

Encore!: Homecoming Recitals in Christian South Korea

Nicholas Harkness

“Homecoming Recitals” (kwiguk tokch’anghoe) in South Korea are events in which singers of European-style classical music, after having studied and worked professionally abroad, return home and are integrated into the social and musical life of Seoul. This article explores what appear to be blatant contradictions in the key elements of the recital. Although the recitals are presented as public events and the singers as professionals, the audience consists almost entirely of persons related to the singer through kinship, school, or church. And although the recitals consist of secular art and operatic music, they almost always end with an encore featuring a Christian hymn or song. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research in the churches and colleges of music in Seoul, I explain how these seemingly contradictory elements, in fact, work together in the ritual function of the recital, which I argue is to manage the transition from “abroad” to “home” by producing transformative effects for both performer and audience.

AN OSTENSIBLY PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

During one of my first visits to South Korea to conduct early fieldwork on cultural conceptualizations and practices of voice, I traveled around Seoul to visit various colleges of music and performance halls.¹ At both I found rows of glossy flyers and professionally designed posters advertising the solo recitals of musicians who recently had returned home from study and professional work abroad. Most of these posters were for singers of European-style classical singing, called “*sōngak*” in Korean. The ubiquity of these flyers and the frequency of these recitals seemed to suggest a robust, thriving audience for this type of music.

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I had originally traveled to Seoul to find out why South Korea was producing so many successful singers of European-style classical music. I had noticed that Korean singers regularly swept conservatory auditions and competitions in the United States and Europe, and so I assumed that in South Korea there must be some sort of thriving culture of connoisseurship for *sōngak* singing and perhaps classical music more broadly.² But I would discover that the social life of *sōngak* singing in South Korea, far more so than classical orchestral or piano music, was most centrally located in and anchored to the church. I found that the *sōngak* voice itself served as an emblem of South Korean Christian personhood framed by a specifically Christian aesthetic of progress.³ This pervasive Christianization of *sōngak* as a semiotic register—a cultural model of social action associated with stereotypical persons and values⁴—was reflected in the professed religious beliefs of my informants in Seoul. I found that at least four out of five of the singers I interviewed were self-identified Protestant Christians (with most of the remaining singers being Catholic), while only approximately half of the other instrumentalists claimed some sort of church affiliation. Furthermore, *sōngak* singers generally thought the percentage of singers who were Christian was even higher, around 99 percent. They perceived the practice of *sōngak* in South Korea as basically—or ideally—a Christian practice, even when the music was secular and it took place beyond the institutional boundaries of the church. But at the time of this early fieldwork in 2006, my awareness of the important sociocultural link between seemingly secular *sōngak* performances and the cultivation of the *sōngak* voice in South Korean Christianity was still only developing.

I finally attended my first homecoming recital in early 2008, while conducting long-term research in Seoul.⁵ The week of the performance, I went to the box office of the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts, one of Seoul's premiere performance spaces, to purchase a ticket. The young woman behind the counter was noticeably surprised to see me there, but she happily sold me a ticket to a recital for the coming weekend. When I told her that it was my first time buying a ticket for a homecoming recital, she laughed and responded that it was her first time selling a single ticket for a homecoming recital. I asked her how could that be, since there were as many as four or five each week at the Sejong Center's recital hall alone. She explained that in the few months that she had been working at the center no one had come in to buy an individual ticket for a homecoming recital. Rather, right after scheduling a recital, usually a few people—the performer among them—bought up rows of tickets in advance.

When I arrived at the chamber hall later that week, the ticket-seller's surprise made more sense to me. Many of the people waiting in the lobby seemed to know one another. Most of them stood in large groups, greeted the people who arrived (not me, however), and many addressed or referred to one another with kin terms or other institutional titles. When I walked into the lobby, it was clear that I had entered not a public event, exactly, but something more intimate and closed. And as I sat in the auditorium, waiting for the seats to fill up and finally realizing that

they would not, I noticed something else: with fewer than a hundred people in a hall that seated at least three or four hundred, this was not the event that the marketing materials seemed to me to have been selling. The performance was not presented as the aesthetic object of a connoisseur's attention or as a public display of art music for anyone inclined to hear it. The singer had not simply thought to "put on a show and see who shows up."⁶ This was a more intimate performance, in which a returning singer presented herself as a *professional* singer to her family, friends, and institutional relations.

At the intermission, I asked some teenagers seated nearby how they knew the performer. They responded that they did not know her personally, but that someone who did know her had given them tickets. Others responded that they knew the singer through church, that they were acquainted with one of her parents, or that they were studying with the singer's former voice teacher. It seemed that most members of the audience were there because they either knew the singer or had been given free tickets by someone who did.

During the performance, older adults talked loudly with one another, teens texted on their mobile phones and giggled, and some small children even crawled around in the aisles—much to the irritation of the ushers who pleaded with the parents to take control of their kids. For approximately one hour, the sparse audience seemed to suffer patiently through the recital of European works in four languages by composers such as Handel, Meyerbeer, Berg, Poulenc, and Tchaikovsky, paying little attention to the events on stage.

Until the end, that is. After the singer had finished the final piece in her program, members of the audience stood from their seats and shouted "Encore!" at the top of their lungs.⁷ Others whistled and yelled "bravo!" [*sic*]. The singer remained on stage and, after the noise died down, began to sing a twentieth-century Korean melody composed by Im Kŭngsu (b. 1949) to a poem by Song Kilcha (b. 1942) titled "As if Spring Were Coming across the River" (*Kang kōnnō pom i odūt*). After she had sung the final phrases, the crowd again broke into animated applause and called for another encore. This time the soprano sang a Christian hymn, "Nae yōnghon ūi kŭŭkhi kip'ŭn tesō," translated from the nineteenth-century American hymn by Warren D. Cornell, "Far Away in the Depths of My Spirit." The refrain went as follows:

P'yōnghwa, p'yōnghwaroda
 Hanŭl wi esō naeryōne,
 Kŭ sarang ūi mulgyōl i yōngwōn t'orok
 Nae yōnghon ūl tōp'ūsosō.

Peace, O Peace
 Coming down from Heaven,
 With waves of love forever,
 Cover my soul.⁸

A hush came over the audience. Adults stopped talking, teenagers stopped texting, parents embraced their children. The audience's full attention was on the singer. Some people closed their eyes, bowed their heads, and clasped their hands together. After the hymn, the audience again broke into ecstatic applause, but this time without any calls for another encore. It was as if they knew that this was the end, as if the Christian hymn obviously signaled the end of the event.

The audience filed out into the lobby and waited for the singer to emerge. People waited to greet her, to bestow flowers upon her, and to have their picture taken with her by a man in a dark suit, who appeared to be a professional photographer hired to document the event. Before leaving, each of us was instructed to take a small pink bag from the ticket counter. Inside was a small piece of chewy rice cake (*ttōk*), wrapped in a ribbon, a gift to thank us for attending.

As I would come to realize, everything about this particular homecoming recital was representative of the performance genre overall, from the location of the performance, to the selection of repertoire, to the extensive publicity, to the Christian hymn offered (and expected) as an encore. Of the numerous recitals I attended in 2008 and of the dozens of recitals described by my informants, I saw only one and heard of only a few in which a Christian hymn was not sung at the end. So I asked myself: Why the professional show for an event that was so clearly personal? And why a Christian hymn as an encore for a seemingly secular event?

This apparent contradiction is the starting point for this article. In the analysis that follows, I show how these various aspects of the performance event—both personal and professional, both religious and secular—are intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the ritual function of the recital. To do so, I give an ethnographically grounded account of the sociocultural work that goes into creating and maintaining an audience for such performances of *sōngak* in Seoul. I follow by addressing the problem of “homecoming” itself and discussing the kinds of biographical transformations that take place as these singers train and work abroad. Finally, I draw on a semiotically informed anthropology of communication to “read” the ritual as a poetically structured text that brings together these two kinds of groups—performers and audiences—to produce transformative effects for both.⁹

My analysis hinges on the role and placement of the Christian encore sung in Korean in a public performance hall. By ritually mapping the transition from abroad to home, from foreign to familiar, and from secular to Christian, the hymn as an encore in this setting casts the entire event as thoroughly Christian and thoroughly Korean. In fact, *sōngak* singing in South Korea *is* Christian, in the sense that the vast majority of performers and audiences are linked one to another through churches.¹⁰ The homecoming recital highlights this basic socio-cultural fact by presenting the performer as a public professional and presenting the mostly Christian audience of intimate and institutional relations to itself as the general Korean public for this kind of music.

