

The Present Situation and Prospects of Performing Arts Business Which Uses “*JongmyoJeryeak*”

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JongmyoJeryeak is the most famous traditional music in South Korea. It is a kind of worshipping song for the kings and queens of the *Joseon* Dynasty. *JongmyoJeryeak* was registered as South Korea’s first intangible cultural asset, also registered as the first of South Korea’s World Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Since 2010, *JongmyoJeryeak* has been performed not only at an annual ceremony but also at special performances with explanations and dramas at the *Jongmyo* Shrine. This performance has two concrete aims. First, it is held so that both the public and young people can easily access *JongmyoJeryeak*, a traditional Korean treasure, which is rarely seen in person. Second, it is designed to inspire pride in traditional culture and promote the beauty of *JongmyoJeryeak* to tourists who visit *Jongmyo* Shrine. This performance attracts about 60,000 viewers over the past ten years. It means that the public impact of this performance is enormous. This case is a very pertinent example of the developing performing arts business, especially with respect to the world intangible cultural heritage in South Korea. Also, this performance contains dramatic elements that include explanations for the general public, and is therefore very compatible with the trend toward popularization. So, we will try to analyze the present situation of this performance and seek to better understand how coexisting aspects of this performing business inherit or develop this modernized traditional heritage.

Keywords: *JongmyoJeryeak*, *Gugak*, performing arts business, South Korea, intangible cultural heritage

Introduction

Intangible Cultural Heritage is both a traditional culture and a living culture. UNESCO introduced “the oral and intangible heritage masterpiece system” in 1997 to raise the international community’s attention to the importance of the world’s intangible cultural heritage and to maintain cultural diversity. Since designating 90 events in 70 countries over four years starting in 2001. And in 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention on the Protection of World Intangible Cultural Heritage, as the international community grew more aware of the importance of intangible cultural heritage. The country has registered 508 events of World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 117 countries until 2018.¹

Currently, a total of 20 events are listed as UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage in South Korea. As many as 13 of the traditional music related events are considered to be significant in the preservation of

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¹ Refer to the UNESCO homepage; <http://heritage.unesco.or.kr>

traditional Korean culture.² Among the 13 events, the most notable is the *JongmyoJeryeak* : Royal ancestral ritual music in the *Jongmyo* shrine. The reason is that *JongmyoJeryeak* is designated as the number one intangible cultural asset of South Korea and the first Korean intangible cultural heritage to be listed as a UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage.



Figure 1. *JongmyoJeryeak*³.

Introduction of *JongmyoJeryeak*

JongmyoJeryeak is a kind of worshipping song for the late kings and queens of the *Joseon* Dynasty centered around the *Jongmyo* Shrine located in Seoul. It is held every year on the first Sunday of May and the first Saturday of November.

I think *JongmyoJeryeak* is the most famous Korean traditional music in the world. However, the actual music of *JongmyoJeryeak* is less famous than the name. This is because the symbolism and formality of the music makes it difficult to create an emotional response in the listening public. If you ask someone if they can sing *JongmyoJeryeak*, most of them will answer, “No, I can’t.”

² There are a total of 20 intangible cultural heritages in the South Korea including ‘Royal ancestral ritual in the *Jongmyo* shrine and its music’ (2001), ‘*Pansori* epic chant’ (2003), ‘*GangneungDanoje* festival’ (2005), ‘*Ganggangsullae*’ (2009), ‘*Yeongsanjae*’ (2009), ‘*NamsadangNori*’ (2009), ‘*JejuChilmeoridangYeongdeunggut*’ (2009), ‘*Cheoyongmu*’ (2009), ‘*Gagok*, lyric song cycles accompanied by an orchestra’ (2010), ‘*Daemokjang*, traditional wooden architecture’ (2010), ‘Falconry, a living human heritag’ (2010), ‘*Taekkyeon*, a traditional Korean martial art’ (2011), ‘*Jultagi*, tightrope walking’ (2011), ‘Weaving of *Mosi* (fine ramie) in the *Hansan* region’ (2011), ‘*Arirang*, lyrical folk song in the Republic of Korea’ (2012), ‘*Kimjang*, making and sharing kimchi’ (2013), ‘*Nongak*, community band music, dance and rituals in the Republic of Korea’ (2014), ‘Tugging Rituals and Games’ (2015), ‘Culture of *JejuHaenyeo*(Women Divers)’ (2016), and ‘Traditional Korean Wrestling, *Ssirum/Ssireum*’ (2018), listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Among them, there are 13 categories that are directly or indirectly related to *Gugak*.

