



**Korean Music Volume 2: Creating Korean Music:
Tradition, Innovation And the Discourse of
Identity (Soas Musicology) (Soas Musicology)
(Soas Musicology Series: Perspectives on Korean
Music) (v. 2)**

Keith Howard

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With the rise of nationalism in the Republic of Korea, music has come to play a central role in the discourse of identity. This volume asks what Koreans consider makes music Korean, and how meaning is ascribed to musical creation. Keith Howard explores specific aspects of creativity that are designed to appeal to a new audience that is increasingly westernized yet proud of its indigenous heritage - updates of tradition, compositions, and collaborative fusions. He charts the development of the Korean music scene over the last 25 years and interprets the debates, claims and statistics by incorporating the voices of musicians, composers, scholars and critics. Koreanness is a brand identity with a discourse founded on heritage, hence Howard focuses on music that is claimed to link to tradition, and on music compositions where indigenous identity is consciously incorporated. The volume opens with SamulNori, a percussion quartet known throughout the world that was formed in 1978 but is rooted in local and itinerant bands stretching back many centuries. Parallel developments in vocal genres, folksongs and p'ansori ('epic storytelling through song') are considered, then three chapters explore compositions written both for western instruments and for Korean instruments, and designed both for Korean and international audiences. Over time, Howard shows how the two musical worlds - kugak, traditional music, and yangak, western music - have collided, and how fusions have emerged. This volume documents how identity has been negotiated by musicians, composers and audiences. Until recently, references to tradition were common and, by critics and musicologists, required. Western music increasingly encroached on the market for Korean music and doubts were raised about the future of any music identifiably Korean. Today, Korean musical production exudes a resurgent confidence as it amalgamates Korean and western elements, as it arranges and incorporates the old in the new, and as it creates a music suitable for the contemporary world.

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