

500 Words

Kim Yoona is an Ajaeng-bowed zither instrument player, composer, improviser, and music educator originally from Seoul, South Korea, who is currently active in Boston, USA. She intuitively and sensibly expresses a wide sound spectrum using the Ajaeng, drawing from her diverse genre background, and her unique performances blending traditional Korean elements with multi-genre and contemporary sensibilities.

Kim began her musical journey at the age of eight with Korean folk songs and Gayageum. She later learned various traditional Korean arts, including Pansori, Jeongga, Haegeum, Dance, and percussion. For her, playing and singing Korean music as a child was the happiest experience. At age fourteen, she began to specialize in the Ajaeng and studied Ajaeng performance and musicology at Seoul National University. She completed her Master's degree and an Artist Diploma in Contemporary Musical Arts at the New England Conservatory, studying under Anthony Coleman, Carla Kihlstedt, Hankus Netsky, Joe Morris, Lautaro Mantilla, and Stratis Minakakis. Upon graduating from the New England Conservatory, she received both the Tourjée Alumni Scholarship and the Peter Lyman Row Global Musicianship Award, making her the first person to receive two awards from the conservatory

Kim founded the contemporary Korean music group 'ModernGagok' in 2016. Her first project and recital, 'Ajaeng Gagok Hanbatang,' which featured compositions that integrate the Ajaeng into Jeongga and showcase the modern transformation of traditional court music. This project was awarded the Sinak-hoi Composition Award. ModernGagok have been praised for their unique songs, characterized by a calm and stable sound, as well as beautiful harmonies using the Ajaeng and Piri, which closely resemble the human voice. It was selected as the Artist of the Month by Jeongdong Theater in 2017, participated in the Exciting Arts Journey in 2018-2021, and was recognized as a group by the Korean Cultural Center in Berlin and the Surim Cultural Foundation's Surim New Wave in 2019. She has organized various artistic projects, including "Modern Sound," which combines soundscapes and improvisation, and "Modern Story," which is a musical.

Kim collaborates with Arizona-born banjo and guitarist Roman Barten-Sherman, creating music that fuses traditional Korean music with Delta blues. This duo has performed at renowned venues, including Passim in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Smithsonian Museum "Instead of creating a forced fusion, the two singers/musicians, who met in Boston, dive deep into American and Korean traditions as they trade vocals and licks, showing how both the blues and Korean folk music share a sense of sustain, soul, rhythm, and space." - WBUR, Boston's National Public Radio.

As a contemporary improviser, Kim is actively involved in the music scene in both the United States and Korea, performing with artists such as Anthony Coleman, Chris Cochrane, Fay Victor, Satoshi Takeishi, and Greg Kelley. Currently, Kim is expanding her musical spectrum by studying jazz with George Garzone and Linda May Oh Han at the Berklee Global Jazz Institute. She is preparing for the release of her first album with Roman Barten-Sherman and the second album of ModernGagok.