

TRADITIONAL KOREAN MUSIC AND DANCE

GRADES: K-12

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SUBJECT: Social Studies

TIME REQUIRED: 3-5 class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Describe some characteristics of traditional Korean dances
2. Demonstrate an appreciation for different Korean cultural dances
3. Identify similarities and differences of several Korean dances
4. Explain the common role of dance in the world

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Video: "Korean Traditional Music and Dance"
- Copies of handouts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

BACKGROUND:

In this activity, students examine a variety of Korean dances in an effort to understand cultural differences and similarities. From the minute the Korean dancers take their places, every person in the audience focuses their attention on the stage. The costumes are colorful and magnificent. Each dance movement is executed with grace and beauty. There are six varieties of the traditional dance: shamanistic, Buddhist, court entertainment, country or folk, dramatic and Confucian.

Several movements characterize Korean dance: they are the heel walks and turning on the heels, raising the body gently and lightly from the bent knee position, slight vibrations from the hips, pulses from the shoulders, and improvisation of action. The most distinctive movement is balancing on the foot with the free leg extended while the shoulders rise and fall softly: this is called the suspended position. Ecstasy permeates all of the varieties of dance. Korean dancers are covered in long, voluminous silk costumes that cover the entire body with full sleeves. The beauty of these dances display expressive gestures, smooth movement, a spiritual intensity, and metaphysical joy.

PROCEDURE:

1. To introduce this activity, locate Korea on a map, read the background to the class, and show the video "Korean Traditional Music and Dance."
2. Discuss the various dances with the students. Have the students select their favorite dance and explain why it is their favorite dance. Students can do extensive research on Korean dance and music to determine how it has affected Korean culture (customs, religion, values and the arts). Collect and examine photos or pictures of the traditional dancers.
3. Divide the class into small groups and have the students analyze and discuss the various dance steps in each of the Korean dances.

EVALUATION:

- To culminate this activity, small groups of students will create an example of a Korean dance. The teacher will observe creativity, accuracy and participation.

STUDENT RESOURCES:

Compact Disc: *A Window On Korea*, Korean Overseas Information Service, Seoul Systems Co., LTD, 1994.

Compact Disc: *Exploring Korea's Culture*. Korean National Tourism Organization, Seoul, UNESCO, 1996.

Video: *Korean Traditional Music and Dance*. Foundations For The Preservation of Cultural Properties, Seoul.

Video: *Korea '96*. Korean Consulate Office. 13 min.

Video: *Touring Korea*. A Questar Home Video Production Encounter Video, Inc. Chicago, Il. 1993. 55 min., ISBN 0-927992-12-4.

Video: *Images of Korea II*. Korean Foundation, Seoul, Korea. 14 min.

Video: *Images of Korea III*. Korean Foundation, Seoul, Korea. 22 min.

TEACHER RESOURCES:

Ha Tae Hung. *Korea Sings, Folk and Popular Music and Lyrics*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1997. ISBN 89-7141-189-9 93810.

Han Suzanne Crowder. *Notes on Things Korean*. Seoul: Hollym Corporate, 1995. ISBN 1-56591-019-2

Harvey John H.T. *Koreans*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1993. ISBN 201-4-03910

Korea House. *Korean Traditional Music and Dance*. Seoul: Korean House Theatre, 1995.

Korean Overseas Information Service. *Facts About Korea*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1993. ISBN 89-7375-052-6 33910.

Korean Overseas Information Service. *Korean Heritage*. Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1996. ISBN 1-56591-078-8.

Lee Elizabeth K. *The Koreans*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1989.

Park Jeannie J., Park, Edward J., Chwe, Sykvia R., Cho, Beckhee. *Hello From Korea*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1994. ISBN 89-7375-351-743910.

Wright, Chris. *Korea, Its History and Culture*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1996. ISBN 89-7375-302-9 03910.

Yong Ahn Graphics. *A Handbook of Korea*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1993. ISBN 89-7375-002-10 33910.

HANDOUT 1

King Sejong, a Choson monarch, was a great student of literature, astronomy and the fine arts. He classified music and dance into three sections and made changes in the costumes of the court dancers and musicians. King Songjong, his grandson, sponsored a comprehensive book on Korean dance and music that describes the properties, costumes, procedures, dance, and instruments that are still used today in these works of art.

