouse a contradicting conceptualisation of Yun’s *Hauptton* Technique (main-tone technique), as the twelve-tone method is based on the condition of the whole row (12 notes) as its structural premise. The main tone technique on the other hand, is used to accentuate the single note and thus providing meaning or gesture through that particular note/tone. However, the realisation came through my analysis, when I was searching for the system of tone rows and its derivatives, that each note is significant in a way that holds the structure together, and Yun’s free manner of employing the technique (often times not following the rules) to imply consequential meaning is precisely at the core of his *Hauptton* technique.

Therefore, the framework of the *Hauptton* technique consists of the *Hauptton* (a principle or main tone) and the *Umspielung* (surrounding notes). According to Yun, *Umspielung* enriched the *Hauptton* and strengthened the intensity and vitality of his music as a result...Yun saw the *Umspielung* as no less

important. Yun considered the surrounding notes not to be purely ornamental elements, but essential elements of the entire structural unit.⁶⁰

1b. The ‘controlling pitch centre’ in Chin’s *Etude no. 4 “Scalen”*

Even though Chin’s music is not tonal in the traditional sense of the word, she deploys tonality around what Whittall describes as the ‘controlling pitch centre’⁶¹, where the certain underlying tone acts as the ‘core’. Even though Yun’s use of the *Hauptton* mainly refers to the concept of enhancing a tone, the philosophy shares certain similarities to Chin’s use of this pitch centre in both of their ‘tone-focused’ approach.

2. Dualism concept of ‘yin and yang’

The view of this dualism concept of ‘yin and yang’ that Yun continuously implemented across his compositions, demonstrated to be a very important and useful tool for my interpretation of his music. His use of fermatas or silences after ‘active’ passages, or where there were two distinctly contrasting ideas present with each other, reflected much upon this concept. This law of two opposite forces being present together also generated a particular insight in understanding Chin’s use of contradicting elements. Conflicting features coming to a harmony derives from the Eastern Taoism philosophy that may be embedded in both composers’ musical works.

3. Tao with no beginning or end

As the Taoism philosophy locates its core very close to the nature, for Yun, composing music was not ‘creating’, but simply ‘presenting what is already existing’. As he states,

My compositional works are expressions of the Tao in the sense that I always seek out the principles of Taoism in the creation of the works. The beginning of my music is actually a continuation of something [invisible] that has already been ringing without sounding. Likewise, the seeming end of my music in fact belongs to the unheard sound of the future, and would continue to ring in the unheard sound.⁶²

⁶⁰ Lim, *Cultural and Political Overtones in Isang Yun’s Works for Piano* (2019), 156.

⁶¹ Whittall, (2000), 22.

⁶² [trans.] Isang Yun, *Bewegtheit in der Unbewegtheit*, 30. apud. Kim, *Isang Yun and the Hauptton Technique*, 52.

4. Timbre of Korean instruments

The search for timbre of Korean instruments was done after having practiced Yun's *Fünf Klavierstücke*. Some passages in the third piece especially reminded me of timbres of Korean instruments that I have previously encountered but never studied.

5. Korean 'rhythm'

This was one of the challenges during the process, which was to justify what I instinctively felt not only as a pianist, but as a Korean (with innate experiences from my childhood). For example, the certain rhythmic patterns I recognised to be 'Korean', found in Yun's third piece, was difficult to find references of, due to the nature of traditional music not usually being written down (especially in the Western notation system). To find references for my 'intuitive' analysis therefore required much research.

Some other challenges were also raised when the initial thoughts or interpretations were contradicted by another finding from a different process. For example, as of the structural division in Chin's etude, when my research findings suggested contradicting phrase or section divisions (such as shown in ex. 30 in b. 37-38, the sources suggested b. 38 to be the beginning of the new phrase according to their 'contour schema' mentioned in p .34-35, ex. 17.2 and 19), the decisions of my interpretation had to be rationalised with an analytic reasoning.