THE PROFESSIONAL SINGER

As any classical musician working in South Korea will tell you, there really is not a classical music market there comparable to what one would find in Europe or the United States. Despite the large number of Korean musicians represented in conservatories and performing arts organizations around the world, concert halls in Seoul are often empty.¹¹ So why were these events advertised if no one bought tickets from the box office? Why were there so many of them if the audience seemed only to consist of family and friends? Why did they take place in large, public recital halls if the audience did not fill even half of the seats? Why did the whole event have the show of an overtly public occasion if this was so clearly not the case?

At one level, the recital serves as a fairly straightforward ritual reincorporation of a singer into South Korean society after an extended period of socially enforced separation and transition abroad. Singers have to study abroad partly in order to find steady employment at home. The homecoming recital is, in itself, an originary act in the biographical life of an individual singer: by aiding in the transition from student to professional, the recital is a practical enactment of the social permission granted to the returning singer to present his or her individual self as the primary focus of public performance. The vast majority of students and professionals of *sōngak* are, as I have mentioned, Protestant Christians, and most of their early performance opportunities are in the context of the various churches where they sing. Before leaving South Korea, a singer's personhood qua singer is defined primarily by the singer's place in the discipleship structures of church and school, and the use of the singing voice is more or less restricted to these institutions and oriented to these institutional interests. In both of these sites, the singer sings "through" an institution, or the institution "through" the singer, as it were; the personhood of the singer is inhabitable in terms of the particular institutional models of discipleship.¹² In churches and music schools, singers vocalize for captive audiences, where attention is presupposed by participation in events such as practical exams or church services. More than merely celebrating the return of a musician to South Korea following advanced study or work abroad, the homecoming recital inaugurates an individual into the professional music circuit of the city.¹³ In so doing, it effectively baptizes singers as professionals in South Korea by presenting them as authorized to perform beyond these two institutions. This baptism thus delivers singers into a role in South Korean society different from the one they occupied when they left.

At another level, the recital transforms not only the singer, but also the audience. The recital brings members of explicit institutions—especially families, schools, and churches—into a public space and recruits them to a public ritual that, in its organization *prima facie*, does not seem to address an institutional or subcultural audience.¹⁴ However, people usually show up to a homecoming recital out of personal obligation to the performer and wait patiently until it is over. And

through the structuring of the recital, members in attendance become engaged in a ritual performance as members of an emergent sociological grouping. For a durationally restricted period, it transforms a grouping of individuals—who may be strangers to one another but are related socially to the performer through institutional ties—into an idealized public for *sōngak* singing in South Korea. However, as I will show, this is achieved not through the scripted portion of the recital (i.e., what is listed in the program) but rather through the audience's participation in and reception of an encore. A Christian encore—usually a hymn—is offered to the audience as a performance explicitly for them, in which they, as a specific subgroup, can participate, while the performance context is presented as potentially for everyone, to which the general public is invited.

The programmed portion of the recital features little, if any, Christian content. Programmed Christian content in homecoming recitals is thoroughly secularized as “academic music” or “art music” and, with the exception of selections from Handel's *Messiah* and a few other pieces, is rarely performed in South Korean churches or other religious settings. But during the encore, the Christian hymn is understood to be deeply and completely Christian, relevant to the faith and religious practices of the singer and most of the audience, and framed as the culmination of the performance. Unlike the rest of the recital, the encore presents precisely those songs that one does hear in churches throughout South Korea. The use of public performance halls for homecoming recitals allows the performer to use the encore to characterize the secular content of the recital as a form of music that is ultimately in the service of Christianity, while presenting a group of Christians to itself as the general public for this secular music. In so doing, the ritual performance surreptitiously characterizes modern South Korean Christianity as an inherent quality of modern South Korean publicity. That is, from the perspective of South Korean Christianity and some of their most public representatives, *sōngak* singers, the homecoming recital ritually enacts a contemporary South Korean public as it should be: unmarked, generalized, normative, and thoroughly Christian.

BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

The homecoming recital is a big deal. For most singers, it will be the first time they have ever given a solo recital in their home country. If a singer had completed a master's degree in South Korea before going abroad, he or she would have given a solo graduation recital on campus for family and friends. But homecoming recitals take place outside of universities, in one of the professional recital halls in Seoul, usually the Sejong Center, the Seoul Arts Center, or Yongsan Art Hall each of which seats 300 to 500. Unlike graduation recitals, homecoming recitals have the appearance of “real” concerts, with the full package of tickets, ushers, programs, and marketing materials. Although the concert generates no revenue

for the singer, because singers purchase their own tickets from the concert hall and give them away as gifts (which are actually requests for attendance), the performance is treated as a real professional recital. If the homecoming recital does not appear to be of professional quality, the singer is not considered a professional, and the performance loses its legitimacy.

Seasoned professional singers in South Korea, like many other performers, know that they must have a dense and expansive network of social relations in order to perform on stage. While artistic experience and accomplishments are important for receiving roles in operas and concerts, the most important factor is the guarantee that a singer can generate an audience by ensuring that someone will purchase tickets. Because there is virtually no consumer market for vocal performances of secular classical music, soloists are usually hired based on their own individual ability to generate ticket sales. This comes down to two main factors: their social relations and their personal finances. Singers who perform widely in South Korea, therefore, usually have faculty positions, are affiliated with large churches (with tens of thousands of members), and have family money. As Chiyōng, a mezzo-soprano, who had studied in Italy and also happened to be my neighbor, put it plainly: since the differences between singers' abilities in South Korea are "paper-thin" (*chongi han chang ch'ai*), if someone wants to reach the "A-class" (*eigūp eik'ŭllaesŭ*), there are only two methods: have either extremely powerful connections or extremely large amounts of money.¹⁵

Singers who have just returned to Seoul are expected to fund their own homecoming recitals, which can cost as much as ten million *wŏn* (approximately \$8,000).¹⁶ They rent the space, which can cost upwards of five million *wŏn* (approximately \$4,000) depending on the day and time of the recital. They guarantee ticket sales by purchasing the tickets themselves and giving them out to family and friends. Attendees are not expected to purchase tickets. A piano accompanist in the music department of Seoul National University (SNU) gasped when I told her I had purchased tickets to attend the homecoming recitals of people I did not know personally. She said she had never purchased a ticket for a homecoming recital and suggested that in the future I go to the box office and simply announce that I had been invited. (Another singer actually tried to pay me back for the ticket I had purchased for his recital. I refused his money, of course.) The point, she said, is not to make money; the point is to give a recital. When I asked why homecoming recitals were not simply free, she told me that it would be impossible because it would not seem professional.

Although a sufficient amount of money is a prerequisite for putting on a homecoming recital, money alone does not guarantee a place in a concert hall. One must supply credentials to the booking office to prove one is certified to perform in the space. A singer has to prove their qualifications by listing all of their institutions of training, degrees, and competitions won. This information is also included on the marketing materials and concert program, which list the achievements of a singer like a professional curriculum vitae. Singers also

have to supply the names of faculty members and other established singers to the concert hall as references. In addition to renting the hall and purchasing the tickets, singers pay a service to prepare the materials (a photo shoot, posters, and program design) for the recital and to distribute the marketing collateral to appropriate spaces (in the concert hall itself, in the respective schools the singer might have attended, mailers to friends and family, etc.). This portion of the recital can also cost around five million *wŏn*. The name of the service usually is listed on the posters and program as an “arts management” agency, such as Youngeum Arts Management (*Yŏngŭm Yesul Kihoeok*).