³ <https://m.post.naver.com/viewer/postView.nhn?volumeNo=7048374&memberNo=36555640&vType=VERTICAL>

Since 2008, I have been trained in various percussion instruments that are organized in National Intangible Cultural Property No.1 *JongmyoJeryeak* as a learner called “*jeonsu-ja*”. After four years of intensive education, I have been participating in various national events as a master called “*isu-ja*”, performer of *Pyunjong*, *Pyunkyung* and *Banghyang*.⁴ since 2012. I participated in various events and I began to think more seriously about the preservation and succession of *JongmyoJeryeak*. Furthermore, I came to think about the *JongmyoJeryeak* with an objective viewpoint. In the meantime, attention has been paid to the performance projects that can solve the problems of the *JongmyoJeryeak*, that is, the gap between fame and musical recognition.

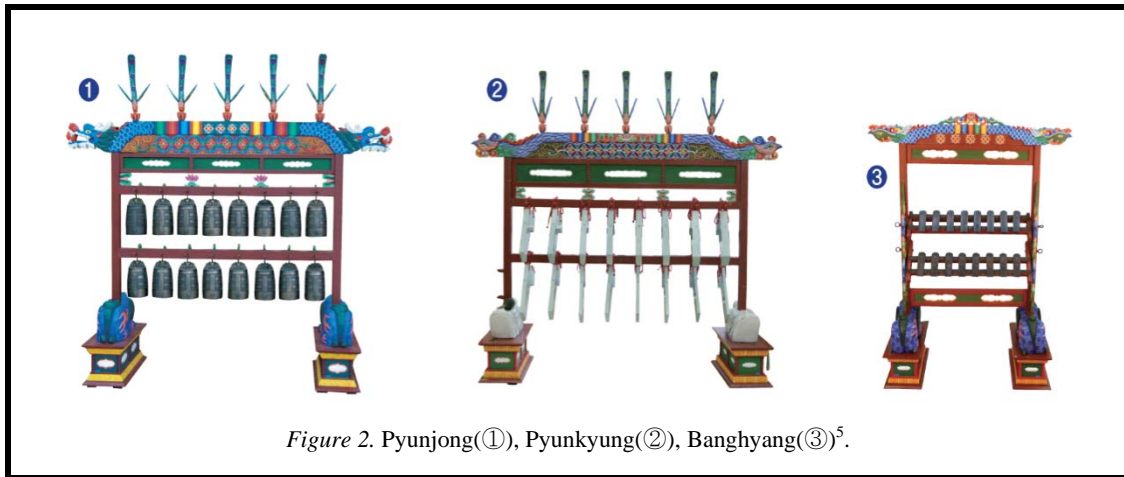


Figure 2. Pyunjong(①), Pyunkyung(②), Banghyang(③)⁵.

In this paper, I would like to examine the present situation of performing arts business which uses the World Intangible Cultural Heritage focused on *JongmyoJeryeak*. Furthermore, I will analyze the present situation and discuss the business prospects of this traditional art form. In order to do so, a simple understanding of *JongmyoJeryeak* is needed.