Ex. 30 Chin, *Etude no. 4 "Scalen"*, b. 34-39 Blue phrase marking shows my research suggestions, and red phrasing marks showing my own interpretation

Regarding performing the works, there were technical challenges. The etude was technically challenging, not only due to the fast tempo, but as the scales were not 'traditional', and was non-systematic (whole-tone and chromatic combined) in a way that required unconventional fingerings. One of the other virtuosic element of this etude in particular as Wilkening also mentions⁶³, is the cross-over and the

⁶³ Martin Wilkening, in Lee, 진은숙, *미래의 악보를 그리다* (2012), 282.

interweaving gesture of both hands which requires the use of both bigger (arm movement) as well as smaller (fingertips) muscles of the body that demanded lots of practice. Moreover, as of the practical process in Yun's work, figuring out ways to distribute this highly systematic music into expressive ways was the most difficult to assimilate in the primary stages. However, after having performed it, returning to my own analysis clarified many musical elements that were not foreseen. This included the connections of sections (such as in I and III) through tone rows. How I played 'intuitively' also smoothed my analytical view of the piece, and elucidated some compositional intentions or elements, such as being able to clarify the overall narrative of Chin's etude.

3.3 Lecture-recital

For this lecture-recital, I wished to combine pieces that composers wrote with the influence of other cultures than their own. The programme thus combined both Eastern and Western composers, of which the thread that held it held together was the theme of 'finding the common ground' between the two ends, the East and the West. I had come across Tan Dun's music a few years ago after having studied about the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). His first work, the *Eight Memories in Watercolor* (1978) was composed in the Western style, while he was studying in Beijing Conservatory. I chose the seventh piece from the set to begin the recital, the *Floating Clouds*. The piece demonstrated some of Chinese folk elements (such as the use of pentatonic scales or imitation of Chinese flute), but written in a Western style that reminded of impressionistic music, as he 'paints' the picture of floating clouds through the broken chords. Hence, this work was a perfect antecedent to bring in Debussy's music, who is one of the most well-known Western composers regarding both impressionism, as well as to be influenced by Eastern elements such as the Javanese Gamelan. I chose to perform the set *Image II*, in which the three pieces continued similar sonorities from the *Floating Clouds*.

As one of the primary reason for the project was to raise awareness of Korean composers (especially in Norway), I introduced Unsuk Chin and Isang Yun with a brief summary of their biographies, alongside their distinct characteristics in compositions. The short lecture about each pieces (*Etude no. 4 "Scalen"* and the *Fünf Klavierstücke*) included the analytical and the research findings relating to how Eastern elements were integrated in their works. In some ways, this prepared the audience for these contemporary pieces.

During the search of the last part of the programme, I found out about Godowsky's *Java Suite* (1924-25), which he wrote after he visited Java. With this inspiration, he writes, "it occurred to me that a musical portrayal of some of the interesting things I had been privileged to see, a tonal description of the impressions and emotions they had awakened, would interest those who are attracted by adventure and

picturesqueness and inspired by their poetic reactions.”⁶⁴ As the whole suite is around 55 minutes in length, I had to make selections that suit the programme. *The Gamelan*, which is the first piece of the whole set was particularly interesting as he uses only diatonic notes, and the overall sonority depicted the sounds of the Gamelan. *The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak* was a piece that involved more grand gestures. For the piece, Godowsky paints his vision of scenery from the Bromo Mountain in Java, and in his text, he expresses his imagination of this panorama turning into an erupting volcano, and he reflects upon life. It was a suitable ‘summery’ of the whole project, where realisations occur under these uncontrollable factors, that the human beings are the same and there are in fact no ‘borders’ across cultures.



Mount Bromo⁶⁵

3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this project *The Borderless Ends of the East and the West* was to explore the Eastern influences found in the compositions of Isang Yun and Unsuk Chin, South Korean composers who both led bi-cultural lives with their migration to Germany. Numerous sources demonstrated Yun’s conscious initiation of blending the Eastern influences onto his Westernized writing. The analysis of his *Fünf Klavierstücke* has brought light to several aspects in which he has achieved this, as well as the embedded Taoistic philosophy of his approach in the compositional writing. The consideration of both Eastern and Western traditions was required in order to understand his music. As of the result in Chin’s ‘universal’ approach, correlation to Korean traditional music and philosophy was also examined in her *Piano Etude no. 4 “Scalen”* from the research and the analytic findings of Yun’s piece as a point of departure. Her unique language, developed from both of her deliberate and non-deliberate encounters of wide range of cultures is demonstrated to surpass ‘nationalistic’ traits of any kind, blurring the borders across the East and the West. The continuous dialogue between these two ends by the ever-expanding cultural exchange and accessibilities are advancing the music to become increasingly borderless.

⁶⁴ <https://interlude.hk/godowsky-java-suite/>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Documentation of Lecture-Recital, “The Borderless Ends of the East and the West”

26th April, 2022

Levinsalen, Norges Musikkhøgskole, Oslo

Video Documentation:

<https://youtu.be/0PCOcl46gzM>

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