If a singer has been gone for many years, much is expected of their return. The production of the recital—which indexes the enormous price tag of the event and of the singer’s education as a whole—presents the constant threat of what Erving Goffman called a “false front.”¹⁷ That is, before the actual recital, the marketing materials depict singers dressed in tuxedos and ball gowns, elegant Romanized fonts display the names of famous European composers, and posters feature other images of luxury and grandeur, suggesting a personal history of professional accomplishment in the world that may or may not be based on reality. The homecoming recital is a ritual of authorization, and the attendees, particularly other singers, are continually asking themselves and one another “whether or



Figure 1. Display of marketing flyers for recitals at Yongsan Art Hall. More than half are for homecoming recitals.

not the performer is authorized to give the performance in question and are not [always] primarily concerned with the actual performance itself.”¹⁸ There is the persistent danger of singers appearing as imposters if they do not meet the vocal standards commensurate with the event design.

This is exactly what happened on one occasion in May 2008. I accompanied a group of fourth-year students from a prominent voice department to the homecoming recital of a soprano, their *sōnbae*, who had graduated from the department many years before. The recital took place at Seoul Arts Center in Kangnam and was highly anticipated by all of the attendees with whom I spoke. There were more people in attendance for this recital than I had ever seen at any other. Unlike most homecoming recitals, which generally fill fewer than half the seats of a recital hall, all of the seats were filled. I found it curious at the time that a number of members of the faculty had also shown up, including the head of the department. Presumably, not all of these professors could have been the recitalist’s instructors. A part-time lecturer in the department took me aside as we were congregating in the lobby and said, “She [the singer] has attended the most expensive schools, the Paris Conservatory, the Milan Conservatory, Peabody. She had better be good.”

The soprano’s performance failed to please the students. They whispered that the performer was “holding” her voice (*moksori rŭl chapta*) and that her tongue seemed to be “stiff” (*ttaktakhada*). After a stretch of English songs, some of these students were critical of her diction and questioned, jokingly, whether she was really singing in English at all. Soon, students took out their phones and began texting their friends out of boredom. However, after the recital ended and the singer had emerged from the hall into the lobby to greet her audience, the professors were first in line to congratulate her. One professor cut through the crowd to introduce a visiting professor from the Eastman School of Music (United States), who was in Seoul to give master classes (for which the students would pay a great deal of money). I left the concert with a bass in his fourth year of college. As soon as we had left the performing arts complex and crossed the street, he looked around carefully and then began to criticize the performance. I asked him why everyone—not just family but students and faculty as well—had given her such warm and generous praise. He answered that she was very rich, and therefore powerful. I asked him how he knew. He chuckled and replied, “Because there were so many people at her recital.”

Of course, not all singers have the kind of power mentioned above. After years of private payments to voice teachers, master classes, competition entry fees, self-funded mission trips overseas, summer workshops in Europe, extended study abroad, and monetary gifts to teachers, the homecoming recital is in some sense a final payment for the right to be a professional singer in South Korea. But its cost, after all of that payment, is sometimes too much for the singer or the singer’s family to afford out-of-pocket. This is where a different kind of relationship of debt-obligation comes in, specifically anchored in gift exchange.

As with other areas of South Korean society, the most common intersection of gift exchange with the recital is manifest in the informal favors that friends and acquaintances do for one another. For example, a person who works in a company or owns a store might buy a handful of tickets for the recital of a friend's son or daughter and invite (or oblige) his or her employees to attend the recital. Another person might buy a floral wreath (*hwahwan*) to be displayed in front of the recital hall (figure 2). These wreaths are congratulatory flower displays that are endemic to recitals, store openings, funerals, and other major life transitions. The parents of the singer will be expected to reciprocate in the future with a similar kind of gift, or simply by compelling their singer-child to perform in some capacity for the person on the receiving end, such as at a private function.

The extent and form of reciprocation depends on the relations of the persons involved and their capacity to reciprocate.¹⁹ Given that the vast majority of classically trained *sōngak* singers in South Korea belong to and sing in Christian churches, reciprocal relations are commonly established through the church. Many of my informants talked about the role of *p'umasi* among church consociates. *P'umasi* refers to a form of labor exchange, originating from a form of cooperative village organization.²⁰ Church members might be able to recruit the singer to perform for a church function, give lessons, or supply the labor of their own student disciples for some evangelical activity. This term (*p'umasi*) would generally come up when singers explained how the majority of the audience at their own or others' recitals were made up of fellow church members.²¹ As I will show in the following section, the influence of the church does not end at its social relations; Christianity itself is, in fact, central to the way the homecoming recital functions.

On the one hand, this has to do with the associations most audience members make between *sōngak* and Christianity, and, on the other, it has to do with the singer's own feeling of "return" as being a transition from being a performer of secular art music abroad who is also a Christian, to being at home as a Christian singer of vocal music trained in *sōngak*. It is to this biographical transformation of the singer abroad that I now turn.

TRANSFORMATIONS ABROAD

What does it mean to come home? The homecoming recital does not merely mark the end of study or work abroad; it is an event in which one must have something to show for the time spent abroad. With all of the money and labor that goes into the recital, the stakes are high to convince an audience of its merit and legitimacy. Furthermore, it is absolutely necessary for making an appropriate transition home, just as going abroad is absolutely necessary for being able to work at home at all.

When students begin university studies in voice, they know they will have to go abroad.²² As I was told repeatedly, it is practically impossible to gain employ-



Figure 2. Flower wreath (*hwahwan*) for a homecoming recital. The Korean *Han'gŭl* on the left lists the name of the person and the organization giving the wreath. The Hancha on the right reads, “Congratulations on your homecoming recital.”

ment as a voice teacher at a university—whether as full-time faculty or part-time lecturer—without a degree from a conservatory abroad. It is practically impos-

sible to reserve performance space in a concert hall or to successfully audition for a professional solo part without a degree from abroad. Indeed, it is practically impossible to be treated as a professional without a foreign degree.²³

Although numerous vocal performances take place at music departments all over Seoul, a central purpose of schools of music is to generate and regiment discipleship relationships between students and their teachers.²⁴ The role of vocal cultivation at school has two basic functions. First, the pedagogical mission of the college of music is focused on reproducing the faculty's vocal technique and style in the students. Second, its vocational purpose is to prepare students to audition for further study and performance abroad. Often, students use their discipleship relationships at school to gain part-time work at churches, whether through a professor's recommendation, or under the auspices of the professor him or herself. But the vocal training that one receives in Seoul—even from its most prestigious departments—does not qualify one to be a public singer of *sōngak*.

While the church operates as an important site of training for young singers and exposure for older singers, singing in church is nonetheless not considered serious professional work. Paid engagements taking place in, or explicitly facilitated by, the church are understood to be “work” (*il*), but are clearly marked as “part-time” work (*arūbait'ū*), not professional work. Unlike in the United States and Europe, churches are not usually viewed as potential recital spaces for secular performances of classical music, so professional recitals almost never take place there. While secular music might be performed in a church, it is presented as a part of a church-oriented event (a fundraiser or church talent show), and is usually framed by a sermon and group prayer.

Abroad, classically trained South Korean singers far exceed other foreign singers in number and prestige at many conservatories and international competitions. Yet despite achieving success at conservatories and competitions that could propel them into an international career, most classically trained Korean singers return to Seoul—which quite often is their plan from the beginning. In Seoul's local performing arts industry, adequate certification takes precedence in qualifying a singer for a job in performance or teaching. The conservatory name and the number and prestige of competitions won can make an enormous difference in a singer's employability in South Korea.²⁵

Singers who have studied and worked professionally abroad generally describe two simultaneous developments taking place during this time: technical and affective development. Suyōn, a key informant, was working as a lecturer in voice at a few universities in Seoul and as a conductor of a church choir. When I met her, she had recently returned to Seoul from Germany, where she had spent four years studying and working as a singer. Suyōn had originally gone to Germany to be with her husband, who was at that time also studying voice in Berlin. Before going to Germany, she had been a top soprano in a prominent voice department in Seoul. However, when she arrived in Germany, the faculty at conservatories there told her that her singing method would ruin

her voice. She explained to me how she spent one year in Germany studying privately with a teacher before she auditioned again for conservatories there. During the first six months of these private lessons, the teacher would not allow her to sing anything except *glissandi* (smooth glides from one pitch to another) on “pure” Italian vowels (/e/, /i/, /a/, /o/, /u/). This, she explained, helped her “let go” of her dependence on hearing the sound of her own voice, which she had been taught to do in South Korea, and to focus instead on the processual “feeling” of singing. After auditioning successfully, Suyŏn spent the rest of her time in Münster and Freiburg studying and practicing the physiological and acoustic aspects of vocal sound production to ensure that she could “protect” her own voice and the voices of her students.²⁶

Singers usually describe the affective dimensions of vocal transition abroad as a transition from “singing notes” (*ŭmjŏng ŭl naeda*) to “making music” (*ŭmak ŭl yŏnjuhada*). They cite as fundamental their increased attention to the harmonic structure of a musical composition and their role within it, their more intense emotional commitment to the denotational text being sung in a foreign language, their feeling of close connection to others in an ensemble, and especially their newly formed relationship to an audience based on a common appreciation for music being performed in a secular context. Singers attribute the success of this transition to interaction with new teachers and peers and also give a great deal of credit to the audiences composed of eager fans of classical vocal music—something they had not experienced before leaving South Korea.