JongmyoJeryeak consists of *Botaepyeong* which praises the achievements of the former kings and *Jeongdaeop* which praises the king’s military achievements. They are well known to be created by King *Sejong the Great* who is recorded as the greatest king in *Joseon* Dynasty. The lyrics of *JongmyoJeryeak* called “*akjang*”, describe the purpose the rite, how former kings of the *Joseon* Dynasty devoted themselves to the protection and care of Korean people, the king’s contribution to the peace of the nation, and the prayer for the prosperity of descendants in detail.

Today’s *JongmyoJeryeak* involves instruments such as *Pyunjong*, *Pyunkyung*, *Banghyang*, *Chook*, *Eo*, *Bak*, *Dang-piri*, *Daegeum*, *Haegeum*, *Ajaeng*, *Jangu*, *Jing*, *Taepyungso*, *Julgo*, *Jingo* and so on in the musical groups for ‘*Deungga*’, the upper musical group and ‘*Heonga*’, the lower musical group. ‘*Ilmu*’, the ritual dance of *JongmyoJeryeak* is performed by 64 dancers, in 8 lines of 8 people. The props they hold in their hands are called “*euimul*”. When dancing *munmu*, dancers hold *Yak*, a type of instrument in the left hand and *Jeok*, the

⁴ “*Pyunjong*”, “*Pyunkyung*” and “*Banghyang*” are idiophones that can play 16 different notes. These instruments play the main melody in *JongmyoJeryeak*.

⁵ Donghee LEE, Basic Theory of Korean Traditional Music that finishes without a break, Music and Life, (2020), p. 44.

feather of pheasants, in the right hand. But during the *mumu* dance, the first four rows of dancers hold a sword and the last four rows of dancers hold wooden spears while dancing.

JongmyoJeryeak, which is a little slow and rigid, has very complex melismatic melody style. And many tones and ornaments are put to one syllable. Also irregular rhythmic patterns of percussion instruments are one of the features. Various instruments play a similar melody at the same time with heterophony, which is based on the sound percussion instruments such as *Pyunjong*, *Pyunkyung* and *Banghyang*. To the music, dancers hold *yak* and *jeok*, and dance *munmu*.

Present Situation

JongmyoJeryeak was created in the early *Joseon* Dynasty and has been continuously performed until now, so legitimacy is highly important. Also, when the music and dance accompanying the rite are performed, it must be performed in a formal manner that adheres to various criteria such as musical groups, number of people, arrangement of musical instruments, sequence and repetition. And 600 years later, it is still held with the memorial service. Of course, in the late *Joseon* period and the Japanese Colonial Period, rhythm, the order of composition, the length of a musical note, the organization of musical instruments and other elements were known to change. But it has been the most enduring of the existing Korean traditional music. This is why *JongmyoJeryeak* was designated as the National Intangible Cultural Property No.1 in South Korea, and the UNESCO also designated *JongmyoJeryeak* as South Korea’s first intangible cultural heritage. As the original form is preserved and handed down as much as possible, it is necessary for the performing arts business to be carried out in order to close the gap between fame and musical recognition.

A full-scale performance project using *JongmyoJeryeak* started in 2010. It was only ten years ago that *JongmyoJeryeak* was performed for popularization and modernization in conjunction with other parts of music. The *JongmyoJeryeak* performance project in 2010 was started as part of the ‘Listening to Korean Music in the Palace’ hosted by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Traditional Performing Arts Foundation and the National *Gugak* Center. The festival features various kinds of Korean traditional music at *Gyeongbok* Palace, *Deoksu* Palace, *Jongmyo* Shrine, and *Changdeok* Palace. The purpose of the project was to become a tourism resource by linking traditional art contents with the royal palace, which is a tangible cultural asset. Among them, “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a commentary” was held at *Jongmyo* Shrine. The performance introduced musical instruments, dances and songs through an easy and interesting commentary to understand the deeper meanings of our ancestors’ dream of peace for both Korean people and the nation. (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2018)



Figure 3. Listening to Korean Music in the Palace—*JongmyoJeryeak*⁶.

