

Original Article

The effects of Korean music Pansori *Sugungga* on mental health sung by Dong-jin Park

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to show that satire through *Sugungga* is beneficial for the mental health of people. Dong-jin Park is one of the greatest singers of Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂). He is an authentic singing master through long-term training, which explains why his cheerful voice will certainly allow us to become unburdened. The story of Pansori *Sugungga* is akin to that of David and Goliath, the art of battling giants but a Korean version. Satire is a technique found in Pansori, Korean epic songs which use humor as a cover for more serious social criticism. Koreans have believed that outbursts of sentiment through satire are good for their mental health. For a long time, these singers have entertained Koreans with political satire and indirect counter-drives. Pansori *Sugungga*'s keen wit and satire have earned the love of Koreans. Koreans want vivid descriptions and surprising turns that end with catharsis through *Sugungga* and are therefore thrilled with *Sugungga*. Therefore, *Sugungga* in Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂) is a good means of music therapy for better mental health.

Keywords *Sugungga*, Dong-jin Park, Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂), Pansori, satire, mental health, music therapy

INTRODUCTION

By 2019, 'Global burden of disease attributable to mental and substance use disorders: findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010' referring to a 20-year period of time, the global economic output losses as a result of mental health issues will amount to \$16 trillion (Daisy et al., 2016). According to the theory of Pythagoras (and later Plato), music serves in a curative function and represents a means of maintaining psychological balance in our everyday life (Even, 2013). In 2003, 'The categorical structure of pleasure' noted that listening to music is consistently ranked as one of the most rewarding human experiences (Benjamin et al., 2013). Dopamine release in the ventral striatum appears to play a major role in the rewarding aspects of listening to music (Benjamin et al., 2013). In 2008, 'The effects of music in educational and community settings' noted that many community music interventions view positive psychological benefits as an important secondary benefit (Raymond, 2013).

For a long time, satire has been used to point out the absurdities of society. According to Elliot, in *The Power of Satire, Magic, Ritual and Art*, his thesis of the powerful magical origins of satire and its evolution through various form of literature with the aid of language appears to parallel the evolution of medicine from the beginning (Papper, 1990).

Satire is a technique found in Pansori, Korean epic music, which uses humor as a cover for more serious social criticism. Satire serves to prod people into an awareness of truth. Satire exists because there is need for it. Pansori has utilized humor, irony and ridicule to bring attention to a situation or issue disapproved of by the artists. Koreans have believed that outbursts of sentiment through satire are good for their mental health. For a long time, this form of music has entertained Koreans with political satires and indirect counter-drives. Pansori *Sugungga*'s keen wit and satire has earned the love of Koreans. Koreans want vivid descriptions and surprising turns that end with catharsis through *Sugungga*. The story of Pansori *Sugungga* is a Korean version of the story of David and Goliath. *Sugungga* is one of the most famous types of satirical Pansori in Korea, believed to revitalize weary bodies and souls. It contains plot twists and unexpected explanations. The purpose of this article is to argue that satire through *Sugungga* is beneficial for the mental health of people.

The story of *Sugungga*

Pansori is a traditional Korean vocal music with long epic songs. It is composed of a solo singer and a drummer. In fact, in the 1960s the government of Korea proclaimed Pansori as the fifth Korean Intangible Cultural Asset. In 2003, UNESCO listed Pansori as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In 2000, 'Korean Music Historical and Other Aspects' noted that *Sugungga* (Song of the Underwater Palace) is based on the story of the Dragon King, a tortoise, and a wily hare. The hare spoke for the soft and spiritless petty bourgeois who were clever but showed a yellow streak, serving as a self-portrait of our times. However, he shows his strength

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Fig. 1. Dong-jin Park, <http://search.daum.net/search>

of will to overcome his actual situation. The Dragon King and tortoise are symbolic of corrupt officials. Sickness came as a result of debauchery. Moreover, the Dragon King of the Underwater Palace suffers from an ailment that can be cured only with the liver of a hare. Thus, the tortoise deceives the hare with sweet words and takes the hare to the Underwater Palace. When they arrived there, the hare realizes he has been tricked. This incident made the hare a laughingstock, though it was also seeking a chance to counterattack. Later, the hare deceives the Dragon King with honeyed words, reversing the situation. Interestingly, there was an unexpected turn of events. In addition, the hare was the main character who turned the tide in the drama. The hare states, "I hid my liver under a cinnamon tree, because it is a miracle medicine that would help anyone who is always on the lookout for the elixir of youth." In this way, they cheat each other or take advantage of each other. In the end, the situation changed to the hare's advantage. This is the paradox of the wisdom of crows, or the paradox of collective intelligence.

Who is Dong-jin Park?

Dong-jin Park (Fig. 1, 1916-2003) was born in Gongju Chungcheong province. He was noted as Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 5 for Pansori *Sugungga* in 1973. In 2012, '*Hangyourae Umakin Daesajeon*' noted at the age of 16, after *changeuk* (a traditional Korean opera drama), that Dong-jin Park dropped out of school to learn Pansori. To finalize learning the time scales of Pansori can take a long time, sometimes even several decades. He is known for fully singing by himself in his role in every Pansori performance. Specifically, his songs are long to teach Koreans of the importance and soul of Chunhyangga, a type of Korean Pansori, with one single performance lasting five hours in 1968. After this, he continued to sing various forms of Pansori. Accordingly, he coined the term "Wanchangpansori," meaning to sing Pansori from beginning to end.

You can enjoy Pansori *Sugungga* sung by Dong-jin Park on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/7HWFkRw5JWM>).

DISCUSSION

It's known about the potential of music within mental health has been recognized for nearly a century. Music-therapy engagements are more suggestible and can even be "self-managed" by the public (Catterall and Jimenez-Dabdoub, 2015). Music may help decrease mental fatigue and enhance work efficiency (Wei et al., 2015). In 2009, '*Dynamic interactions between musical, cardiovascular, and cerebral rhythms in humans*', in 2013, '*Rethinking stress: the role of mindsets in determining the stress response*' and in 2008, '*Music listening: its effects in creating a healing environment*' noted that music therapy enhances human psychological states, decreases symptoms of anxiousness and depression, and can be used to treat long-term stress-related physical ailments (Lolita, et al., 2016).

The soul of Pansori *Sugungga* sought to illustrate the conflicting relationships and compassion between the ruling class and the ruled. The ruled, the hare, strongly and sensibly opposed the ruling class, the dragon king and the turtle. This means we need to fight against the use of violence or physical force by the ruling class. It also meant that we should bring corrupt officials to justice through the hare's piquant wit. Koreans have thought it is not unusual for people to resist political authority. The fame of *Sugungga* was driven by public anger, catharsis, and compassion. The main character, the hare, punishes the corrupt kingdom officials with amazing wit, which gives common people catharsis. Dong-jin Park is a one of the greatest singers in Han Ak (Korean music, 韓樂). He is a true singing master given his long-term training. This is why his cheerful voice will certainly unburden listeners.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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