

KAMSA CHRONICLE

Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1999

A. YANGWON JACKSON, EDITOR

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Kee H. Kim, M.D.



We have much to celebrate during KAMSA's 10th season. Our March benefit dinner concert featuring world-renowned violinist Chee-Yun, was a great success. Her sensitive and spirited musical interpretations were a delight to the audience. The proceeds from the event will be used to further our goal of helping young Korean-American musicians. My sincerest thanks to all those who helped make

this benefit possible.

To commemorate KAMSA's 10th season, the KAMSA Youth

Orchestra, under the talented and innovative direction of Maestro Lawrence Kohl, will perform a special Gala Concert at Herbst Theatre this September.

Since its inception, KAMSA has been committed to promoting the careers of young Korean-American musicians and providing a forum for new and classical music in the Korean community. As KAMSA has matured and grown over the past 10 years we now feel prepared to expand our audience. We encourage all of you to invite your friends and colleagues to participate in upcoming KAMSA events.

Thank you for your continued support of this organization.

FUND RAISING DINNER CONCERT A SMASHING SUCCESS

World renowned Korean violinist Chee-Yun performed on March 4th at the Stanford University Faculty Club. As always, her spell binding performance was the highlight of the evening. Thanks to the many generous donors and community leaders who caught the vision of KAMSA's mission, the evening raised a total of \$30,000. These funds will be instrumental in promoting the careers of young musicians. Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner Concert will be applied towards expanding KAMSA's slate of activities and projects.



Chee-Yun performing and Charles Wadsworth at the piano

KAMSA YOUTH ORCHESTRA 10TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT AT HERBST THEATRE WITH SOOVIN KIM



In celebration of our 10th anniversary this year, a Gala Concert of the KAMSA Youth Orchestra will be presented on Sunday, September 26th at 4:00 PM in San Francisco. The venue, Herbst Theatre, is known as the West's Carnegie Hall. We are fortunate to once again have Maestro Lawrence Kohl as conductor. He brings to the podium both consummate musicianship and dynamic leadership. The guest artist will be Soovin Kim (*left*) who graciously accepted our invitation to play with the orchestra. He is the first American in 24 years to win the Paganini International Competition and is widely recognized as a rising virtuoso. Mr. Kim will perform Saint-Saens' Havanaise and Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso. In addition three of the Bay Area's most promising young artists were

chosen to perform Beethoven's Triple Concerto in C Major. Rebecca Boin Jackson (*right*) will play violin, Gilbert Hwang (*left*) the cello and Jeong Seon Cha (*right*) at the piano. Rebecca





Jackson, 1997 Winner of the American String Teachers Association's California State Solo Competition, is a rising 2nd year violin performance major at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She studies with Prof. Stephen Shipp. Gilbert Hwang, winner of 1998 ASTA California State Solo Competition and Grace Vamos Cello Competition, is a senior at Los Altos High. He studies with Irene Sharp. Jeong Seon Cha, winner of Wellsley Competition and New England Concerto Competition, is a master 2nd year piano performance major at the San Francisco Conservatory. She studies with Mack McCray.



PROGRAM

Brahman Song for Orchestra	Jae-Eun Park
Triple Concerto in C Major op. 56	Ludwig Van Beethoven
"Havanaise" for Violin and Orchestra	Camille Saint-Saëns
Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso for Violin and Orchestra	Camille Saint-Saëns
Symphony no. 9 in e minor, op. 95 "From the New World"	Antonin Dvorak

ADDITIONAL KAMSA YOUTH ORCHESTRA AUDITION

Our apologies to those of you who didn't see the Korea Times ad announcing the first audition. A second audition was set for any interested musician who would still like to be considered.

