

The Korean Folk Ballet Greet You as Kings and Queens

Joy Schmidt [Pople]
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Dancers the world over begin training in their pre-school years to achieve perfection in the art of classical dance. Yet eighteen Korean girls have achieved a miracle perhaps beyond compare in this field. In four months' time, under the expert guidance of the Little Angels staff, these girls have put together a repertoire of amazingly complex and varied dances.

Five of the girls were graduates of the Little Angels and another four had studied dance while university students, but the other nine had never danced even one step.

All Unification Church members, they were chosen from the thirty to forty girls recommended by [Unification] church directors of each of the Korean provinces. Tryouts were held at the Little Angels Performing Arts Center in Seoul. Of those chosen for the Korean Folk Ballet, some were working fulltime for the church, others studying at the university, and still others had just graduated from high school.



They trained very hard for four months, eating and sleeping in a church center and traveling one and a half hours to the Little Angels Arts School in Seoul. Their director, Mr. Moo Kyung Lee, said, "When they got into the car or bus it was very difficult to move their legs -- their bodies were so tired. But they always said, 'We have to do this because we can fulfill such a wonderful purpose as a group.'" Mr. Lee

added that the choosing and training of the Korean Folk Ballet was "united in spirit and under the guidance of our Heavenly Father." Training in Korea was very fundamental, concentrated on basic steps and outlines. Upon arrival in the United States about a week before the premiere, the patterns were organized into the actual dances.

Of their first few weeks in the United States, Mr. Lee said, "We are very happy to work with the American and European Unification Church members." The enjoyment is evidently mutual on the part of the other cast and staff members, who vie for the privilege of traveling in the Korean Folk Ballet vans. Communication may often have to be non-verbal, but even that has such wonderful delights as smiles and pantomimes.

Surprisingly, the dancers know the words to almost any popular American song played on radio or television. But the best known word may well be Ben-gay, an ointment which they buy a case at a time to relieve their sore muscles. Backstage before performances they can be seen giving themselves or each other instant massages, so they will be able to dance. On performance days dress rehearsals last from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. or later, and often the mornings are filled with rehearsals.



A 21st century experience

The Korean Folk Ballet was founded on January 10, 1974 at the inspiration of Reverend Sun Myung Moon. At the end of his 21-city Day of Hope speaking tour in America he realized that much more was needed in order to make the best impact on audiences and to stimulate the greatest inspiration. The main purpose of the Korean Folk Ballet is to transcend the pattern of contemporary crusades by providing a "21st century experience."

"The Celebration of Life is not just a celebration of the physical dimension," Mr. Lee explained, "but also a celebration of mental ability and the spiritual life." This is particularly well exemplified in the Fan Dance, a glorious celebration of joy and harmony. On university campus malls, on television screen, or on a theatrical stage, the Fan Dance enchants young and old alike. One guest at the Oakland premiere performance described the effect of the eighteen dancers and their fans as "hundreds of beautiful butterflies."

Other popular dances from the Little Angels' repertoire include the Mask Dance and the Hourglass Drum Dance, apparently the favorite dances of many of the dancers themselves. The Hourglass Drum dance is noted for its elaborate and acrobatic techniques.

The dancers, dressed in the traditional flowing Korean dresses, leap and twirl in interweaving patterns to the rhythm of their long slim drums. The Mask Dance is highlighted with two playful and aggressive lions, each animated by two dancers. The girls who play the head and forelegs of the lions must make great leaps while carrying the very heavy head mask. Even though they are exhausted, often to the point of tears at the end, they look forward to the dance with eager faces.

A vision of heaven on earth

The first night's program is introduced with the elegant and stately Royal Court Dance, which Miss Na Kyung Pak, Col. Pak's daughter and the hostess for the performances, introduces to the audiences in the

following way: "The Korean Folk Ballet has come 8,000 miles to perform for you tonight.

They come to bring you a vision of heaven on earth, as they express their love for God and man through the dance. The first dance tonight will be the Royal Court Dance. In the ancient Kingdom of Korea, whenever a king and queen had occasion to celebrate, they usually opened their ceremony with this particular court dance. It is something like a salute to the king and queen. The Korean Folk Ballet will greet each one of you tonight as they would greet the king and queen of Korea."

