No “Korean Wave” Here: Western Classical Music and the Changing Value System in South Korea

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Because of the Korean Wave, Korean popular musicians have gained a powerful presence in South Korea, while classical musicians have become increasingly marginalized. This change is surprising because a considerable amount of educational capital has been invested in the systematic grooming of classical musicians—and popular musicians have historically been treated with disrespect and even contempt. The impact of the Korean Wave and the shifting social status of musicians indicate that a fundamental change may be taking place in the South Korean value system. Based on personal experiences of musicians and the history of the presence of Western classical music in Korea, this article demonstrates that this change of attitude toward musicians’ social status may metaphorically serve as a wedge driven into a crack created by the shift of the old and new cultural and social tectonic plates of South Korea.

Changing Social Status of Musicians

The Korean Wave refers to the surge in popularity of South Korean popular culture around the world since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Because of the Korean Wave, the status of Korean popular musicians has been elevated significantly, while classical musicians have become increasingly marginalized. This article examines the impact of the Korean Wave and the shifting social status of musicians in South Korea.

Musical activities in South Korea can be roughly divided into three overlapping spheres: classical music in the Western tradition that deals with the performance of works composed primarily by Western composers (e.g., Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Schoenberg); domestically produced popular music that is represented by various genres (e.g., ppongchak 봄짝, palladû 발라드, sinminyo 신민요); and traditional Korean music. The major forces of the Korean Wave came from popular cultural fronts, most notably television dramas, movies, and popular music. But when it comes to increasing awareness and popularity of non-popular musical spheres, the Korean Wave was...
not so successful. Indeed, the contrast between the popularity of music produced by Korean "popular" musicians and that by "classical" musicians—often referred to as "art" musicians—both inside and outside Korea is quite striking. This disparity is even more startling when placed in the perspective of the different treatments these two groups of musicians have garnered in the past.

When I was doing fieldwork on Korean popular music in the early and mid-1990s, the term "Korean Wave" did not yet exist; it was coined later by Beijing journalists (Faolalao 2006). The major focus of my inquiry at the time was a Korean popular-music genre called t'onggi'’a 탑기타, which swept the nation in the 1970s and early 1980s. I was able to arrange interviews with many famous t'onggi'’a singers and even once waited with Song Ch'ang-sik 송창식 (b. 1947) in the green room at a music hall while he was preparing for an appearance in a nationally broadcast concert. The name of this concert was Yollin umakhoe 열린음악회 (Open concert). It was "open" because it featured musicians from all three spheres, quite a departure from previous practice. One of the most memorable statements Song Ch'ang-sik made to me that day was that, in the past, hardly any venue had existed that featured both classical musicians and popular musicians on the same stage. Even if they happened to have appeared at a same venue (still an extremely rare occasion), classical musicians had typically shunned popular musicians and not even acknowledged their presence. But, Song Ch'ang-sik stated, now such musicians were not only sharing the same stage but also exchanging pleasantries.

If one is familiar with Korean popular culture of the 1970s, Song Ch'ang-sik needs no introduction, because, as one of the biggest stars of the South Korean pop scene in the 1970s and early 1980s, he was—and still is—a household name in South Korea. But, despite his fame and celebrity, he was still considered a cultural lowborn because of his affiliation with the popular music industry. In fact, another famous pop singer of the time, Cho Yong-nam 조영남, acknowledged in his memoir (1993) that, while he officially belonged to the high-class (고급) world as a classical voice student at Seoul National University, he actually "bummed around" (해갈고 다니다) in the low-class (저급) world of popular music (75). He explained that his decision to appear on a television program as a popular musician was one of the toughest decisions he had to make in his entire life—because it could have led to his expulsion from university (154). When I interviewed Song Ch'ang-sik in 1992, he was compelled to point out to me that he felt the status of Korean popular music and its practitioners had significantly improved in recent years.

As Bob Dylan once sang, "The times they are a-changin’"; this sentiment is certainly true in South Korea, where the losers from the past are now the winners. These days, the power of popular entertainers is evident
in not only the Korean cultural sphere but also the social, economic, and political spheres. If Korean pop musicians were already grateful for the courteous treatment they received from classical musicians in the mid-1990s, now the table has completely been turned: It is not just classical musicians but Korean politicians, capitalists, and just about everybody else in Korea who would be grateful for a nod of acknowledgment from the very powerful popular entertainers.