Date: Saturday, August 14th, 1999	Instruments: All orchestral strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion
Place: Korean-American Community Services 1800-B Fruitdale Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128	Audition: Own piece, 5 minutes or less
Age: Through senior year of high school	Audition Fee : \$10.- Contact Mela Hwang at (650) 948-5797

REFLECTIONS of a VIOLIN VIRTUOSO — an Interview with Chee-Yun

by Annette Yangwon Jackson

Violin Virtuosos are few in number. Rarer still would be a master musician from the tiny homeland of South Korea, world famous for her passionate interpretations, technical skill and electric stage presence as well as a truly gracious personality. Indeed, there is only one Chee-Yun.

Amidst her busy schedule of 120 concerts a year, Chee-Yun recently appeared for the second time as featured performer at a benefit concert for KAMSA. On the eve of her concert Chee-Yun joined me for dinner at Seoul Garden Restaurant. I was accompanied by my daughter, Rebecca, an aspiring violin student.

Chee-Yun, bright, cheerful smile and contagious laughter would light up any room. To hear her tell of it, as a little girl her mom used to say that a smile would make anyone beautiful. And what a smile the daughter now possesses! Her thoughtfulness is equally heart-warming. Constantly she checks to make sure others have enough to eat. For much of the evening, she devoted her conversational energy advising Rebecca about her violin studies. At one point I shared an article published in Suzuki Journal that described how Chee-Yun had helped a particular student. Her eyes sparkled with tearful emotion and said, "I am so happy I can help!" Knowing she so loved to help others, I started the interview with my first question?



Annette Yangwon Jackson, interviewer, on left and Chee-Yun on right.

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS IN BECOMING AND REMAINING A VIRTUOSO?

Most importantly, a passion for music. You must do it for yourself. You must totally and completely love what you do. Devotion, willingness to sacrifice, parental support, a teachers' guidance, and an incredible amount of discipline are some other ingredients.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME DISCIPLINED?

It's a learned behavior with parental support and encouragement. The teacher is also very important. As has been said, genius is 99% hard work. There's no sustained genius without hard work.

DURING CHILDHOOD WERE THERE MUSICIANS IN YOUR FAMILY?

Yes, I was totally surrounded by music. My older sister started piano lessons when she was four so there was music in the house even before I was born. My parents loved classical music and listened to recordings all the time. My mom wanted to be a pianist but her mom didn't think it was a good career for a woman. Her mom believed, as all Koreans in those days, that the best career for women was as a housewife. My mom thought that her children should learn to play musical instruments. We used to go to symphony concerts. My favorite part of the concert was the soloist performance. I told my mom that I wanted to do what the soloist did.

WHEN AND HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A VIOLINIST?

I started studying piano at age 5. When my teacher gave me a piece to work on I would finish the whole book. I worked so hard that my mom noticed my eyes getting cross-eyed. She thought it would permanently damage my eyes so that ended the piano lessons. At that same time my sister didn't want to play violin any more. She wanted to be a dancer. So I told her, "Why don't you take dance lessons and I'll take over your violin." I thought my mom paid more attention to my older sisters who were taking music lessons so I wanted to get her attention by playing the violin. I started taking lessons with Mr. Hong, a neighborhood teacher. At age 8, two years later, my teacher and mom entered me in one of the most prestigious competitions in Korea in the hopes that I would practice harder. I didn't like practicing violin then. I played better on stage than at home and walked off with a grand prize. Both Mr. Hong and my mom thought maybe I had something. So that's when I switched to Ms. Nam Yoon Kim and studied with her until I came to the U.S. when I was 13.

DID YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO BE A VIOLINIST OR DID IT JUST EVOLVE?

I wanted to be a lot of things. I wanted to be the first woman president of Korea. I wanted to pay off all Korea's national debt. I wanted to help the country to gain everybody respect. I had many dreams but things became clearer as I grew up. When I entered competitions I would usually do well. That gave me courage. There were times when I hated practicing. When I was eleven my mom told me that it would be all right if I didn't study violin any more, that she should save the lesson money. When my older sister would be giving a concert on stage I could carry her baby on my back and watch from far. So I said, "Oh, wait a minute, I want to be on that stage!"

IT SEEMS LIKE SHE KNEW EXACTLY WHICH BUTTONS TO PUSH.