The origins of the Korean dance are magical, sacred and ritualistic in character. shamanistic, Buddhist and Confucian are the three ritual forms with shamanism being the most highly developed and widely used.

On the first Sunday of May, reverence is paid to the spirits of Choson dynasty kings and queens. Music and dance are performed at the grand ceremony in *chongmyo*, the royal shrine. King Sejong composed the ceremonial music, which incorporates gongs, bells and instruments utilized in ancient times.

Twice a year at Songgyun'gwan, the national Confucian university, on Confucius' birthday, on the 21st day of the third moon and the second day of the ninth moon, eight rows of eight students honor Confucius and several other Korean and Chinese scholars. The students rhythmically bow left and right. In the first half of the dance, they hold a dragon-headed stick in one hand and a flute in the other. In the second half, a wooden hammer is used to beat a wooden shield. In the *Ilmu*, a Confucian line dance, there are eight rows of students in purple lined cerise robes and courtier hats. They circle their arms and forearms, and while bending one knee, lift the other three times. Repeatedly, they bow slowly and reverentially to the east, west and to the shrine.

Buddhism is a syncretic religion and does not require strict adherence to dance movements used in rituals as the Confucian ceremonies do. It has contributed a positive influence on court dances and shaman rituals, especially those for the dead.

In the Koryo period, female court performances were elaborate spectacles. Beautifully costumed, the dancers sang verses to music in beautiful costumes. One of the oldest shaman dances is the *Dance of the Dragon of the East Sea*, the *Choyong*, which is performed to exorcise the evils of the past year before the coming of the next. The men wear brown face masks and costumes of blue, white, red, black and yellow. These colors signify the four cardinal directions and the center point. They perform solo turning sequences, then each man dances a duet with a center person, and all turn in unison.

Many Korean court dances include Buddhist symbols, such as bird and flower images, in their titles. Examples include *Beautiful People Picking Peonies*, *The Coming of the Phoenix* and the *Crane Dance*. *The Savored Dance* is a weapon dance performed by women.

The Bellgame Dance is both sophisticated and humorous. Two teams of women compete by throwing wooden balls through holes in two gates decked with flowers. A peony flower is given to those who succeed in making a goal. A "brush girl" paints a black line on the cheek of those who fail. *The Nightingale Dance* is performed with extremely slow, delicate movements on a reed mat. The dancer wears a costume with rainbow-banded, long flowing sleeves. In the court *Crane Dance*, *Hangmu*, two lotus buds on a rear platform carry two dancers dressed as enormous cranes. The giant birds peck at the lotus buds with their long bills as the dance is performed. The petals unfold and dancing children appear.

HANDOUT 2

According to tradition, Buddhism came from India via China in 372 CE. Buddhist chanting *pomp'ae* and the associated music and dances were taught to Koreans by a Silla monk on his return from China. The Korean Buddhist basic ritual dances are called *chakbop*. There are three types of ritual chants: *yombul* (reciting sutras), *hwachang* (chanting folk songs) and *pomp'ae* (a long solemn chant).

There are several dances that accompany the chants. Their purpose is to prepare for and celebrate death and to release a person's soul into nirvana. A musical band called *chorach'i* accompanies the ritual chant singers and Buddhist monk dancers.

The *Parach'um* is a dance that is usually done by 2-4 dancers who twist their bodies in spiral turns as they clash large symbols together.

Nabich'um, or the butterfly dance, is usually performed by Buddhist nuns who wear peaked hats and are dressed in white robes with long sleeves.

Popkoch'um is a drum dance that is a tribute to the dead. It is a dance solo in which the dancer uses two sticks and a small drum. It begins by a dramatic rolling of the sticks around the ridges of the drum's circumference that builds to passionate drumming. Today it is performed with as many as twelve dancers and no longer has a religious connotation. The use of many small drums combined with acrobatic dance movements present a sensational effect on stage.

HANDOUT 3

FOLK DANCES

Folk dances mix Buddhist rites with shaman forms and shaman rites with both Buddhist and Confucian forms, and were usually performed in the market place, courtyard, shrine, fields or at a banquet hall.