While Korean popular musicians are now enjoying an unprecedented level of recognition and limelight due to the Korean Wave, and although the spill-over effect of the Korean Wave has even attracted non-Koreans to take notice of Korean food and the Korean language, classical musicians in Korea have not been able to ride the wave at all. If one considers the fact that quite a significant amount of educational capital has been invested—and a massive educational infrastructure has been constructed—to train and groom classical musicians systematically, while popular musicians have historically been treated with disrespect and, sometimes, contempt, this change of fortune seems quite perplexing. After all, classical music, not Korean popular music, had been regarded as the culturally superior and therefore desirable form of cultural pursuit since its formal introduction to the country in the nineteenth century.

A Brief History of Classical Music in Korea

According to commonly accepted accounts, Western music was first introduced to Korea in 1885. In that year, two of the most influential Protestant missionaries, Horace G. Underwood (1859–1916) and Henry G. Appenzeller (1858–1902), arrived at Jemulpo Harbor. In 1886, they established Kyōngsin 경신 School and Paechae 베객 School, respectively, where Western hymns were taught. Soon, the Northern Presbyterian Church, the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church, the Southern Presbyterian Mission, the Australian Presbyterian Mission, the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, the Southern Methodist Episcopal Mission, and the Salvation Army all established schools in various parts of the country. These schools—about 40 were established by various churches between 1885 and 1909, with 759 schools established by 1919—became the bedrock of modern Korean education as well as the breeding and nurturing ground for classical music in Korea (Choi 1997, 4, 74–103; Yi Yu-sŏn 1985, 21–28).

Although activities of other musical spheres, such as that of traditional Korean music or popular music, were not regarded as desirable cultural pursuits for reasons that I will not delve into in this article, classical music was regarded as desirable because it became associated with cultural sophistication and prestige due to its Western origin and its affiliation with formal educational institutions from the beginning of its presence in Korea.
The first school exclusively for Western music opened its doors in 1945 as Kyŏngsŏng Music School (경성음악전문학교); this school became the College of Music within Seoul National University a year later. Since then, the number of higher-educational institutions that house schools of music or music departments has continued to rise. In 1975, 33 universities and colleges had music schools (Yi Yu-sŏn 1985, 289–94). By 1993, 70 colleges and universities produced approximately 4,000 graduates in classical music. By the end of the twentieth century, more than 90 four-year universities and colleges offered degree programs in classical music performance in South Korea (Kim, Kwon, and Yi 1993, 221).

Recognizing the connection between classical music and a potential for achieving a higher social status, Koreans started sending their children to music lessons in droves, and music training is now a ubiquitous part of the present-day South Korean cultural landscape. Private music academies are fixtures in every neighborhood in South Korea, and, according to Pak Un-cha, the number of licensed and unlicensed private piano academies reached about 100,000 by the middle of the 1980s (1993, 8). Until fairly recently, the music curricula for K–12 students were based on classical music, and almost all first- and second-grade students take some sort of lessons on a Western musical instrument in order to boost their school grades.

This emphasis on classical music education for young children has had a profound impact on the proliferation of music schools in higher education. Each year, thousands of music majors from colleges and universities graduate in South Korea. Statistics supplied by the Titimdol Publishing Company indicate that 25,000 students applied to four-year institutions of higher education to study music in 1997 (Titimdol 1997). Yang Chi-yŏng (1998, 37) stated that, as of 1997, 93.1 percent of full-time music professorships at universities and colleges were occupied by musicians specializing in classical music, compared to a meager 6.9 percent in traditional Korean music. Not surprisingly, in the same year, 90.2 percent of the incoming students at universities and colleges were admitted to study classical music, but only 9.8 percent were admitted for traditional music, and no significant number in popular music.

Many South Korean students aspire to continue their training in classical music at foreign institutions. Korean nationals are heavily represented at many prestigious music conservatories in the United States and Europe. Via phone, I was told by the staff of the Manhattan School of Music that, as of 1998, 20 percent of the students in the college division of the school were Korean. Yi Sang-man (1999, 140) stated that two-fifths of the preparatory division and one out of every six students at the undergraduate and graduate schools of the Juilliard School of Music were Korean.