I think she knew me well. Good loving parents always have the best interests of their children at heart. Mom, of course, disciplined me but at the same time didn't overwhelm me. She encouraged, praised me and gave lots and lots of hugs. It was all very important.

YOU COME ACROSS AS VERY GROUNDED, WELL-ROUNDED, LEVEL-HEADED AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, HAPPY. SURE ENOUGH, THERE WERE GOOD PARENTS THERE BEHIND YOU. HOW ABOUT YOUR FATHER?

My father was very generous and gentle. He never yelled at us. He was busy working and brought many gifts. He was quietly supportive.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DID YOUR PARENTS CONSIDER IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO LEARN?

My father used to tell me that I must never hurt other people, to always be nice to people even if they tried to hurt me and to have a generous spirit. Even if I don't receive all the blessings for being good, my children and grandchildren would be blessed for it. My father was very generous with his siblings and so good to his parents.

WHO WERE SOME OF THE IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE?

So many of them! Of course my parents. And starting with my first teacher, he was very nice. I used to almost shock him. I was going through roller skating phase and even took lessons on roller skates. I think I was quite a character, but fortunately he had a good sense of humor. He never scolded me. He made it fun for me. My second teacher, Nam Yoon Kim, was a stronger disciplinarian. That's what I needed at the time. She also instilled in me an incredible drive in music and helped me develop a strong stage presence. At Juilliard, Ms. DeLay taught me the importance of fundamentals, such as intonation, and paying attention to details. You can't be

musical without being a complete technician. That's what I really needed to refine when I came to the U.S. Ms. DeLay prepared me for what I do now. She gave me concertos and short pieces to learn every few days. Sometimes I have to perform with an orchestra on a day notice. You have one night to brush up a whole concerto and you have to be able to do that. I have worked with many great conductors, like Mike Tilson Thomas of the SF Symphony. He was so imaginative. It was an incredible eye opener for me. I started to create images and to imagine movie scenes. I tried to put that feeling into music, singing the music in my mind. I felt that if someone had drilled a hole in my head, pure singing would have escaped. My head was completely filled with volumes of music. I started to really fall in love with music and playing with other musicians. After attending the Marlborough Music Festival I fell in love with chamber music. Chamber music really taught me to listen to other people and make music together. My first manager, Susan Wadsworth, gave me the name Chee-Yun. Her staff taught me to be communicative with the audience.

HOW DID YOU PRACTICE IN THE EARLY YEARS?

By repetition. When you can't concentrate at the highest level, repetition proves to be the most valuable tool. My first teacher would tell me to play a piece five times. I was really counting those five times. Despite being lazy with my second teacher, I started studying Mozart and Viotti Concertos. I realized that repetition five times didn't work. When my mom shockingly told me that I would be watching babies while my sister gave concerts, I started to practice much harder, longer and in a concentrated way. When you decide this is the road you have to go on you become much more focused. For example, when you are reading a book sometimes you can't remember what you just read. The same thing happens with music practice if you are not paying attention. You play a passage or a page and can say afterward what was it that I just studied! You space out. When you concentrate for one hour it's much better than 3 hours of not concentrating. You get more tired after the one hour of concentrated effort.

DID YOUR MOM HELP YOU WITH DAILY PRACTICE?

She couldn't help me musically but she was always there to help me and support me in every way she knew how. She made sure that I practiced. She used to tape lessons. She played these on the way home from the lesson, even when I was eating, etc. She'd also use the lesson tape as an alarm clock or signal for "time to practice."

HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO GO TO JUILLIARD AT AGE 13?

My mother was at the Young People's Concert in March of 1983. She saw one of Ms. DeLay's students, Charlie Kim, whom she thought was just wonderful. So my mom gave the

tape of my recital at age 12 to Ms. DeLay. She played the tape and said that I should come to Aspen. There Ms. DeLay told me that I could start learning Vieuxtemps #5. In two weeks I learned the whole concerto and memorized it. Ms. DeLay was very impressed and she started paying attention to me.

THAT IS AMAZING!