The oldest form of the folk dance is the *Farmers' Dance*. Animated and lively, it is performed by both men and women. This dance is led by a person carrying a gong, a *kwaenggari*, and a pole with pheasant feathers at the top and a banner saying: "Farming is the Mainstay of Our Nation." This is followed by a processional of men and boys. Each dancer wears a hat decorated with white paper flowers. A dancer follows the leader and carries an hour-glass drum, a *changgo*, over his shoulders. Some dancers carry gongs, drums and loud reed instruments. The dancers move counter-clockwise running, turning and hopping, dancing solo with their instrument, and turn in unison. The high point of the dance is when small boys, moving their heads, make long spirals with white ribbons attached to the crown of their hat. They gyrate laying down and standing up and the flowing streamers curve in the air for a grand finale to the dance.

The *Farmers' Dance* is performed during times of planting and harvesting and during ceremonial occasions to express feelings of joy. The *mudang*, or shaman, is the people's connection to the spirits and performs dance rituals to bring good fortune and to console the spirits of the dead. The *Salp'uri*, a popular shamanistic dance is very rhythmic and emotionally charged. The *Kanggangsullae* is performed by a large group of girls singing solo verse and chorus on the full moon of the first and eighth lunar months. It starts off slowly and ends with a whirling climax.

In *kut*, a shaman ritual, the audience may join in some of the dancing. A *kut* consists of chanting, singing and dancing, with instrumental music that starts with a slow tempo that eventually becomes fast. A *changgo* (hour-glass drum), the *chaegum* (cymbal), the *piri* (bamboo oboe), the *taegum* (flute), the *haegum* (two-string fiddle) and gongs are used to play shaman music. The purpose of the *kut* was to insure happiness, health, prosperity and longevity to the village people or to appease the spirits.

Fan Dance, *Puch'ech'um*, was developed from a folk ritual and is often staged. It is performed by a group of women who dance with folding fans, *puch'e*, which have peonies flowers painted on them. Their costumes resemble those worn by dancers of the royal court. Each dancer wears a flowered crown, *hwagwan*. The dance is dignified, elegant, and graceful. The dancers open and close their fans as they dance to a light-hearted, flowing rhythm. The climax of the dances comes as the dancers form a large fluttering flower that rotates in a circular motion.

Kanggangsullae is a circle dance for women usually performed during the Harvest Moon festival, *Ch'usok*, on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month. According to legend, this dance was used as a successful military tactical strategy in 1592 to trick the Japanese into believing that there was a large army waiting for them on shore. This dance originates from the traditional customs of the farmers. The dance starts with a large group of girls singing, moving slowly clockwise, then counter clockwise, around a solo singer who dances in the center of the circle, and accelerates to a rapidly whirling

climax. The girls sing the refrain as the center girl sings the lyrics. The song expressed desire for happiness, longevity and love. *Kanggangsullae* means "watch or guard the surroundings."

MASKED DANCES

The *Lion Dance* is based on the belief that the lion is capable of driving evil spirits out of households. As the dance procession winds its way around the village, the lion would devour the silly aristocrats and the wicked priests as he danced. There is a mixture of song, dance, pantomime, colorful costumes, magnificent masks and comedic dialogue involved in this dance.

The *Monk's Dance*, *Sungmu*, is a very expressive dance that evolved from ancient legend. A beautiful *kisaeng* is determined to seduce a monk famous for his celibacy. The *kisaeng* puts on Buddhist robes and a hat and enters the monk's temple. She begins by slowly beating a seductive rhythm on her drum. The tempo increases as she sways and dances before the entranced monk; in the end, completely disrobed, the poor monk is overwhelmed and capitulates.

