

More About KOREAN DANCES FOR ORCHESTRA

When I first hesitantly decided to emulate such masters as Grieg, Brahms, and Dvořák by writing a set of national/ethnic dances for orchestra, I decided not to base them on the obvious choice of American folk music because that had already been masterfully done by earlier composers and there was no point in trying to compete with established standard repertory. So, after giving it considerable thought, I chose Korean folk music--partly because I am “Korean” by marriage, but also because I had some Korean-inspired music originally written for other mediums that I could recycle as a starting point for some of the orchestral dances. I felt reasonably comfortable engaging in this self-piracy because the symphonic literature includes so many notable precedents. Composers have been recycling their own music into new compositions for centuries, so it seems like a safe practice.

These dances are all based on Korean folk songs. Like the traditional music of its neighbors China and Japan, Korea's folk music generally utilizes pentatonic scales (having five notes in the pattern of a piano's black keys). It also tends to favor minor tonalities and triple or compound meters. But although the source tunes are mostly pentatonic, these dances make no attempt to limit themselves entirely to pentatonic scales.

The tempo and approximate duration of each dance are as follows:

Korean Dance No. 1 – *Allegro agitato* – 2:20

Korean Dance No. 2 – *Allegro robusto* 2:10

Korean Dance No. 3 – *Andante semplice* – 1:50

Korean Dance No. 4 – *Allegro vivace* – 2:25

Korean Dance No. 5 – *Allegro con spirito* – 2:50

Korean Dance No. 6 – *Andantino/Meno mosso* – 2:15

Korean Dance No. 7 – *Allegro moderato* – 2:10

Korean Dance No. 8 – *Allegretto* – 2:35