Koreans’ zeal to study classical music has had an impact on the integrity of music professionals outside Korea. Music critic Yi Nam-chun (1993)
claimed that Koreans had "corrupted" some faculty members of foreign institutions. To get on the "good side" of teachers, South Korean students and parents "spoiled" their teachers by paying enormous amounts of money for lesson fees at the drop of a hat, "bribing" them with costly presents, or treating them as if these teachers were members of royal families during their visits to South Korea. Although Confucianism indeed taught Koreans to be respectful of their teachers, it is beyond one's obligation to pay the entire expense of a teacher's stay in Korea or to recruit students to take expensive lessons during a teacher's visit to Korea. But some parents have happily done so to curry favor for the sake of their children.

Also according to Yi Nam-chun (1993), many so-called international competitions sprung up in Italy like mushrooms after a rainfall primarily for Korean and Japanese contestants, because Koreans and Japanese were known to value musicians with prizes from competitions with the word "international" in their name. Yu Yun-jong at the Dong-a Daily News (Tong-a Ilbo) reported in 1999 that one voice competition in Italy decided to reject all Korean and Japanese contestants based on evidence that singers from these two countries had won a series of competitions and then returned to their home countries to charge extraordinarily inflated lesson fees with their newly acquired credentials— but without furthering their performance careers to fulfill the purpose of these competitions.

What these sad sagas indicate is that Koreans are willing to expend an enormous amount of money on classical music education and training. But such high enthusiasm has produced tangible results. It is now a routine to see Koreans winning international music competitions, and some of them— Kyunghwa Chung (violinist, b. 1945), Young-uck Kim (violinist, b. 1947), Myung-hun Chung (pianist and conductor, b. 1953), Sumi Jo (opera singer, b. 1962), and Han-na Chang (cellist, b. 1982), to name a few— have become international stars.

In fact, classical music has become integrated into the lives of Koreans to such an extent that in the everyday Korean language, ुमाक 음악 (music) is equated to classical music. For example, if Korean children learn to play piano or violin, it is colloquially called learning ुमाक, and lessons take place at "music academies" (ुमाक 화원 음악학원). But if they are learning to play Korean traditional instruments, such as the kayakum 가야금 (zither) or tanso 단소 (bamboo flute), they are said to be studying traditional Korean music, kugak 국악, at traditional Korean music academies, kugak 화원 국악학원. And as for Korean popular music, Koreans use genre specifications (e.g., rock, rap) to identify them, reserving the term ुमाक exclusively for the domain of (Western) classical music.
Superficial Integration of Classical Music in Korea

Despite the massive investment and significant social prestige, in comparison to Korean popular music, classical music is integrated into the everyday lives of Koreans in a remarkably superficial manner. A closer examination reveals that there is almost no true listening audience for classical music in South Korea who would pay to go to musical events for pure listening pleasure and artistic experience. Most recitals given by domestic classical musicians are occasions for performers to spend, not earn, money, in hopes that their recital endeavors eventually lead to fulltime positions at educational institutions. Indeed, classical musicians cannot make livings as performers in South Korea unless they rely on their salaries from positions at various educational institutions. And, as the supply-and-demand rule dictates, the competition to secure the limited number of fulltime positions at South Korean universities is brutally fierce.

If performers cannot make adequate money by giving performances, can they bring in extra income through the sale of compact discs? Unfortunately, CD sales of domestic classical musicians are almost nonexistent in South Korea. Unless one goes to a music superstore in a metropolis, finding a sizable collection of classic music CDs in South Korea is a tough task. Even if a CD store displays an extensive collection of classical music, those CDs would almost entirely be by famous international stars, not by domestic musicians. During a recent trip to Korea, I learned that one of the most respected pianists in South Korea had recently produced a CD. I visited several well-stocked CD stores in Seoul in an effort to purchase the CD. But no store was carrying it. In the end, I had to contact the performer to get a copy, and he lamented the dismal market condition for domestic performers. In fact, production of a CD in Korea is a sure way for a musician to spend, not earn, more money. According to one store owner, such CDs are “more for one’s vanity and ego.” Although musical venues featuring international stars do draw huge crowds, it remains questionable if they constitute a serious listening audience. It almost seems that Koreans go to these concerts featuring international mega-stars in an effort to demonstrate their cultural sophistication to others as well as to themselves.

