

Full Bio

It has been said that Shinuh Lee is a composer who ponders seriously about the origins and nature of human existence and, therefore, her works are the result of such thoughts. Lee's reflection touches on the universal pain and emotion of heartbreak of humans in the secular world, but she is a composer who is ultimately finding the consolation and language of healing in regard to these things. The biblical themes which she frequently explores go beyond religious doctrines, they are the questions asked during the process of exploring this language and are a means of appealing to the sensitivity of human universality. In this sense, it can be said that Lee's compositional perspective follows that of Bach or Messiaen, those who did not separate faith from creation.

Lee's pieces are mainly chamber and orchestral music, rather than vocal music. The biblical message, which she often uses as a source of her creation, is recreated in contemporary language through the accommodation of instrumental genres such as sonatas, symphonic poems and orchestral music. In particular, there are pieces which combine Psalms with instrumental genres, such as *Psalm 20 for orchestra* (1994-96, revised 1998), *Psalms Sonata for violin and piano* (2011-2013), *Psalm of Nature for solo violin* (2014) and *Psalm Cantata for mixed choir and orchestra* (2015/16). This Psalm series with the exception of Psalm 20, takes inspiration from nature. Lee's interest in and passion for nature sprang from time spent in the landscape of New Jersey in her sabbatical year of 2011.

The composition of *Psalm 20 for orchestra* marked a turning point in Lee's life. This is a piece which bathes in a unique Eastern colour through a transformative use of heterophony. It is based on her research into Psalms and ancient Hebrew music, and her experience on this research motivated her subsequent pieces. Perhaps most significantly this work begins to explore the very nature and origin of human existence, and sets into a motion a preoccupation that follows Lee's music to the present day. This preoccupation begins to emerge in *Invisible Hands for violin and orchestra* (2000/2002) and *An Open Door for strings* (2004) intensified in her later works.

In 2007, Lee began her ongoing series of *Chorale Fantasies*. *No.1 Comfort, comfort my people* for piano (2007-2009) manifests her will to explore issues of human sin and salvation through music in a profound way. *Comfort, comfort my people*, consisting of ten movements and 50 minutes in duration, deals with biblical messages of Isaiah and Romans, and these are executed by various techniques and styles. This work was tried in a couple of different editions and genre, with its chamber music version performed at Kumho Art hall in 2008. Another version with light and installation entitled *The Screwtape Letters* was performed at the Seoul National University Museum of Art in 2009. It was also toured to the East-coast of America, Carnegie Hall and the Vienna Musikverein in 2013 & 2014 accompanied by Pianist Hyojung Huh. Ms. Huh has also recorded all three Chorale Fantasies on Dux label.

Lee studied composition with Sukhi Kang at Seoul National University and later with Michael Finnissy at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the University of Sussex. While she was in the UK, she won the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize for Composers and the Musical Times Composers' Competition. She was also a finalist composer at Gaudeamus International Composers' Competition and the Leonard Bernstein International Jerusalem Composing Competition. Lee was also awarded many prizes, these are the Korean Composition Award, AhnIckTae Composition Prize, Korean Race Composition Award, as well as Nanpa Music Award, Young Artist Today Award from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In 2019, she was appointed as an ARAM (Associate of the Royal Academy of Music), which is awarded to alumni who have contributed significantly to the music profession or to the Academy itself.

Becoming the first female professor in the department of composition in Seoul National University in 1999, she launched the 'STUDIO2021' SNU New Music Series in 2003 and has been working as Artistic Director, putting her efforts into supplying the creative and dynamic education in the field of Performing Arts. She was also invited as Composition faculty for the Young Artist Summer Program of Curtis Institute of Music for many years.

Her works are being performed by many orchestras, ensembles and soloists such as the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, KBS Symphony Orchestra, Prime Philharmonic Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, Chungnam Symphony Orchestra, Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, Asko Ensemble, Ixion Ensemble, Ensemble Opus, Sejong Soloists and Seoul Virtuosi. Her *Concerto for clarinet and orchestra* was commissioned by and premiered at the Seoul Music Festival in 2010, *Lament* for clarinet and strings was premiered in the Casals Festival in 2011, and *Landscape* for two violins and viola was commissioned by and premiered at the Great Mountain International Music Festival in 2015. In 2019, *Four Songs of Lamentation* was premiered by soprano Hyunah Yu and the Prime Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Yunsung Chang at the Seoul Arts Center. Her Symphonic Poem *Yeomillak* commissioned by Sejong City, was performed at many major venues including Seoul Arts Center and Carnegie Zankel Hall. *An Open Door* for strings was also performed by Ensemble Pan at Konzerthaus Berlin.

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She has been a professor in composition at College of Music, Seoul National University since 1999, and has also worked as an artistic director to Studio2021 since 2003. She was appointed as ARAM(Associate of the Royal Academy of Music) from the Royal Academy of Music in 2019.