Singers often told me that there were three kinds of audiences in South Korea: one group comprising nonsingers who are brought to a performance via other social relations and therefore indifferent to the classical vocal music being performed; the “masses” who are only interested in hearing the “hits” and tend to resist anything new or different; and another, smaller group comprising trained singers who are likely to be critical of others’ voices. In contrast, they told me that audiences in Europe and the United States comprised grateful music-lovers with whom they could form an artistic, affectively charged relationship through performance.

Singers often described their own process of becoming music-lovers themselves by recognizing the presence of and singing for audiences of connoisseurs. In an interview I conducted in Berlin in 2007, the world-famous South Korean bass, Youn Kwangchul (Yŏn Kwangch’ŏl) admitted to me that until the year 2000, well after he had started his professional international music career, he still continued to think mostly about the technical aspects of the voice during performances. He said that after singing with many professional colleagues and for many appreciative audiences in Germany and throughout the world, he finally realized that “the voice is really just pure material. You have to make music with it.” (*Die Stimme ist ja ein reines Material. Damit muss man musizieren.*)²⁷

Singers also often report that their voices deteriorate or suffer when they return to South Korea. As the mezzo-soprano Chiyŏng explained:

Mostly we went abroad and returned after being recognized for excellence, but eighty percent of us, after two or three years pass, find our throats gradually worn “down” [taun] because of these factors. Yes. So we have to be cautious.²⁸

My informants attributed the deterioration of voices to numerous causes. They complained that singers must also teach in South Korea in order to earn a living and build a network of disciples and that teaching wears out the voice. They told me that most performance spaces have poor acoustics, so singers need a microphone to sing, which negatively affects a technique honed to amplify without a microphone in the proper acoustic environment. If singers want to perform, they said, they have to sing the same repertoire over and over again, which makes the voice “stiff” and restricts development; singers “tune” their voices to the expectations of their audiences, and South Korean audiences want “big,” “loud” voices (*k’ŭn sori*) regardless of the repertoire and despite the poor acoustics. And the very culture of the stage was also an issue: they told me that colleagues on South Korean stages often try to out-sing one another, despite the singer’s dictum that the biggest voices on stage often resonate the least well in a theater.

Suyŏn also described her experience of involuntarily shifting back to vocal habits she thought she had left behind in Seoul. For example, in the spring of 2008, Suyŏn was involved in a concert at the Sŏngnam Arts Center, a massive arts complex in Bundang, a wealthy suburb south of Seoul. The program consisted of Gustav Mahler’s *Das Irdische Leben* for soprano and orchestra and his Fourth Symphony. *Das Irdische Leben* is sung in the voice of a starving child calling out to his mother for bread. The child dies. The fourth movement of the symphony contains *Das Himmlische Leben*, a poem written from the perspective of a child who describes heaven and a feast of saints. As is common in Seoul, the concert itself was presented as a cross between an educational event and a musical performance, and the young conductor, who had recently studied in Austria, gave a thirty-minute lecture about Mahler before the concert.²⁹

For weeks before the concert Suyŏn expressed doubts and anxiety regarding the performance. Mahler orchestras are usually large and demand a very powerful, “heavy” voice to penetrate the thick orchestration. A soubrette or “light” soprano of her type is not normally cast to sing such music, even if the part represents the voice of a child.³⁰ But the conductor had asked her to do it, and she accepted, feeling unable to turn down such a request. At the concert, the audience occupied, at most, 100 of the approximately 1000 seats in the hall. Suyŏn and I had been singing together for months by this point, and we knew one another’s voices well. I noticed that the timbre of her voice was different from what I had heard on earlier occasions. Throughout most of her singing, she was able to project enough to be audible above the orchestra, and her German diction was extremely clear, but her voice seemed tense and strained. When she was not singing, her face expressed discomfort, and I saw her rotating her jaw and tongue to moisten her mouth and throat.

About ten members from the church choir were in attendance. The day following the performance, when Suyŏn arrived at choir rehearsal, she was obviously upset. She spoke to the choir about the concert and lamented the poor acoustics and the lack of rehearsal time. On my way home, I received a text message from her, thanking me for coming to the concert. She wrote that she had not been able to manage the performance well because the tempo had been too quick. Despite the obvious mismatch between her voice and the repertoire, I wrote back and told her how touched I had been by her delivery of the pieces. Then she wrote back with the following:

Thank you. [*Han'gŭl letter representing laughter*] In Germany I always thought about emotions, about music, but in Korea I have begun to think first about the sound.³¹

Through many long discussions about this topic following the concert, I came to understand that Suyŏn saw her role as a singer and her voice itself as different when she sang in Germany and in South Korea. When she sang classical music in Germany, she told me she felt she was communicating emotion and musicality to her audience. She said she felt one of two things when she sang secular classical music in South Korea: she was either bringing “culture” to an audience as a part of an education model or was auditioning for critics who she saw as powerful judges in a competition.

For singers returning to South Korea, homecoming can be bittersweet. Despite celebrating their reunion with family and friends, they often report feeling let down by the fact that few people around them appreciate what they have accomplished overseas and what they are bringing back with them. The homecoming recital is supposed to be a triumphant concert that stands as a testament to their labors abroad. Yet there will be few in the audience who judge the performance by the same aesthetic standards as the singer. Returning singers see themselves as having undergone intense, sometimes painful psychological transitions: having been marked as cultural outsiders; having been told that the techniques learned in South Korea were backward and destructive; having been told that their pronunciation of Italian or German or English was poor and ethnically marked; having been told that they were not expressing the emotions required for the performance. Yet when they return home, they find that members of the audience have little appreciation for their training or experience. Rather, it is their certification and social connections that will draw a crowd.

Singers describe “abroad” as a place where, in the end, they were treated as professionals, as experts in their field, and worked independently among colleagues. They describe the homecoming as a return to a local hierarchy that has little to do with the craft of singing itself; they are “behind” (as *hubae*, juniors) or “prior to” (as *sŏnbae*, seniors) other singers by virtue of the year they entered the university. They are also reinserted once again into the role of disciple

(*cheja*) of their former teachers and must assume the duties of this role. They describe abroad as the place where audiences are quiet, attentive, and willing to pay; where concert halls are designed acoustically to support the unamplified vocal sound production methods of classical singing. They describe homecoming as a return to singing with microphones, over a chattering audience, in acoustically “dead” concert halls. One singer described her frustrating experience of having to sing for a luncheon of mostly male church elders while they slurped beef-rib soup (*kalbit’ang*). Despite the many positive things reported by my informants about the return home—the food, the family, the language, the general feeling of home—they bemoaned the practical challenges of being singers in South Korea and often cited the homecoming recital as their first experience of this difference.

