

First Thoughts On the International Artist Association for Culture and Peace

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In 2021, I had the opportunity to offer remarks in several webinars under the auspices of the newly formed International Artists Association for Culture and Peace (IAACP). Because art and culture play significant roles in the process of attaining socio-cultural betterment, the responsibility of artists in that process is an important factor. In my remarks, I alluded to the "beauty" aspect in the beauty, truth and goodness paradigm and its effects in shaping our consciousness in ways that could be beneficial individually and collectively. In music we refer to this as psycho-acoustics -- how music affects our mood and character.



The ancient cultures of China and Greece understood the impact of art in general, and music in particular, in the process of creating a moral and ethical society. In *The Republic*, Plato wrote, "The ways of poetry and music are not changed anywhere without change in the most important laws of a city." The Chinese politician Le Bu Wei (291–235, BCE) wrote in his *Spring and Autumn Annals*, "The will of people living in an area can be known by examining the customs prevailing there. And their virtues can be known by examining their will. Whether a state will become prosperous or face its downfall, whether its sovereign is sensible or unworthy, and whether a person is honorable or base, can all be known by the music they enjoy."

The cultures of antiquity were well aware of the moral power of the arts and understood that art, especially music, had the power to either ennoble or corrupt individuals and societies. With this understanding, art and music were not viewed merely as entertainment, but as vehicles by which society could be uplifted or debased.

Between 2003 and 2012, I traveled to Israel on ten occasions to participate in concerts and conferences sponsored by the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI). In 2008, I met Kitty Cohen, director of The Folklore of the Other Institute, an interfaith organization in Israel that seeks to create conditions for understanding and respect for people of various faith traditions. Kitty has been working on this effort for over twenty years. She explained that in her early experiences of doing interfaith work, she produced seminars and conferences but quickly realized that these types of events had little effect in ameliorating

historical antagonisms.

The polarizing aspects of religious and political convictions were far too ingrained to be resolved through dialogue. As Miss Cohen explained, dialogue often led to greater misunderstandings and created deeper divisions. She changed her focus to social action, service projects, music, art and sports. This change of focus toward project-based initiatives demonstrated that when people work together for a common cause, the barriers of religion, ethnicity and race disappear more rapidly and become subsidiary concerns. Music and dance were especially effective in bringing people of varying backgrounds and beliefs together in the spirit of harmony and goodwill.



In my career as a composer, conductor and producer I've had the good fortune to work with musicians in Europe, Asia, Israel, Russia and Central America and South America.

The power of music, or more precisely, the power of beauty to bring people together in a harmonious fashion testifies to the human desire to experience beauty and to be uplifted by it. In his study of Emanuel Kant, the British philosopher, Roger Scruton observed that Kant situated the aesthetic experience next to the religious experience and for Kant, the aesthetic experience was "the archetype of revelation." When we experience beauty, whether it's the beauty of nature or the beauty of art, our consciousness changes and we can have epiphanies that effect our lives in profound ways.

American composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein asserted, "Art cannot change events. But it can change people. It can affect people so that they are changed. Because people are changed by art -- enriched, ennobled, encouraged -- they can act in a way that may affect the course of events by the way they vote, they behave, the way they think." This, of course, is in accord with what Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon states in her memoirs, that it's not politics that moves the world, but rather it is art and culture that moves the world. As she notes, "It is affection, not reason, that strikes people in their innermost being.

When hearts become receptive and are able to receive new things, ideologies and social regimes can change." Because aesthetic beauty has such a powerful effect on our psyche, artists have to understand that their art has a certain moral power, and they must use that power with a sense of moral responsibility.

I've often been asked if my music is affected by life experiences, or if I use my music as a way to affect change. It's actually both; a "reciprocity of influence," as musicologist Richard Taruskin so nicely put it. Artists don't create in a vacuum. What we create and put before the public has consequences. As such, artists ought to be aware of their influence on society.

In her keynote address at the Rally of Hope on November 22, 2020, Dr. Hak Jan Moon announced her intention to establish the International Artists Association for Culture and Peace (IAACP). She also shared her view that the artistic expressions of Europe and its classical tradition were the progeny of Christian culture, and that this tradition could be a model for art in the hyojeong cultural experience.

She alluded to how the European artistic culture was a glorious expression based on the expectation of the return of Christ and the dawning of Heavenly Parent's ideal world, saying:

The idea of "one family under God" has been the aim of many religious movements throughout history. Yet achieving that ideal remains elusive. Overcoming the problems of tribalism, jealousy, envy, greed, immorality, racism and materialism requires new ways of thinking. The beauty of art can open our hearts to these new ways of thinking and change our consciousness. Art that is created with the motivation and intention of elevating humankind to a higher consciousness in the pursuit of peace and mutual prosperity can be said to be art that is godly. In this respect, IAACP is calling on artists of all disciplines to examine their creative endeavors in the hope of establishing a culture of peace, the hope of all ages.