As a result, the attendance for these performances reached full capacity each time and it was clearly popular among those ‘Listening to Korean Music in the Palace.’ So in 2011, “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a commentary” was separated from the “Listening to Korean Music in the Palace” project to become a tourism resource for UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage. The first purpose of the project was to create an image as a tourist attraction for foreigners by reproducing the ritual and traditional music. Second, the development of new contents combines the historical meaning of a place with performing arts. Third, it is the contribution of the citizens to raise their self-esteem and change their positive perceptions toward *Jongmyo* Shrine. (Korea Traditional Performing Arts Foundation, 2011) The project, which used the weekend of spring and autumn which was a good time to have a picnic, lasted until 2014.

From 2015, “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a Story” was first performed following its predecessor, “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a commentary”, as part of a project for the Tourism Resources Business that deals with the world’s intangible cultural heritage. While the existing *JongmyoJeryeak* performance project was aimed at providing easy and interesting explanations, “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a story” was designed to help the audience visit various places within *Jongmyo* to enjoy *JongmyoJeryeak* along with plays, storytelling, and various traditional music. In other words, the main purpose of the performance is to provide the public with easy access to *JongmyoJeryeak*. To do so, a new method was established using non-musical elements of the play. The play was conducted by the famous actor Minwoo LEE. And the story of the new *Joseon* Dynasty that *King Sejong the Great* dreamed of, the story of the independent *Joseon* Dynasty, and the background of *King Sejong the Great*’s attempt to create the *JongmyoJeryeak* easily attracted audience participation. Also the *JongmyoJeryeak* appreciation was structured to follow story telling. This performance project includes all the objectives of the existing “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a commentary”, but it will be used to develop traditional culture contents by actively utilizing various facilities in the *Jongmyo* Shrine. In addition to enhancing the understanding of the *Jongmyo* and *JongmyoJeryeak* with the experience of the audience participating in the performance, it was further emphasized to expand the opportunity for the audience to enjoy the culture.

⁶ https://www.mcst.go.kr/kor/s_notice/news/newsView.jsp?pSeq=1473



Figure 4. *JongmyoJeryeak* with a story⁷.

“*JongmyoJeryeak* with a commentary” and “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a story” attracted a total of 60,000 viewers over the past ten years. In other words, it shows that the audience has already appreciated the modernized version of the *JongmyoJeryeak*. This case is a very pertinent example of the developing performing arts business, especially with respect to the world intangible cultural heritage in South Korea. Also, this performance contains the historical and speciality of a place, explanations for the general public and dramatic elements, so it is therefore very compatible with the trend toward popularization.

Specific results of this performance project are as follows. First, the public has easy access to *JongmyoJeryeak*, which is difficult to access. Second, it induced a positive change in people’s perception of our cultural heritage, especially *JongmyoJeryeak*. Third, an elegant traditional culture program was developed and established that embodies the historical and spatial characteristics of the site. Fourth, it induced visitors to revisit the program through a popular performance program that included elements other than music. Lastly, it helped foreigners who visited *Jongmyo* Shrine to better understand Korean traditional culture and to improve tourist satisfaction.

Also, I would like to introduce some more representative performances based on *JongmyoJeryeak*. In order to enhance the public’s understanding of *JongmyoJeryeak* from a decade ago, the Cultural Heritage Administration has placed commentators and announcers on the grounds of the *Jongmyo* rite. During the ceremony, the entire process is explained in detail to the audience, helping them understand easily. In 2009, the National *Gugak* Center restored and staged the splendid *JongmyoJeryeak* of the *Joseon* Dynasty, which was composed *Gayageum*, *Geomungo*, *Bifa*, *Nogo* and *Nodo*, according to the records of the 15th century.⁸ In

⁷ <https://blog.naver.com/gingoba2/220897373797>

⁸ <http://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20090407/8717344/1>, <http://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20090407021003>

addition, from 2015, the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation has been holding a night performance of *JongmyoJeryeak*, where people can enjoy music with the night view of *Jongmyo Shrine*. The project begins at 8pm near the actual time of the ceremony, and it is meaningful that the event can focus only on the performance itself, without involving the ceremony.