Performances in South Korea can feel downright out-of-place for singers. For example, in 2008 Pak Chiyōng gave a solo performance at Seoul Station, a major railway station in Seoul. Her program consisted of both the classical Italian repertoire and Christian hymns. As she sang, dressed in a floor-length blue gown, her voice amplified by a microphone to cut through the din of her environment, passersby gathered around her to observe the spectacle. Some members of the impromptu audience approached her and, standing just feet away, pointed cameras at her open mouth.³² Public, free, variety-show-like performances tend to be the only places where strangers actually congregate on their own as an audience for classical music. And they serve as a stark contrast to the kind of performances Chiyōng and her husband, the tenor Chōng Chungsun, were used to in Italy, where they both studied and worked. Chiyōng graduated from Kyung Hee University (Kyōnghūi Taehakkyo) in Seoul and went on to study at the Conservatorio di Musica G. B. Martini in Bologna. Chungsun graduated from Chongshin University (Ch’ongsin Taehakkyo), a Presbyterian Christian college in Seoul, and then studied at the Conservatorio di Musica “Licinio Refice” in Frosinone, Italy. They spent nearly ten years studying and singing professionally in Italy and Germany before returning to South Korea. Abroad, they sang in resonant churches and concert halls, before appreciative audiences, where tuxedos and gowns were appropriate not merely to the music being performed but also to the context of the performance. Chiyōng’s performance in Seoul Station was a kind of transposition of the figure of the classical singer—and classical song—into a Korean context, where it underwent a semiotic transformation of cultural meaning.

When I asked Chungsun and Chiyōng about singing in South Korea after the homecoming, they cited the same problems others had raised and characterized performance contexts in South Korea as one of the main causes for “ruining,” “spoiling,” or “wasting” (*ssōkhida*) good voices. Chiyōng had explained to me that there are only three sites beyond church or school where singers could perform classical music beyond one’s own self-funded recitals: a public hall run by a government agency, an invitation-only party hosted by a corporation

or private organization, or a music event organized by a private agency for which tickets are sold. If members of governments or agencies put on a performance and publicize the event, then one has to sing what is requested of them. The sponsors of invitation-only events also have very clear expectations for repertoire. And musical events organized and publicized by private agencies, while providing the most flexibility of repertoire, often have the lowest turnout. Ticket prices are high, the music is often unfamiliar to “the masses” (*taejung*), and, Chiyŏng explained to me, members of the cast often have to sell or simply give away tickets to their friends and family.

The problem of audience (*kwan'gaek*) is recurrent in singers' lamentations about the performance culture of Seoul. Even with well-publicized events, the performers have to hand out tickets with the hope that some will purchase their tickets out of courtesy. If one hopes to capture and hold an audience's attention, they have to sing something familiar—which means they have to sing the same thing on almost every occasion:

For example, the case of the mezzo-soprano. . . . Among the songs for mezzo-soprano, “Habanera” is well known to people, you know. Therefore the sponsors of the performance request “Habanera.” . . . Constantly singing the same song and singing the same repertoire a lot hinder the development of classical singing after a singer's return. . . . If you sing German art songs or Italian art songs, you won't have an audience.³³

If these singers are to have an audience, they must cater to the demands of their audiences. And so there are a number of contradictions to be overcome in the homecoming recital. For the homecoming recital, the singer must, first of all, convince the audience of the legitimacy of the performance and its material. This means that the event must be presented as fully professional and public, consisting of foreign and somewhat inaccessible music, as well as something familiar, accessible, and locally authorized, for which the Christian encore is intended. But the performer must also manage the emotional conflict between the intimacy and comfort of home and the feeling of a professional downgrade that comes with leaving the performance contexts of Europe and the United States. This feeling is often first experienced in the affective distance singers feel from Korean audiences who are not easily moved by most classical European repertoire. It is further strengthened by the sense that one's voice is deteriorating through the repertoire demands and performance spaces of South Korea. The Christian encore helps resolve this dissonance. It is a semiotic genre that is comfortable to sing and deeply meaningful to both audience and performer—often expressing the very evangelical goals that led singers to study and perform *sŏngak* in the first place. Thus, the Christian encore, as an affective meeting place for both performer and audience, is emblematic of the “home” in homecoming, out of the wilderness and into the safe, familiar realm of intimate spirituality. In the final

section, I examine the transformative effects that this ritual arrangement has on both audience and performer.

THE RECITAL'S RITUAL FUNCTION

The homecoming recital can be seen as a semiotic text formed out of multiple intersections of time and space.³⁴ The biography of the individual singer is organized and presented in the recital program in terms of intersections of time and space that follow a remarkably consistent pattern. These intersections usually are invoked by the names of music schools, competitions, and performance contracts listed in the program. The dates and places begin in South Korea, where singers are prepared for separation from home and for further studies and careers abroad. Then there is usually an extended period in Europe or the United States, where singers undergo dramatic and sometimes painful transitions, which are usually guided by their *sōnbae*, their institutional seniors, abroad. After some time away, the singers return again and are reincorporated into South Korean society.

The university years for a singer in South Korea are focused almost solely on preparing for auditions abroad.³⁵ These programs are designed around the successful separation of the singer from Korean social life, even as they put immense pressure on the student singer to orient to and participate in the local discipleship structure of the school. One professor explained to me that the numerous mission trips student singers take with their church choirs and Christian groups on campus help to prepare them to go abroad for study and work. Life abroad, then, is a period of transition that can last from one to ten or more years, depending on the singer's career success and financial resources. In many cases, the perceived liminality of this period can create fear and anxiety for the singer's family back home. A widely performing South Korean soprano, who is also a professor of voice and an evangelizing Christian, explained to me that while she was studying in Rome in the late 1970s, her mother came to Italy and took her to live with her sister in Philadelphia because she "was becoming just like an Italian girl."³⁶ Incidentally, in Philadelphia she won the Pavarotti competition, which allowed her to sing opposite the famous tenor himself. But she, too, returned home a decade or so later. And when she did, she held a recital that announced her return to the social life of Seoul.

The organization of the sung portion of the homecoming recital looks very similar to a graduation recital for a singer completing a master's program in South Korea. The pieces consist of songs or arias in more than one language, normally Italian and German, but often also include French or English. The recital is usually organized chronologically, beginning with Baroque pieces by Bach, Handel, Purcell, or Vivaldi and then moving to art songs of the classical, romantic, and modern periods. Opera arias are often reserved for after the intermission. This temporal sequencing invokes a vector of vocal development that is understood

to parallel an imagined progression of difficulty from earlier to later compositions. Students of voice usually begin their studies with *bel canto* arias from the eighteenth century, then move to art songs, and then to lighter opera arias, and finally to romantic Italian and French opera arias. This is often the case in Europe and the United States, but it is a pedagogical absolute in South Korea. University students are expected to make a steady progression through the repertoire during college so that they can perform arias from Italian operas by Verdi and Puccini at their graduation recitals.³⁷

There actually are two histories aligned within the structure of the recital itself: a history of the development of European musical composition, and a history of individual-biographical development punctuated by shifts in repertoire. For example, Suyŏn's homecoming recital was organized in precisely this manner. The history of European musical composition lined up with Suyŏn's biographical history as a student of singing, progressing first through oratorio arias and art songs and then circling back for a second temporal progression through opera and operetta arias. The emphasis on German repertoire in her program indexed Germany as the site of her most recent vocal training, putting her past studies as a student in relation to the present event of the recital. And just as singers will most likely never again return abroad to study or perform for an extended period of time, most will never again sing music from their homecoming recital. Of the sixteen songs performed in her recital, Suyŏn sang only two of them again in South Korea: a piece by Bach, *Schafe können sicher weiden*, which she sang at church (to the irritation of some since it was in German and not immediately recognizable as Christian), and *Les Oiseaux dans la Charmille*, also known as "The Doll's Song," from Offenbach's opera, *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (The Tales of Hoffmann). She sang this aria at numerous musical events outside the church.

Built into the structure of the recital, but not represented in the program itself, is a break with these earlier stages of development. This break is marked and managed by the inclusion of an encore following the programmed performance. Initially, my informants had general things to say about the encore. An encore—which takes place regardless of the quality of the singing—should, at the most basic level, consist of one song accessible on some level to the entire audience. However, it probably should not be taken from the standard "classical" repertoire; it should not resemble the rest of the recital or performances of classical music abroad. Informants said that the encore should be sung in Korean, possibly a Korean art song or a folk song set to a new accompaniment. If a singer chooses an encore in another language, it should be a very well-known composition, such as "O Sole Mio." Most important for the encore is that it be enjoyable, accessible, and meaningful to the audience, so that it can serve as a kind of reward to the vast majority of attendees who would have sat politely through one hour of music in a language and form to which they had little intellectual or affective attraction.

