

More About KOREAN DANCES FOR ORCHESTRA

When I first hesitantly decided to emulate such masters as Brahms and Dvořák* by writing a set of national/ethnic dances for orchestra, I decided not to base them on the obvious choice of my own homeland's folk music because that had already been masterfully done by earlier composers and there was no point in trying to compete with established standard repertory. So, after giving it considerable thought, I chose Korean folk music--partly because I am "Korean" by marriage, but mainly because I already had a core of three movements that I could use to start the set by adapting my concert band composition **Korean Suite** into 3 dances for orchestra. Then, by adding an orchestral adaptation of the **Scherzo** from my **Piano Trio No. 1 (Koreana)**, I already had half of the set of eight dances that I was planning.

I felt reasonably comfortable engaging in this self-piracy because the symphonic literature includes so many notable precedents. Composers have been recycling their own music into new compositions for centuries, so it seems like a safe practice. The audiences for the concert band suite (intended for school and community bands) and for the orchestral dances (intended for the concert hall) would be mostly different as well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*These dances are all shorter and simpler in structure than most of the famous **Hungarian Dances** of Brahms and **Slavonic Dances** of Dvořák, so although the idea was inspired by those works, my dances are not modeled on them in any way other than title.