If classical music exists as an aesthetic pursuit and pleasure that people truly enjoy, they would actually pay to go to recitals and buy CDs by domestic performers and composers, which is the case for products created and offered by Korean popular musicians. But in South Korea, the primary purpose of classical music seems to be not as an art form but as the social and cultural trappings and rituals that comes with that art form. Therefore, no independent performers, not even the first-rate ones, can make livings based on performance alone within South Korea, and classical musicians’ careers must primarily be linked to educational institutions.
Status as a Value: An Effect of Confucianism

Although evidence suggests that classical music does not seem to have been thoroughly internalized in South Korea, it nevertheless has been considered culturally superior to popular music, and that was why I believe a concerted effort has been made to embrace classical music since its introduction to the country. Indeed, I believe the fundamental structural force that assured the widespread acceptance of classical music in South Korea—and simultaneously marginalized the position of Korean popular music in the cultural topography of the past—was the Confucian ideology that shaped traditional Korea.

Confucianism was introduced to Korea some two thousand years ago: Chinese commanders who dominated the northern part of Korea during the first three centuries C.E. are thought to have introduced a rudimentary knowledge of Confucian tenets. In 372, a Confucian academy was established during the Koguryo 高句麗 dynasty (37 B.C.E.–668 C.E.), and Confucianism was further disseminated into the southern half of the peninsula with the rise of the Paekche 百濟 (18 B.C.E.–660 C.E.) and Silla 新羅 (57 B.C.E.–935 C.E.) dynasties. In 682, a Confucian academy was built in Kyongju, the capital of Silla, and an imitation of the Tang 中国 (618–907) examination system was instituted in 788 during the Unified Silla period (668–935), with the Confucian classics as its core (Deuchler 1992, 14). The Choson 朝鮮 dynasty (1392–1910) adopted Confucianism as the national ideology on which to build an ideal nation, and it subsequently became the ruling governing principle for every aspect of Korean life for several centuries (Deuchler 1992, 24–27).

The intellectual, aristocratic, academic, and governing ideology of the ruling class of the Choson dynasty was Neo-Confucianism, and the “influence of Confucianism on Korea’s traditional culture was, needless to say, both profound and pervasive” (Kihl 1994, 730). Indeed, the impact of Confucianism still reverberates to this day. For example, Seoul has the most imposing Confucian shrine outside China where one of the major genres of Korean traditional music—Confucian ritual music—is performed during Confucian ceremonies. The study of Confucianism is still a vibrant academic pursuit, and one of the missions of Sönggyun’gwan University in Seoul (established in 1398) is the preservation and promotion of Confucianism. Out of three paper notes in South Korea, two of them—1,000 won and 500 won—feature Korean Confucian scholars, Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501–70) and Yi I 李珥 (1536–84), respectively. The permeation of Confucianism in Korea does not end at a symbolic level. The Confucian ethical and behavioral code profoundly affects every aspect of Koreans’ lives, and some consider Korea as the country most steeped in Confucianism.
Traditional Korean society was divided into three strata: an aristocracy (*yangban* 兩班); commoners (*yangin* 良人 or *sangmin* 常民); and lowborn (*ch’önmin* 貧民), such as slaves, butchers, leather workers, entertainers (including most professional folk musicians), and shamans. In 958, Emperor Kwangjong 光宗 (r. 949–75) of the Koryŏ 高麗 dynasty (918–1392) introduced the civil-service examination system of China in order to break the power of the original elite, and this system became the main vehicle to recruit officials for governmental positions (Deuchler 1992, 32). The term *yangban*—referring to two orders (*pan* 班 of civil (*munban* 文班) and military (*muban* 武班) officials—was introduced to Korea during the formative period of the Koryŏ dynasty (Deuchler 1992, 32). Only members of the hereditary elite were allowed to participate, and passing such a competitive examination that led to a governmental job—the ultimate goal for Korean elite—meant added prestige and status. Through this examination system, the Koryŏ government gradually became organized into a rigidly hierarchical bureaucracy consisting of civil and military officials: the *yangban*.

Some scholars argue that social strata in traditional Korean society were never delineated legally, and there was no sure guide to determine who was eligible to be counted among the elite (Deuchler 1992, 12). Nevertheless, traditional Korean society, which recognized the *yangban* as an elite stratum, resembles a caste system more closely than a class system, because its membership was more or less fixed or impermeable, members were strongly endogamous, and their legitimate offspring automatically became *yangban*.5

When Western music was introduced to Korea, the country was experiencing turbulent political, economical, and social changes. A series of calamities—the decline of the Chosŏn dynasty; the Japanese occupation (1910–45); division of the country (1945–present); and, worst of all, the Korean War (1950–53)—led to the disintegration of both the dynastic system and the strict social stratification of the past by the middle of the twentieth century. With this disintegration, Korean society was propelled from a closed caste system to a new society based on a fluid class formation. This transition proved a great opportunity for those who wanted upward mobility. Some were said to invent new identities by fabricating genealogical records or by changing their family names. Unlike the old days, when education was only for the privileged few, modernization made education widely available throughout the country. The Korean economy began to prosper, and people could afford more leisurely lifestyles, which led to the formation of the middle class. But who belonged to this middle class? How is the middle class defined?