Despite these generally stated guidelines for the encore, in practice encores at homecoming recitals overwhelmingly, almost absolutely, feature a Christian

song sung in Korean. As I mentioned above, I saw only one recital in which the encore was not a Christian song (it was “Gentle Annie,” by Robert Foster, and later it was met with criticism from members of the audience). Commonly heard songs include Christian songs such as “Chu ūi kido” (“The Lord’s Prayer”), hymns such as “Chuhananim chiōsin modūn segye” (“How Great Thou Art”) or “O sinsirhasin chu” (“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”), or more recent Korean Christian lyric songs such as “Ch’am choūsin chunim” (“Truly Great Lord”) or “Hananim ūi ūnhye” (“The Grace of God”). Suyōn sang “Amazing Grace” for her encore. She sang the first verse in English and the rest in Korean, again diagramming the shift from abroad to home via a shift in codes. And in just this way, as the singer returns home from abroad, the encore marks the transition from a repertoire of inaccessible foreign languages and increasingly “difficult” secular music in a singer’s past, to familiar, personal, generally Christian songs sung in Korean which will form the basis of the singer’s professional career in the future. That is, the performance of a homecoming recital that culminates in the singing of a Korean hymn is a tropic figuration of the time and space that lead up to it: it links a history of classical music composition starting in Europe and ending in South Korea with a biography of a classical singer that is returning from Europe to South Korea in a single culminating point.³⁸

Despite the ubiquity of the form, a few singers, all of them Christians, told me they disagreed with the practice of performing explicitly Christian music in the encore. While the Christian encore is nearly always present at the recitals of more locally established singers (singers who are not just returning home), some of these same singers argued that the homecoming recital’s role of establishing a singer as “professional” means, ideally, that it should be entirely secular, even “academic”³⁹—even if, as they well know, “professional” implies “Christian” in the Korean context of *sōngak*. While they could understand how it would be important to give back to their audience and express their gratitude to God, those who wanted to reproduce in South Korea the recital culture from abroad also found it strange to include the Christian encore at the end of a basically secular performance. Still, in almost every case, these singers succumbed to social pressure and ended their recitals with a hymn or some other Christian song.

This disagreement points to the different conceptualizations of the function of the recital as a ritual of reincorporation; whether it should emphasize the events prior to the return (secular academic), or the performance contexts that most certainly will take place after it (Christian). However, as it becomes more apparent to all singers in South Korea that the professional singer’s largest audience will consist of people who view classically trained vocal arts as part and parcel of South Korean Christianity, the Christian encore is becoming more of an explicit and predictable commentary on the recital as a whole. The encore announces that the singer individually and the musical development of the populace generally are in the service of the Korean Christian god, and that the recital is a kind of reciprocal act—a dedication—for all that this god is understood to have done for South Korea

(and for the performer). The recital accomplishes through specifically Christian encores what the tenor Yi Sōngūn did with words and money after he won the 2009 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He announced to the press, “I want to become a world-famous singer so that I can reveal the glory of God” and gave all his winnings away to support missionary activities.⁴⁰ In the homecoming recital, the Christian encore makes explicit the metapragmatics of the recital; that is, it frames the social action accomplished by the recital by regimenting and guiding the interpretation of its pragmatic, indexical signs.⁴¹ Among Korean singers of *sōngak*, the cultivation of the classical voice in South Korea is understood to express and embody the strivings of South Korean Christian personhood.

Thus the programmed portion of the recital is not the heart of the performance; the program represents a past-life stage of singers to which they will most likely not return (musically or biographically). In the shift from the programmed academic recital to the unprogrammed (but expected) encore consisting almost always of a Christian hymn, the audience transitions from gazing at the spectacle of a foreign semiotic form transposed into a Korean context (recall Chiyōng’s performance in the train station) to ratifying a specifically local performance genre that fits into their cultural worship practices. The most consequential aspects of performance—those that accomplish the social transformation of both the singer and the audience—begin at the applause, reach full saturation during the performance of an encore, and continue to structure the event as the singer emerges from the theater into the lobby to greet her family and friends as fans.

In one sense, homecoming recitals like these train attendees to be an audience. They are instructed when to clap. They are asked not to speak during the performance. They are told not to eat in the auditorium. And they learn when and for how long to shout “encore!” For most in attendance, however, it is unlikely that the homecoming recital provides their first opportunity to shout to the stage. Like saying “amen” at church or even offering calls of encouragement (*ch’uimsae*) during a *p’ansori* performance, shouting “encore” is a form of participation and expressive ratification that is learned in multiple performance contexts and comes to be viewed as an expected and normal feature of performance in South Korea. Attendees are aware of what form encores take in other contexts. But in the case of the homecoming vocal recital, the audience understands the Christian hymn or song to signal the real and absolute end of the recital. It creates the space in which the audience can participate and feel that the performance is for them and not merely for the performer. It is their emotional “release” as much as it is the performer’s. At the moment when members of the audience clap at will, perhaps even rise to their feet while calling out “encore,” the audience itself performs as a participating public for Christianized classical singing and does not merely act as an audience formed out of personal relations.

At this moment, the singer is no longer a student showing the work he or she has accomplished—in one way to peers, in another to professors, and in yet

another to family and friends—but a local artist meeting the demands of a local public.⁴² It is the Christian character of the encore that accomplishes this. It performatively presents a devoted Christian singer who can now evangelize professionally—both individually and publicly—through song. The Christian encore means that the singer has finally come home.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the fact that the homecoming recital is not merely a celebration of return. In many cases, the singer technically might have been home for months, perhaps even more than a year, and will have had plenty of time to catch up with friends and family, distribute gifts, accept invitations, receive congratulations, and so on. The singer likely will have participated in numerous celebrations of return prior to the actual recital. In fact, the singer likely will have performed prior to the recital. The recital's sociocultural importance for South Korea lies in its function as a ritual of transformation that takes as its communicative channel the very object of transformation that it "recites": the human voice, and, by extension, the bearer of that voice. Furthermore, it is unlike other kinds of homecoming events—gatherings for soldiers recently discharged from the military or special worship events for evangelists returning from overseas—in which a particular institution is clearly present in and perhaps even presides over or officiates the event via its sanctioned representatives (parents, higher-ranking officers, *sŏnbae*, ministers). In its explicit format as a public performance of secular art music, the homecoming recital downplays its institutional linkages—church, family, school—and focuses on the professional singer herself as both the object of and the officiant of the transformation. But like testimony or witnessing in church, the final hymn points to the Christian god and his sanctioned representatives (Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit) as the ultimate agents of the transformation. And the audience socially ratifies this transformation through their calls of "encore," which only cease with the performance of the hymn sung in Korean, with the musical and, importantly, denotational expression of South Korean Christianity as the endpoint of the journey abroad and the starting point for a singer's life back home. After the hymn, the audience may well replace calls of "encore" with "amen."

The homecoming recital thus integrates a returning singer, after having studied and worked professionally abroad, into the social life of Seoul. By recasting private relations within a public setting, singers are presented as professionals to an audience of intimates and institutional relations; the specificity of Christian faith and worship is presented as a generalized and thoroughly pervasive aspect of public life in South Korea.⁴³ My aim in this analysis has been to offer a systematic and ethnographically informed account of how such specific claims to general publicity subtly affect local conceptualizations of sociality.

But these claims to publicity are nonetheless fraught with challenges and contradictions in both their ritual presentation and their ongoing practice. To become a public, professional singer in South Korea, one must accept the local performance conditions that facilitate the ritual enactment of publicity. Singers often characterize this as a kind of sacrifice of the education, experience, and commitments gained abroad, in return for readmission into South Korean society. Homecoming recitals facilitate this delicate transition by subsuming the repertoire of “abroad” within the repertoire of “home.”

Singers also described the transition from programmed recital to encore as the point at which they no longer felt like students taking a test. They described the encore—the Christian encore—as the moment when they could finally sing in a classical style to a Korean audience and try to move the audience’s emotions (*kamdong*)—something they were unable to do through the “academic” repertoire of the program. In South Korea, the performance of secular art or operatic music brings with it a nagging concern about the technique of sound production.⁴⁴ Singers like Suyŏn reported feeling that the entire performance was judged in terms of the size (amplitude) of the voice, despite the poor acoustics of spaces in which such voices are heard. This anxiety is often audibly manifest as tension or fatigue in the voice itself. Regarding the performance of Christian music, however, singers describe a sense of freedom, openness, and happiness connected to a feeling of finally being able to “express themselves” before an appreciative audience in South Korea—just as they had been able to do with more secular repertoire (and for different audiences) abroad.