There are eight variations of the masked dance drama that contain music, song, mime, dialogue and dancing. The cast consists of shamans, monks, old wives, yangban and young concubines. The mask dance, or *t'alch'um*, often was performed at night and consisted of several acts with dialogue that was a parody on life or had a satirical plot. The masks are called "*t'al*" and most have a black cloth in the back to secure them in place. There are artistic and religious masks, some with movable parts. Masks are made of paper, wood, gourds and fur. Red, white and black colors are used. These identify the sex and age of the characters. The old person's mask is black, a young man's red, and a young woman's is white. Most masks are of human faces, but some represent animal deities. The mask dances are usually performed on the first full moon, on the eighth of the fourth moon, Buddha's birthday, *Tano* festival, *Ch'usok*, festive occasions or at the ritual for rain.

If you travel to a country village in Korea you might be able to see the actors walking in the streets or stopping at each door for a blessing. They then proceed to a rice paddy in the mountains wearing their mask on the tops of their heads. Some mask dance drama groups have been designated as "National Intangible Cultural Property" to preserve this rich tradition. The *yangju* masks are burned in a final ritual since they are considered sacred and are recreated for each dance performance.

HANDOUT 4

KOREAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Korea's rich traditional music has a distinct repertory and musical forms. Korean traditional music can be divided into two categories: *chongak* for the ruling class and *sogak* for the common people. Within these two categories are subcategories. *Chongak* is considered "right" for the ruling class in terms of Confucian philosophy. Within this category is ensemble music for men of high social class played outside the court.

Aak is ritual shrine music and only one example remains today. *Munmyoak* is music played at *munmyo*, the shrine that honors Confucius and his disciples. *Tangak* is secular music from the Chinese dynasty that was altered to become court music when it was introduced to Korea.

Military music was played by two bands. A loud band preceded the king during processions, with one playing softer music following him. The front band consisted of brass trumpets, conch shells, conical oboes, cymbals, gongs and drums. The rear band played the cylindrical aboe, Chinese transverse flutes, drums and a two-string fiddle.

Banquet music was for court banquets. *Sujech'on*, which is a thousand years old, is one of the most famous pieces. It is played by an instrumental ensemble using a variety of instruments, including the *taegum*, bamboo flutes, *kayagum*, twelve-stringed zither, drums, *p'iri*, oboes and other percussion instruments. It is often played to accompany court dancing, which is slow and stately. The dancers wear long colorful dresses with long sleeves that drape to the ground and small flower crowns of gold with sparkling pendants. Their steps are measured and graceful and create an atmosphere of dignity and loveliness.

Ritual music accompanied Confucian ceremonies at royal shrines. The ritual is performed twice a year at the Confucian shrine on Songgyun'gwan in Seoul. It is played antiphonally by two orchestras, one on the terrace and one on the ground representing eight materials: wood, metal, silk, stone, leather, clay, bamboo and the gourd. A *p'jonjong* (a set of sixteen bronze bells on a wooden frame), a *p'yon-gyong* (a set of sixteen stone chimes), an *o* (a wooden tiger), a *pu* (a baked clay jar that is struck with a bamboo mallet), a *ch'uk* (a wooden box with a hole on the top through which a wooden hammer is used to strike it when inserted) are the instruments used in this ritual. A team of 64 dancers perform two dances that consist of slow, solemn, rhythmic bowing.

Chongak means proper music that is instrumental and vocal. Besides the different types of instrumental music, *Chongak* has three genres of classical song: *kagok* are long lyrical songs that are sung solo or in duet and accompanied by an ensemble, *sijo* are short lyrical songs set to music that have a three line phrases and are sung on variations of a basic melody, *kasa* are long narrative songs sung by males or females who switch back and forth between normal voice and falsetto and draw out the syllables of the text. They are accompanied by a *changgo* or by an ensemble that consists of an oboe, flute and a fiddle.

The commoners music is called *sogak*, which is lively, lusty and vibrant. It includes narrative opera and instrumental solo music, folk and farmer music, and shaman and

Buddhist music. Many folk songs are about work. The farmers songs are often about plowing, weeding or harvesting. The fishermen sing about fishing and woodcutters about cutting wood. The songs are sung in the village square during festivals. For centuries, bands of acrobats, troubadours, musicians, monks and storytellers carried songs throughout Korea.

Folk music encompasses a variety of subjects, tempo and mood. There are songs about games, love, religion, work and lullabies. These songs can be happy, sad or humorous in mood and fast or slow in tempo.

