

celestial harmonies

sea & mountain:
music in the korean style
michael atherton
celestial harmonies 13170-2
cd - 0 1371 13170 2 2
file classification:
world music (korea)



the artists

Multi-instrumentalist Michael Atherton composed and produced this recording.

Born in the U.K. in 1950, he grew up in Australia. He is an internationally travelled performer, composer, author of books on musical instruments, and an accomplished composer in a variety of genres and styles including chamber music, screen, radio and theatre.

He is founding Professor of Music and Head of Contemporary Arts at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Michael Atherton performs on no less than 24 different instruments on this recording, Korean and Western alike. He is assisted by Mina Kanaridis, vocals, and Philip South, percussion, both of which can be heard on a number of other Celestial Harmonies releases by Michael Atherton, Michael Askill and Synergy.

For Celestial Harmonies/Black Sun Music, Michael Atherton has also recorded ANKH: THE SOUND OF ANCIENT EGYPT (13174-2), ABUNDANCE (13192-2), SHOALHAVEN RISE (15019-2), LYREBIRD (15023-2) and CROSS-HATCH (15028-2).

the project (thoughts from the artist)

As an Australian living in a unique multicultural society, I am privileged to count Korean-Australians among my friends and to have travelled to Korea on several occasions as a performer. I enjoy Korea, its music and the liveliness of the Korean people, and welcome the day when the country might become united again.

In creating this musical project, it was inevitable that I would want to express something of my passion for Korea's rich musical heritage, not simply through copying or emulation, but to allow for melodies, rhythms and timbres to permeate my own musical background, through an osmotic process. The result is a mostly improvised and spontaneously created collection of pieces.

I acknowledge respectfully, Korean cultural identity and values, and the many wonderful composer-musicians I have been privileged to listen to and meet on my travels. Included are Hwang Byung-ki (*kayagum/zither*), Kim Duk-Soo (*samul nori/percussion*), Won Jang-Hyun (*taegum/flute*), and An Sook-Su (*pansori*). Each is a master, an intangible asset to Korea's rich cultural life. Yet mostly unknown to Western audiences in stark contrast with a growing number of Korean virtuosi working in the canons of European classical music.

The instrumental palette on this CD is broad. Some of the instruments are Korean and some of the combinations reflect Korean practices. For example, track 4 *The Singer of Tales* is influenced by *pansori*—an extended musical narrative performed by a singer accompanied by a small double-headed barrel drum (*puk*). *Lovesong 1* and *Lovesong 2* are based on *minyong*, traditional folk-songs heard in the cities of Seoul and Kyongju.

The free improvisations on the zither and the guitar heard on *A Poet's Longing* and *A Monk Reflects* allude to the *sanjo* tradition. *Sanjo* might be described as 'scattered melodies'. It is a solo form devoted to virtuosic performances on a melodic instrument accompanied by the *changgo*, an hour-glass drum.