My mom told me that I always liked to do things very well. When I learned ice skating, I wanted to be a professional ice skater. When I took swimming lessons I wanted to be a professional. I remember in elementary school I enjoyed myself thoroughly. When I work, I work hard and when I play, I play hard. I have passion for many things.

HOW DID YOU LEARN TO PRACTICE BY YOURSELF?

With the right guidance from the teacher the student discovers his own way of practicing. I also asked many questions of others, musicians and conductors. I wanted to know what they thought of the pieces. I wanted to learn from them. Be a student forever. There is so much to learn. Music has incredible depth. The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.

HOW DID YOU PRACTICE WHEN YOU WERE AT JUILLIARD?

I did scales and bow technique, and etude like Paganini's. Then I worked on pieces from different periods, such as Bach, a sonata or a short piece and a concerto. Three, four hours were not enough, so some days I had to concentrate on one thing more than others. You need a plan or strategy before you start practicing. Plan your day. Don't try to do too much. It could be overwhelming. Take one thing at a time. If you have a lot of concerts coming up, just think one concert at a time.

HOW DO YOU PRACTICE NOW?

I have precious little time to practice now, so I have to concentrate more than ever. Recently I had to learn Penderecki Concerto #2 which is probably the most difficult violin repertoire ever. I had never played anything that difficult previously. His composition received two Grammys this year. I was very honored that he asked me to play his piece. I had only three weeks to learn the piece. I practiced eight hours a day and some days I hardly set foot outside the door. It took every practicing technique I had learned, such as repetition, intonation note by note, practicing in rhythms and with a metronome, playing it through, etc. I did that the first two weeks. It was a technically impossible piece. So I said, "The first week I am going to do this much, take 2 pages a day..." It took a good 2 weeks to figure out the piece. Then I put some depth and emotion into it. You had to feel comfortable technically to bring out the calm feeling at

Interview With Chee-Yun

certain places. Even slow passages were extremely difficult. After that piece, every piece became a piece of cake. I also practice a lot in my head now. I solve problems in my head and use jogging or swimming time to memorize a page or two. With music in my head, time goes by faster.

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PRACTICE?

Concentration, setting goals and planning. With a goal and plan set before you start, it gives you a great sense of accomplishment when you finish practice for the day. Set a goal and really go for it. You be amazed at how much you can actually do. You do not know how much you can do until you do it.

WHEN YOU ARE NOT TRAVELLING, HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU PRACTICE?

I don't go by hours any more. I go by what kind of repertoire is coming up and how many different concertos I have to prepare. When I am home I more or less try to get physically fit for the next tour.

HOW LONG DO YOU PRACTICE AT A STRETCH?

No more than an hour. I then take a 10-minute break and stretch my muscles. That's something I learned late and I paid for it. Once I had to cancel three months of concerts because I had no strength left in my arms. I was under a lot of stress, having to do and prepare so much. I never warmed up and just kept going. First it started with pain in the neck area. Then it went down and my wrist and fingers hurt. Now I do a lot of stretching before, during and after a practice session. Don't overdo it but just enough to feel the stretch. If I do all the stretches it could take 45 minutes. Afterwards I feel like I had a body massage.

WHOM DO YOU CONSULT WHEN INJURIES OCCUR?

A physical therapist, Dr. Russel Foley in Atlanta Georgia, is really amazing. I can't think of a better person. He gave me exercises and stretches that really helped. This made a huge difference. I can't even tell you how big of a difference it made. When you are performing over 100 concerts a year, you have to treat yourself as an athlete. Warming up with scales is not an adequate warm-up, you have to warm up all your muscles.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE PERFORMANCE ANXIETIES?

Stage fright is something everybody has. I have incredible stage fright. I constantly doubt myself but you know what? It gets easier. First of all, I accept the fact that I have stage fright. Then I tell myself that I've faced it before. I've prepared and there's nothing more I can do. I just have to go for it. You can't "go for it," though, unless you are prepared.