Sogak includes Buddhist music, *p'ansori*, shaman music, folk songs and *sanjo* music. In shaman music, the female shaman, *mudang*, mediates between the visible and the supernatural worlds. The *mudang* sings, dances and plays an instrument. In Buddhist music, a song called *pomp'ae* is sung in praise to Buddha, and today only a few monks remain who learned *pomp'ae* years ago. The government has designated *pomp'ae* as a "National Intangible Cultural Property."

Sanjo is an instrumental solo piece usually played on a twelve-string zither and an hour-glass drum. The *sanjo* piece has six movements played without pause in progressively faster tempos. The earliest *sanjo* music developed from combining shaman and folk tunes.

The life of the farmers has had a significant influence on the music of Korea. The farmers' music has twelve different rhythmic patterns called *sipech'al* in which time is kept by a small gong (*kwaenggwari*).

A *p'ansori* performance tells one of five basic stories based on Korean legends. The drummer plays a barrel shaped drum (*puk*), by striking the drum head with his left palm and the barrel of the drum with a stick held in his right hand. The drummer sits to the left of the singer and accompanies the singer and from time to time calls out words of encouragement. The *p'ansori* singer tells a long tale combining song and narration and gestures and plays all the characters in the tale. *P'ansori* stories were usually tales of filial piety and chastity. Singers acquire a hoarse or husky tone through lengthy and demanding training. The most accomplished singers are designated "National Intangible Cultural Property" and given the title of *myongch'ang*, or celebrated singer. Today's performances usually last about 2.5 hours and only a segment of the story is told. In the past, a complete *p'ansori* could last for more than six hours.

HANDOUT 5

The National Classical Music Institute has preserved over sixty different kinds of musical instruments. Fifteen of these instruments are no longer used today. Frequently used percussion instruments include the following:

TRADITIONAL KOREAN PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

chabara—These circular brass cymbals are the largest ones used in Buddhist ceremonial dances, military processional music and shamanistic rituals. They are held by cloth handles and played by striking each other; small cymbals are fastened to the thumbs and fingers of dancers.

changgo—This double-headed drum, shaped like an hourglass, comes in a number of sizes and is the most frequently used instrument in Korean music. It is usually painted red and placed on the floor in front of the performer. The left side, struck with the palm of the left hand, makes a low soft sound. The right side, struck with a thin bamboo stick, makes a hard crisp sound.

ching—This instrument, traditionally used for military signalling, is used today in shaman and Buddhist rituals, military processional music and farmer music. It is a large bronze gong with a cloth cord handle, which is held in the left hand and struck with a large, cloth-covered mallet.

chin'go—As the largest Korean drum used in ceremonial music today, this red barrel instrument is supported by a four-legged wooden stand. When struck by a softheaded mallet, this drum produces a deep sound. The edges on the head have multicolored decorations with a yin yang symbol in the center.

cholgo—A performer sits in front of this red barrel drum, which is mounted on a slant on a wooden stand. There is a multicolored decorated edge on the head with a yin yang symbol in the center. A wooden mallet is used to strike the center of the drum, which is used for ceremonial rites.

chwago—This is a medium-sized barrel drum with a wooden body hung on a wooden frame. The body is brightly colored with a yin yang symbol in the center. A loud deep sound is produced when a seated player strikes the head with a large, softheaded wooden mallet.

kwaenggwari—This small, flat bronze gong produces a loud sound when struck with a small wood mallet with a wooden ball on the end. It is used for farmers' music and shaman ritual music.

mokt'ak—Buddhist monks use the *mokt'ak* to accompany sutra chanting. It is a hollow handheld drum that is shaped like a flattened ball. This wooden drum is played when a player hits it with a wooden mallet.

nodo—Used in *chongmyoak* and *munmyoak* ritual music, this instrument consists of two small, twirling red barrel drums set atop one another at a right angle on a long wooden pole.

nogo—Used in *chongmyoak* and *munmuyoak* music, this crossed-barrel drum is struck with a wooden mallet only on one head.

o—This instrument is a tiger-shaped scraper made of wood and is played with a split bamboo whisk for ritual music. Its only function is to give the stopping signal while its counterpart, the *ch'uk* gives the starting signal.