Importantly, it is primarily the expression of Christian faith that is involved in creating a Korean public attuned to classically trained voices. By linking Christianity to the performance of secular art music or operatic music, homecoming recitals subtly insert Christian institutions into the public life of performance arts in Seoul. The singing of the Christian encore constitutes the “Korean” voice, which draws on but is differentiated from other ethnationally categorized voices to which singers orient—the voices from abroad (the Italian voice, the German voice, the Bulgarian voice). By ritually positioning the Christian encore, sung in Korean, as the unscripted, temporally and poetically final portion of the recital and presenting it in a nominally public space (whether privately owned or not), a student becomes a professional, and a network of social relations is presented to itself as the general public for the *sŏngak* voice—as a fully Christianized South Korea that has arrived at home in the present.

NOTES

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1. This article is based on ethnographic research conducted in South Korea in 2005, 2006, 2008–9, and 2010. My main ethnographic field sites were located in a Presbyterian church with approximately 70,000 members and one of the premier college departments of voice. Interviews were conducted in Korean; I have translated transcript data from Korean to English. While anonymity was the default status given to informants, some chose to reveal their identities. In those cases, I have used full names. For informants whose anonymity is preserved, I have used pseudonyms in the form of given names or general titles. Korean names are spelled according to the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system unless the informant goes by another spelling. Formal interviews are accounted for with date and place information, while informal conversations are not.

2. For example, in the first round of 2007 auditions for the voice department of the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin, 104 out of 164 applicants were from South Korea. Dr. Ute Schmidt, e-mail communication, March 23, 2007. And at the *Rocca delle Macie* International Opera Competition, fifteen of the thirty finalists from 1999 to 2006 were from South Korea. Rocca delle Macie, www.roccadellemacie.com (accessed May 1, 2008). More recently, the first, second, and third prizes at the 2009 Bertelsmann *Neue Stimmen* Vocal Competition went to South Korean Nationals. Neue Stimmen, Internationaler Gesangswettbewerb, www.neue-stimmen.de (accessed May 1, 2008).

3. Nicholas Harkness, *The Voices of Seoul*.

4. Asif Agha, *Language and Social Relations*.

5. This term refers to a vocal recital. The term “*kwiguk tokchuhoe*” is used for instrumental recitals.

6. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 114.

7. While the word “*encore*” in Korean is *ang’ore*, most of those who shouted generally approximated the French pronunciation (ɑ̃kɔ) of the word.

8. The original lyrics read: “Peace, peace, wonderful peace / Coming down from the Father above! / Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray / In fathomless billows of love!”

9. For explanations of the concept of “*entextualization*” and a semiotic account of the notion of a “*text*” more generally, see Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, “Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life”; and Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, eds., *Natural Histories of Discourse*.

10. Nicholas Harkness, *The Voices of Seoul*, 51–116.

11. In an article by the *Korea Times* on prestige classical music concerts in Seoul, “Expensive Vienna Concert Frustrates Fans,” Dong-shin Seo quoted a survey done by the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which reported that the percentage of concertgoers who attended classical music or opera dwindled from 6.7 percent in 2000 to 3.6 percent in 2006. Dong-shin Seo, “Expensive Vienna Concert Frustrates Fans.” These numbers provide a picture of the imbalance, but cannot be taken too seriously, since they do not account for the expansion of particular sectors of the performance market, or of

the market overall. Concerts of “traditional” Korean music fare even worse in attendance. For example, as Okon Hwang notes:

As of 1997, 93.1 percent of full-time professorships in music at universities and colleges in South Korea are occupied by musicians specializing in Western art music, compared to 6.9 percent musicians in traditional music. Not surprisingly in the same year, 90.2 percent of places for incoming freshpersons at college and university level were available to study Western art music, but only 9.8 percent for traditional music. At the end of the twentieth century, more than ninety. Four-year universities and colleges specialize in Western music performance, while only nineteen departments offer programs in Korean traditional music. (Okon Hwang, *Western Art Music in South Korea*, 27)

12. For examples of the performance of institutional identities, see Hugh Mehan, “The Construction of an LD Student”; Elizabeth Mertz, “Recontextualization as Socialization”; and E. Summerson Carr, “Anticipating and Inhabiting Institutional Identities.”

13. My informants recall homecoming recitals as far back as the 1980s, when the first generation of South Korean students who went abroad to study music began to return. Informants also said that these recitals have become increasingly popular—and professionally necessary—since the late 1990s, when South Korean musicians abroad began returning to Seoul in droves during the Asian financial crisis. When the crisis hit, many parents could no longer support their children’s study abroad. In 1997 and 1998, starting when two of South Korea’s top conglomerates went bankrupt, the value of the South Korean *wŏn* plummeted to less than half its dollar value, and the composite stock price index almost crashed. In response to the financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pledged South Korea a loan of US \$57 billion in November of 1997. See Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 333.

14. From my brief description of the recital format above, it should be clear that these groupings do not conform to Michael Warner’s characterization of a public, because, as he puts it, “a public organizes itself independently of state institutions, laws, formal frameworks of citizenship, or preexisting institutions such as the church.” Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 66. The audience for homecoming recitals in South Korea is constituted precisely through explicit social and institutional relations. And as my experience purchasing a ticket for the performance demonstrated, true strangers with no personal connection to the performer or other members of the audience are not expected to attend. Despite the seemingly neutral publicity for the event—no concrete audience or preconstituted group appears to be targeted by the advertisements, other than the fact that they exist in places where people are listening to or making music—individuals usually do not purchase tickets and show up at Sejong Center for the Performing Arts for the homecoming recital of a singer whom they do not know. Recent anthropological research has critiqued the notion of a “neutral” public as an instantiation of an idealized Habermasian public sphere, bound by the circulating forms of print capitalism. These critiques have focused in large part on the way the constitution of so-called publics actually depends on their specific cultural conceptualization and institutional authorization. See Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard, eds., *Languages and Publics*; Susan Gal, “Language Ideologies Compared: Metaphors of Public/Private”; and Susan Gal, “Contradictions of Standard Language in Europe.”

15. Pak Chiyŏng, interview by Nicholas Harkness, January 12, 2009, Seoul, South Korea.

16. In 2008, the South Korean *wŏn* fell from 0.0011 to 0.0007 US dollars.

17. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 59.

18. Ibid.

19. Weddings in Korea are a good example of the role of money and ritual gift-exchange among acquaintances. Laurel Kendall describes people entering a wedding, handing over envelopes of cash, the attendants opening the envelopes, counting the money, and logging the number next to the beneficiary's name in a book. Laurel Kendall, *Getting Married in Korea*, 29. I myself have also stood in such lines and handed over such envelopes. Parents often finance the wedding and can use it to "cash in" on all of the weddings they themselves have attended. The more weddings people attend, the greater their social network, and the greater the potential to receive money when their own children marry.

20. *P'umasi* is often grouped with *ture* (mutual aid organization) and *kye* (cooperative banking) as traditional systems of village cooperation. For more on *p'umasi*, see Kyung-soo Chun, *Reciprocity and Korean Society*, and Kim Chuhŭi, *P'umasi wa chŏng*. See Kwang-Ok Kim, "The Religious Life of the Urban Middle Class," for more on *kye* among members of Christian congregations and prayer groups.

21. Having attended numerous recitals with other church members from my field sites, I can attest to the visible presence of church members in the audience. I know well the feeling of standing in line waiting to purchase a ticket and being bumped rather roughly by an older woman rushing to the front of the line to pick up her reserved tickets. Moments later, I would hear this woman addressed as "*kwŏnsanim*." As a nonordained but important leader in the church, the *kwŏnsa* (often translated as "exhorting deaconess" or "Bible woman") has the capacity to corral large groups from the church to engage in specific activities. If a singer's mother is a *kwŏnsa*, the singer can guarantee a large turnout for a recital. In this way, the church provides an important source of financial and social support for ritual events such as homecoming recitals.

22. Students choose a target country based on guidance from their professors. This is often the same place their professors studied.