Figure 5. Restored *JongmyoJeryeak* according to the records of the 15th century⁹.



Figure 6. A night performance of *JongmyoJeryeak*¹⁰.

⁹ <https://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?oid=003&aid=0002626537>

¹⁰ <https://blog.naver.com/royalculture/220987256028>

Another Example

Now, let's take a look at representative examples of the world's intangible cultural heritage projects, other than *JongmyoJeryeak*. First, in addition to the “*JongmyoJeryeak* with a story”, the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Foundation has organized “Sherlock, Find the Lost *Arirang*” and “Sherlock, Find the Lost *Cheoyong*”. These were performed on the lawn of the National Assembly as part of a project for the Tourism Resources Business of the world's intangible cultural heritage since 2015. This performance, which attracted 35,000 visitors in total for three years, was an excellent intangible heritage-related performance project that brought about popularization and modernization by combining *Arirang* and *Cheoyongmu* registered as UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage with the world famous Sherlock Holmes character. Second, the Cultural Heritage Administration promoted joint projects for the events listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage starting in 2012, and selected 6 events such as *Pansori*, *NamsadangNori*, *Cheoyongmu*, *Gagok*, *Arirang* and *Ganggangsullae* for reinterpretation and presented as a performance. Third, since opening in 2014, the National Intangible Heritage Administration has been holding special performances by utilizing 19 events of South Korea designated as UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage and even other country's intangible heritages. Like this, the world's intangible cultural heritage project is being tried in various forms in various institutions. However, the active conducting of the performing arts business is mostly based on events in which the prototype itself is fully capable of reinterpretation and reconstruction. So, the context of the performing arts business is different from that of *JongmyoJeryeak* which has been strong preservation.



Figure 7. Sherlock, Find the Lost *Cheoyong*¹¹

¹¹ <https://blog.naver.com/hohosm/221033087891>



Figure 8. Joint projects for the events listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage¹².

Conclusion-Prospects

In conclusion, the various performances related to *JongmyoJeryeak*, mentioned earlier, all have things in common. And this is different from other world intangible cultural heritage-related performing art business projects. The original features of *JongmyoJeryeak* were not altered for the purpose of the performance, but were preserved as much as possible or even restored to a more ancient form. Of course, in many cases, some changes were made to the arrangement of musical groups, order of performance, number of performers, and so on to help the public understand, but the preservation of the music itself was maintained. This is a factor we must consider when carrying forward a new performance project using the *JongmyoJeryeak*.

JongmyoJeryeak still lacks musical recognition when compared to its fame. But, when appearing in public through various forms of performing arts business over the years, it showed great likability and caused a positive change in perception. So, I think that the prospects for the upcoming performing arts business which uses *JongmyoJeryeak* will be positive. Based on the analysis of the status quo, the performing arts business utilizing *JongmyoJeryeak* should be developed in the following directions in the future. First, various modernized contents should be developed in order to enhance the public’s musical awareness and positive recognition of *JongmyoJeryeak*. In other words, in addition to the theater, description, and spatial

¹² http://www.gugak.go.kr/site/program/performance/detail?performance_id=30012577

characteristics, it is necessary to try to combine them with other than music such as movies, dramas, media art and so on. Second, we should refrain from modifying or reinterpreting the original form to preserve the inherent nature of *JongmyoJeryeak*. It was created in the early *Joseon* Dynasty and continues to the present 600 years later, and should never be overlooked when forming a performing arts business.

We remember the distinction between performing arts business related to *JongmyoJeryeak* and other world's intangible cultural heritage, and always think about how coexisting aspects are inherited and developed within this modernized traditional heritage. Also, we should prepare a more active performing project to continuously change the public's perception of *JongmyoJeryeak*, the world's intangible cultural heritage that represents South Korea.

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