Denise Lett (1998) and Nancy Abelmann (1997a, 1997b) affirm that defining the South Korean “middle class” is, indeed, a slippery slope, because the demarcation lines in a class society are much murkier than those in a caste system. In this hazy and fluid area, opportunities abound for those
who seek upward mobility. One way of doing so is through what Lett terms the “pursuit of status.” To be specific, members of the middle class in modern South Korea seek the status of the yangban of former days. Lett argues that Korean society after the middle of the Choson period became essentially dichotomized between the yangban and the lower classes, comprised by commoners and lowborn (16). Although the yangban made up no more than 10 percent of the total population at first (Deuchler 1992, 12), they were the center of leadership and power during the Choson dynasty, and their worldview became the standard mode of operation of the society as a whole (Eckert and others 1990, 135).

Identifying a thread that connects the yangban stratum of traditional Korean society to the middle class (chungsanch’ung 중산층) in contemporary South Korea, Lett states that:

The key to understanding South Korea's contemporary middle class and its development is the underlying drive Koreans have to attain status and prestige. In the closing years of the Choson dynasty Hulbert noted “a passionate desire” among the Korean people “to ascend a step on the social ladder,” as they tried in every way to insinuate themselves into good society... I found that characteristic to be as operative as in the past. Moreover, this desire to acquire status, coupled with new opportunities to do so, has been a driving force behind the development of South Korea’s human resources in general, of its new middle class in particular, and ultimately of South Korea itself. ...

... The dreams themselves are continually evolving as the middle class itself evolves. Ways of asserting status may change. But status consciousness, the cultural need for status inherited from the yangban tradition... remains the underlying principle behind the drive for status and the development of South Korea’s urban middle class. (1998, 41).

Deuschler (1992, 13) identified the following five criteria as essential for yangban status in Choson society: a clear line of descent, “distinguished” (meaning with a scholarly reputation) ancestors, a clear geographical area within which such status was recognized, close marriage ties with other reputable lineages, and a special way of life. Among them, the first four are based on elements that are beyond one’s control and thus cannot be created or fabricated. However, the fifth criterion, a “special way of life,” is more easily accessible, if one has the economic means to afford it. No longer classified as a member of a certain unchangeable stratum, Koreans have been able, in their newly industrialized and urbanized country, to seek higher status, and they have done so by imitating the trappings of the upper social stratum from the past. For example, pianos (even if never played) and complete sets of encyclopedias (even if never read) began appearing as status markers in living rooms in South Korea.

According to Lett (1998), members Korea’s contemporary urban middle class display the characteristics of an upper rather than a middle class because of their desire to seek a status equivalent to that of yangban in the
former days. Suenari Michio describes the term “yangbanization” as “a process by which the members of a kinship group of lower rank raise their social ranking by making meticulous efforts to conform to the behavior model of the upper yangban” (1994, 577–78). Lett, too, argues that the growth of South Korea’s middle class can be characterized as the yangbanization of Korean society in the modern context. And when status is not inherited, one way to achieve it is through acquiring elements considered to be characteristic of those with such status.

As mentioned above, classical music was always part of the formal curriculum at Westernized schools in Korea. As in the West, where the learning of classical music by serious musicians has primarily taken place in institutional settings (from the Romantic era on, at least), Koreans created a similar milieu for music training. Long before traditional music was recognized as a valuable subject of academic pursuit, classical music had already been embraced by prestigious institutions of higher learning. A degree program in music education was launched at the college division of Ewha School as early as 1910 (Min 1997). Seoul National University—regarded by most as the nation’s most prestigious educational institution in almost all fields—opened its doors to classical musicians in 1945 (but not to practitioners of traditional Korean music until the end of the 1950s). Since associations with educational institutions were considered status markers, the connection between educational settings and classical music from the beginning of its existence in Korea provided another marker of status, adding another reason for the successful dissemination of classical music in Korea. Thus this connection can be summarized in the following manner: First, a shift took place in Korean society from a rigid caste system based on heredity to a more fluid class system based on individual achievements. Second, the opportunity created by the shift allowed people to raise their social status (through a process known as yangbanization). Third, Koreans used classical music as a status marker in the yangbanization process.