23. Those who graduate with a degree in voice but do not go abroad are limited in their professional options, and none of these options include singing classical music on a regular basis. Many students become music teachers at primary and secondary schools. A large number of women I spoke with had married and quit singing the moment they had children. Many others were waiting to marry and sang only in church. A few had changed careers or were planning to do so—usually to something music related, such as "arts management," which basically describes the services for which singers pay to audition for schools abroad and to perform at venues in Seoul.

24. See Nicholas Harkness, *The Voices of Seoul*, 51–116.

25. Abroad, however, many institutions do not look charitably on this process. A professor of voice at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, after praising her South Korean students' voices, especially their "strong vocal cords," told me that the voice department was "sick of" the number of South Korean students who were accepted, never learned to speak German, and returned to South Korea following their training. Interview by author with professor of voice, March 18, 2007, Berlin, Germany. The department ultimately raised the level of German proficiency required for entrance and added to the application an essay question about professional motivation. In 1999,

according to Okon Hwang, one voice competition in Italy actually banned South Korean singers from entering on the grounds that they were suspected of not seeking to further their performance careers. They were accused of using international credentials to gain employment as teachers in South Korea, and thus not “fulfill[ing] the purpose of the competition.” Okon Hwang, *Western Art Music in South Korea*, 29.

26. I discuss this elsewhere with respect to the notion of a “clean voice” (*kkaekkūthan moksori*) in South Korea. See Nicholas Harkness, *The Voices of Seoul*.

27. Youn Kwangchul, interview by Nicholas Harkness, March 16, 2007, Berlin, Germany. Interview conducted in German. In my interviews and conversations with other singers in Europe and North America I have heard some singers mention the problem of adequate expression in performance, but few, if any, ever cited it as a central challenge to their professional development. On the other hand, many South Korean singers told me that it was a problem for students studying abroad. Voice teachers in Europe, North America, and South Korea cited this as a common difficulty for their Korean students, but I heard it even more often from the Korean students themselves. The differences in focus between performing in South Korea and performing abroad became extremely clear to me when singers who had never studied singing abroad said they focused most centrally on not making mistakes (*t’üllida*), and those who had studied abroad said they focused on “emotionally moving” (*kamdong sik’ida*) their audiences with their voices. It is important to clarify here that I am not merely reinforcing the various “orientalist” stereotypes, nor are my informants adopting a “self-orientalizing” position. The issue of affect and expression is connected directly to the performance of secular art music in a European language for unappreciative or uninformed audiences, or for critical judges in a position of authority. It has to do with a contextually specific form of performance anxiety, not with a general lack of cathexis. There is no shortage of public affect or emotionality in other Korean performance genres, such as *p’ansori* (traditional Korean sung narratives) or in church singing. In fact, as I will suggest at the end of this article and show in more detail in *The Voices of Seoul*, the church and other Christian contexts are sites where affective disposition and displays of emotionality are encouraged and cultivated—hence the Christian encore.

28. Pak Chiyōng, interview by Nicholas Harkness, January 12, 2009, Seoul, South Korea.

29. Arts institutions often initiate “music appreciation” events to recruit—and train—potential connoisseurs, and South Korean newspapers occasionally comment on the audience’s lack of “manners” or unrefined “etiquette” during live performances (*yebōp* or *yejōl*; also often expressed as the English loan words *maenōjū* and *et’ik’et*).

30. There is social pressure exerted on singers in South Korea to aspire to a standard repertoire organized by voice *range* (soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass) rather than repertoire organized by voice *fach* (dramatic soprano, tenore leggero, etc.), i.e., by a static range of notes, rather than a type of music and vocal part suited to the type and qualities of a particular voice.

31. Suyōn, text message to author, Seoul, South Korea, April 24, 2008.

32. I watched an online video of this performance but have not published stills from it at the request of the singer.

33. Pak Chiyōng, interview by Nicholas Harkness, Seoul, South Korea, January 12, 2009.

34. Rituals that mark the passage from one life stage to another are framed according to what Mikhail Bakhtin called a “chronotope.” M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84–258. Bakhtin originally used this *dvanda* compound of the Greek roots for

“time” (*chronos*) and “space” (*topos*) to describe the spatiotemporal relationship in the structuring of a narrative. In anthropology the chronotope has come to refer to a cultural model of time, space, and person, immanent in discursive interaction, in terms of which the discursive production of and stance taken in relation to semiotic material becomes contextualizable and interpretable. If the internal sequencing of a story of personhood can be narrated as a biography with a chronotope of its own, some rituals marking major transition points will foreground the more temporal aspects and others the more spatial aspects of these shifts. Some, like the homecoming recital, highlight both. For examples of the application of the concept of the chronotope in anthropology, see Keith Basso, “Stalking with Stories,” 44–45; Michael Silverstein, “Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality”; Michael Silverstein, “Axes of Evils”; and Susan Gal, “Contradictions of Standard Language in Europe.” For an entire special journal issue dedicated to the analytical use of Bakhtin’s concept in the empirical study of discourse, see Michael Lempert and Sabina Perrino (guest editors), “Temporalities in Text,” 205–336.

35. As with all other aspects of the education industry in South Korea, for example, in Nancy Abelmann, *The Melodrama of Mobility*, and Nancy Abelmann et al., *No Alternative?*, there is an industry targeting the specific needs of students wishing to go abroad for musical study. Services for merely completing the application and writing or editing the various application essays can cost as much as three million *wōn* (approximately \$2,400). This usually includes completing application forms and writing essays that explain the student’s professional goals. It also often includes translating faculty recommendations into the target language. Students often need to submit an audio recording of their audition repertoire for the initial screening. As with the marketing materials for their recitals, the object of the recording sessions is to present a professional, finished product. This often means hours in the recording studio and in the editing room. The application process, thus, is a truly expensive endeavor. While many students pay their application fees and related service fees with money earned from part-time work, most often it is the family that pays. As I mentioned above, family wealth is often seen as a prerequisite for the study of vocal music at the university level in South Korea.

36. Interview by author with Kim Youngmi, July 4, 2006, Seoul, South Korea.

37. I observed numerous graduation recitals in South Korea where undergraduate students were singing arias that most singers trained abroad would not sing publicly until they were at least ten years older.

38. The homecoming recital’s ritual text—its metricalized, poetic structure that gives it a coherence and allows it to be reproduced in more or less similar form by singers throughout South Korea—diagrams (via iconicity) and invokes (via indexicality) both the temporal progression of a singer in terms of professional “development,” as well as the spatial movement of a singer through different environments, namely, “home” and “abroad.” It is therefore a self-grounding “indexical icon” of the very social transformation that it narrates. For an explanation of indexical iconicity, see Stanley Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*, 156–57; as well as Michael Silverstein, “The Uses and Utility of Ideology,” 133n22. The durational dimension of the recital has the features of Charles S. Peirce’s famous example of indexical iconicity, a spatial image of a detailed map of a country scratched in the soil of that same country. Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, sections 5.71 and 8.122. An indexical icon, the recital presents a diagram of the biographical development of the singer, which is “scratched,” so to speak, directly into the person’s

own personal biographical trajectory (the recital itself forming a major nodal point in the biography it narrates). When the performance is successful—felicitous in its ritual function—the singer passes from one life stage to another, from student to professional.

39. My informants use the English loan word *ak'ademik* here. Baroque and classical arias from oratorios and the like are generally considered to be secular, academic pieces. With the exception of a few famous compositions, Handel's *Messiah* or Mendelssohn's *Elias* for example, this music is only rarely performed during church services.

40. Yi Söngün's original quote in Korean was "Segyejögün söngakka ka twaesö hananim kke yönggwang ül nat'anaenün saram i toego sipta." *Kungmin ilbo*, "Tenö Yi Söngün Met'ü Op'era k'ongk'urü kongdong usüng," February 24, 2009.

41. See Michael Silverstein's "Shifters" and "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function" for technical explanations of the concept of "metapragmatics."

42. The encore overcomes, if only momentarily, what Goffman called "audience segregation," where "the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting." Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 49.

43. See Susan Gal, "Language Ideologies Compared"; and Jane Hill, "Mock Spanish," for discussions of folk conceptualizations of "public" and "private."

44. See Nicholas Harkness, *The Voices of Seoul*, 171–232.

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