You build confidence with experience. It's very important for a performer to have guts and to be able to show what you have from the stage. When you are performing on stage, you must have a plan in your head, a so-called master plan on how the concert should go. When you are practicing and preparing, imagine yourself on stage. Without such planning you could be distracted on stage. All of a sudden someone's shoe could make you think about something else. While practicing, pick spots where you really focus. While you are performing you can say, "Oh, the spot is coming up so I have to really focus." If there are spots you feel insecure about, you have to calm down and tell yourself that you will not get through this passage unless you play every single note, even if it's a little slow. When you come to an insecure spot there is the tendency to rush and hope no one notices. Actually you should do the opposite. You have to be more expressive.

WHAT DO YOU DO ON THE DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE?

In the morning, I do a relaxed and slow practice, followed by a couple of play-throughs. Playing through is very important for a performance. I also try to review backwards, starting from the third movement. For lunch I eat easily digested food, more carbohydrates than protein and non-spicy food, for example. After lunch I take a rest for about 30 to 45 minutes. I have dinner after the concerts and just have a banana or two before the concert. Right before the performance I work on the first three pages and most importantly the first page. You are most nervous at the beginning and you must start well. The first note is important. People remember the first page and the last. Some don't practice right before the concert, but I practice just the first page.

ANY WORDS OF WISDOM FOR BUDDING MUSICIANS?

Enjoy, have fun and take it one day at a time. You have a whole life ahead of you. Take one project at a time. Ask the teacher a lot of questions because your instructor is not a mind reader. Aim at open communication and a good relationship with your teacher. Do your best each day.

HOW DO YOU JUGGLE MARRIAGE AND SUCH A BUSY PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

It's a never ending honeymoon (laughter). Everything can be balanced, if it's done with love, understanding and respect for one another. This has to be taught by parents. My husband is in a surgical residency. He's consumed by his profession and is always busy. He loves music and loves what I do. He's very encouraging and supports my career.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR LEISURE TIME?

I love going to the movies and going out to eat. I like to take walks with my husband, shopping, talking to friends and family on the phone, going to concerts? I don't sit around.

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Interview With Chee-Yun

WHAT FUTURE PLANS DO YOU HAVE?

I'd like to teach. I have one student now. She started playing violin only five years ago and has been with me for three years. She wants to be a professional musician and is auditioning for Juilliard.

DO YOU HAVE ANY GOALS THAT YOU HOPE TO REACH?

Enjoy every moment. See everyday as a good day.

A PIANO TEACHER WITH 30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN L.A. WITH MULTI-ETHNIC STUDENTS, ONCE TOLD ME THAT KOREAN STUDENTS WERE THE BEST AND THAT KOREAN MOMS WERE NOT. WOULD YOU PLEASE SAY A FEW WORDS TO THE MOTHERS OF YOUNG MUSICIANS?

Music is not an end in itself, but a means to procuring happiness and success in life. We must respect children as special human beings. Parents must try not to live their ambitions through their children. It's dangerous. It will only create hatred. We have to let a child grow up and become a person first. We must treat children as children. We have to guide them with patience and unconditional love. Korean

parents must realize also that what makes a person happy and successful is not criticism or scolding but lots of honest praise and genuine encouragement.

RECENTLY I READ IN THE SUZUKI JOURNAL AN ARTICLE BY A FATHER WHO WAS HELPED BY ADVICE YOU GAVE HIM AFTER A MASTERCLASS. I WAS VERY PROUD OF YOU, A FELLOW KOREAN. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO DO A MASTERCLASS FOR THE YOUNG KOREAN MUSICIANS OF THE BAY AREA?

Yes, I'd love to do it.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP SO MANY MUSICIANS THROUGH BENEFIT CONCERTS, GIVING ADVICE THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND MASTERCLASSES. WE, AT KAMSA, WISH TO THANK YOU AND WISH YOU CONTINUED SUCCESS IN ALL YOUR ENDEAVORS.

Thank you.

KAMSA gratefully acknowledges the Entire Printing Co. for donation of the printing service.