Besides the association with education as a status marker, another fundamental factor that secured the perception of classical music as a status marker was its origin. As Korea finally succumbed to the military power of the West in the nineteenth century, people started to regard the dominant West as a positive and constructive force for the future. This mindset—which can be summed up as “anything old and ours is bad, and anything new and Western is good”—was also seen in other countries. Since classical music was considered a marker of the elite class in its originating countries (i.e., France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain), it was a perfect means to raise one’s status in Korea as well. After all, it not only came from the West but also came from the upper crust of the West. When this aspect was combined with Koreans’ zeal to be yangbanized, classical music exerted a powerful attraction (Hwang 2009, 150).
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Although Denise Lett identified Koreans’ pursuit of status as the fundamental force that shaped modern South Korean society, the era when status was perceived as the ultimate goal in society may seem to be over, especially in light of what is happening with the Korean Wave. In the olden days, individuals who pursued academic knowledge but had no ambitions to be wealthy—exemplified by the sŏnbi (yangban scholars)—were regarded as role models due to their status in society based on Confucian ideology. But the Korean Wave emphasizes the chasm between the popularity of Korean popular music and the inability of classical musicians in South Korea to penetrate Korean cultural behaviors as a truly meaningful art form even more so. Furthermore, the inability of classical musicians in South Korea to ride the Korean Wave may indicate a changing value system in contemporary South Korean society.

Although one can argue over the contribution of the Korean Wave on artistic fronts and its impact on Korean culture overall, I believe the most immediate and visible contribution of the Korean Wave is its ability to generate enormous financial gains for various partakers, including South Korea as a country. And the attraction to materialism as the ultimate goal of individuals has been palpable. According to a 2008 poll conducted by children’s magazine Koraega Kuraesso (That is what the whale said), Korean elementary schoolchildren consider doctors, lawyers, entertainers, and sportsmen as the most desirable occupational choices because of their earning capability (Kang 2008). This inclination marks a drastic departure from even a couple of decades ago, when being elected president of the country was the most common dream among children (Ilyo 2004).

I must admit, though, that the grip of Confucian ideology has not completely disappeared. It is visible in the sudden mushrooming, within the last few years, of schools offering degree programs in popular music in South Korea. My rough count yielded 58 schools to date (July 2009), and this figure demonstrates that Koreans still have an urge to learn within formalized educational settings, even in the case of popular music.

But all the machinery and hullabaloo that support and surround the Korean Wave and the countless young people who worship Korean Wave stars as their ultimate role models—stars such as Pae Yong-chun, Rain, Yi Young Ae and Boa, whose names are known around the world—testify that Korean society may be experiencing a shift of tectonic plates. As evinced by classical musicians’ inability to ride the wave both inside and outside Korea, Koreans may no longer be governed by Confucian ideology that regards status as the ultimate goal of a pursuit in life. Instead, they may finally and thoroughly be engulfed by the capitalism and materialism of the postmodern era. In that sense, the Korean Wave may metaphorically serve as a
wedge driven into the crack created by the shift of the old and the new cultural and social tectonic plates of South Korea.

Notes

1 In this article, “classical” music refers to Western classical music.
2 As a piano major at Seoul National University at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, I was keenly aware of the prejudices against popular music. For example, piano students were strongly discouraged from engaging in music-making that was considered “unsavory,” such as accepting gigs as lounge pianists.
3 The 759 schools established by 1919 were classified by Yi Yu-sŏn (1985, 21–28) as follows (with Korean terms and numbers in parentheses): regular schools (보통학교, 601), high regular schools (고등보통학교, 45), bible schools (성경학교, 40), special schools (전문학교, 40), and other (기타학교, 33).
4 New Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. “Confucianism.”
5 A yangban male might have many concubines from lesser strata, but his main wife would be of yangban lineage. Concubines’ offspring were unable to take the examination for government positions.
6 The internal citation is to Hulbert (1969, 38).
7 Suenari Michio’s (1994, 588) list for the qualifications of yangban status is identical to Deuchler’s, except for the second item, which Suenari replaces with “to receive guests politely.”
8 The study of popular music is called silyong umakhak 실행음악학 (study of practical—or utility—music).

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