Another attractive piece is folk singing with the Kayakum, a twelve-string instrument central to classical Korean court music. The beautiful Korean fans used in the fan dance appear again in the finale of each night's performance. To the tune of "Arirang," the girls glide in with an undulating row of fans and converge in a single graceful fan cluster.

KTVC TV in Austin, Texas filmed the Fan Dance and the Penitent Monk Dance and showed them twice as part of interview shows. Mr. Jay Hodson, who interviewed Col. Pak, complimented him on the Celebration of Life and added that he had never seen a professional group of this kind perform as well as the Korean Folk Ballet.



A depth of spirit

"We must bring a depth of spirit to every part of our daily life," says Mr. Lee. A very humble man, he nevertheless attracts people by his radiant face and his living example of his high ideals. But though he is reluctant to talk about himself, the other members of the stage crew consider Mr. Lee a genius in his skill with lighting and design.

Mr. Lee's entire family joined the Unification Church in April 1953. In 1961 he began working in the general section of the Unification Church headquarters in Seoul, and in 1965 joined the staff of the Little Angels. He accompanied the Little Angels working on stage and lighting on five world tours, including the Olympics in Mexico, where they won international acclaim for their Penitent Monk Dance.

Mr. Lee explained that this dance, also an audience favorite when performed by the Korean Folk Ballet, comes from the Buddhist tradition in Korea. Buddhist monks live in mountain temples, where they seldom see other people and try to forget everything. But sometimes they remember their old days and long to go back. Beating the drum, they try to chase out their old memories. The monks themselves use only one drum, but Miss Soon Shim Shin, the Little Angels' choreographer, brilliantly arranged the dance with an interplay of complex tempos and swinging back and forth among six drums -- a compelling portrayal of the eternal struggle between the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit.

The managing director of the Korean Folk Ballet is Mr. Dae Oh Son, whose responsibility includes directing the spiritual life of the dancers. The first organizer of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principle in Korea, and later a mobile team leader, he teaches the Divine Principle to ballet members. Before his assignment to the Korean Folk Ballet staff, he worked at the Unification Church headquarters missionary department, where he wrote handbills, pamphlets, and lecture materials for local church leaders.

The stage manager is Mr. Suk Koo Shin, a former staff member of the Little Angels, accompanying them

on their 1970 -- 71 tour.

Col. Pak's sister-in-law and secretary at the Little Angels headquarters in Seoul, Miss Ki On Yoon, has accompanied the Korean Folk Ballet in a kind of mother capacity. Her responsibilities included costumes, make-up, and special equipment.

Little Angels heritage

The new Little Angels Arts School in Seoul opened on March 5, 1974, with four classes -- sixty students in each of the first four grades. "Next year a high school will be built. This school is the training center for the Little Angels as well as a public elementary school. A performing hall for the Little Angels is still under construction.

A great deal of the success of the Korean Folk Ballet can be attributed to the foundation laid by the Little Angels staff and dancers, as well as the tremendous spirit of dedication to God and Christ.

The original name for the Korean Folk Ballet is "Han Sun" Folk Ballet, a name of deep significance in Korean. Their participation in the Celebration of Life is part of a long-time dream of Col. Pak for bringing a fresh message of God and Christ to America.

After the ten cities of this first Celebration of Life Crusade, the Korean Folk Ballet expects to learn new dances and prepare for participation in Reverend Moon's eight-city Day of Hope tour this fall, which will alternate cities with the second tour of the Celebration of Life.

Korean Folk Ballet Dancers

Jung Ok Kim (18)
Jung Ja Choi (19)
Tae Ja Park (19)
Jae Hyang Yoo (19)
Young Sook Huh (20)
Young Ae Song (20)
Jae Sook Yoo (20)
Sun Hee Moon (21)
Young Sook Cho (21)
Myung Soon Lee (21)
Myo Shim Chang (21)
Ki Hang Yoon (21)
Hwa Sook Yang (22)
Soon Ja Kim (23)
Soon Ja Lee (23) ·
Chung Yul Chang (23)
Duk Phyo Hong (24)