pak—This wooden clapper has a fan shape and is played by the director of an ensemble to give the starting and stopping signals.

popko—Two players, one on each end, use two wooden mallets to strike the drum head and the body of this large barrel drum set aslant on a wooden stand.

puk—This is an undecorated, shallow wooden double headed drum used in folk music. The player strikes the left side of the drum with the palm of his left hand while striking the right side of the drum with a stick in his right hand.

p'yon'gyong munmyoak and *chongmyoak*—Ritual music that uses this set of sixteen L-shaped chimes, which are made from a form of calcite and hung in two rows of eight in a decorated wooden frame. The player sits behind the instrument and strikes one chime at a time, with a mallet that is made of an animal horn.

p'yonjong—This set of sixteen bronze bells are basically the same shape and size and are hung in two rows of eight on a wooden decorated frame. This instrument is used in ritual music. The player sits behind the instrument and strikes each bell with an animal horn mallet.

sogo—This small drum with two shallow heads has a wooden handle and is played with a thick wooden mallet that produces little sound. It is used in folk music.

yonggo—Brightly-colored dragons decorate the stand where the drum is mounted; therefore, this drum is also known as the dragon drum. It is a shallow four-headed drum and is used in military processional music as well as an accompaniment for folk music.

TRADITIONAL KOREAN STRING INSTRUMENTS

ajaeng—This zither instrument is bowed with seven silk strings that run from a curved bridge to another curved bridge on the other end. It uses a resined bow to make majestic tones and is used to play classical and folk music.

haegum—This two-stringed spike fiddle is used in *chongak* and *sanjo* music. Vertically held on the left knee, this instrument is played by rubbing a resined bow against two strings.

kayagum—This popular zither instrument has twelve strings supported by a bridge. It produces a clear and delicate tone when the thumb, index and middle finger of the right hand pluck the strings and is used in folk and court music.

komongo—This is a six-stringed zither used with a bamboo rod held between the index and middle finger of the right hand while the left hand presses on the string to produce microtones for court and folk music. The instrument is played propped slightly on an edge

and angled away from the performer's right knee.

yangum—This is the only traditional string instrument that uses steel wire strings. It is in the form of a trapezoid and has fourteen sets of four metal strings that pass over and under two bridges. Used for aristocratic music, this instrument is played by striking the strings with a bamboo stick.

TRADITIONAL KOREAN WIND INSTRUMENTS

chi—This is a short transverse flute with a mouthpiece made of bamboo. It has five finger holes with the first one off to the side. It is used in ritual music and in concert performances of ritual music.

chok—This flute, used for court music, is played vertically and has one blow hole and six finger holes.

hun—This small globular flute made of clay has a blowing hole at the apex, three finger holes on the front and two thumbholes on the back. It is used only in the musical ensembles during the rites for Confucius held in Seoul.

napal—The only Korean wind instrument made of metal, this long brass trumpet has no finger holes and is used for military processional music.

nagak—This long conch-shell trumpet produces a deep single pitch and is used exclusively in ensembles for processional music.

p'iri—A cylindrical oboe made of bamboo with seven finger holes and a thumbhole, this leading instrument with its loud distinctive tone quality and timbre always takes the main melody in Korean court music or folk ensembles.

so—Shaped like the wings of a bird, this set of pan pipes consist of sixteen notched bamboo pipes fitted into a thin symmetrical wooden frame. The *so* is used solely for ritual music to honor Confucius.

sogum—Also called *tangjok*, this small transverse bamboo flute has a mouth hole and six finger holes.

taegum—This longest transverse bamboo flute, which has a blowing hole, six finger holes, a membrane covered hole and five non-finger holes at the lower end produces beautiful tones from the vibration of the membrane. It is used in both court and folk music.

taep'yongso—Literally meaning “great peace oboe,” this double-reed instrument with eight finger holes, a metal mouthpiece and a cup-shaped metal bell to produce a loud piercing sound, is used for royal ancestral shrine music, farmer's band music and military music.

tanso—As a favorite solo instrument because of its pure and delicate tone, this small, notched, vertical flute made of bamboo has four finger holes in the front and a thumbhole in the back.