The Korean Wave as Viewed Through the Pages of The New York Times in 2006
This booklet is a collection of 52 articles selected by Korean Cultural Service New York from articles on Korean culture by The New York Times in 2006.
THE KOREAN WAVE

As Viewed
Through the Pages of
The New York Times
in 2006

First edition, March 2007
Edited & published by Korean Cultural Service New York
460 Park Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10022
Tel: 212 759 9550
Fax: 212 688 8640
Web: http://www.koreanculture.org
E-mail: nykocus@koreanculture.org
Sponsored by Korea Tourism Organization New York
Tel: 201 585 0909
Fax: 201 585 9041
Web: http://www.tour2korea.com
E-mail: ny@kntoamerica.com
Consultant: Gwin Joh Chin
Ms. Gwin Joh Chin, a Korean-American New Yorker,
worked for The New York Times for 40 years.
Copyright © 2007 by Korean Cultural Service New York
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by
any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recovering, or
by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing
from the publisher.
Printed in New York
Cover & text design by Jisook Byun
Printing & binding by Karis Graphic Corp.
A war-torn country a mere half-century ago, South Korea today stands at the doorstep of the Group of 8 nations in economic terms. While its traditional strengths in shipbuilding and steel production continue to bloom, the likes of ultra-modern mobile phones and visually tantalizing flat-panel televisions have added greater fuel to the world’s tenth largest economy.

And, these electronic gadgets that are seen across the world from North America and Europe to the Middle East and Africa are proving instrumental in another area of tremendous growth: South Korea’s pop culture.

Beamed through televisions, computers and mobile phones, South Korean music, TV shows and movies have attracted the hearts and minds of Asians, whether in Japan, China or South-East Asia. South Korean soap operas grab primetime slots across Asia, their ratings are high and viewers left thirsting for more reach out for DVD’s that are exported throughout the region. South Korean pop music can be heard in trendy bars and nightclubs in Beijing, Tokyo and other major Asian cities. When South Korean pop stars head overseas for concert tours, stadiums are filled. Simply, South Korean heart-throbs, such as Rain and Se7en, have replaced Hollywood stars in the hearts of Asian teenagers, while those looking to enhance their beauty most often look toward South Korean performers and actors such as Song Hae-goo and Chun Ji-hyun.

More internationally, South Korean films have been the spotlight of international film awards. Hollywood films may bankroll large corporations, but South Korean films have impressed and moved movie-goers who have been exposed to works by the likes of Kim Ki-duk, an artist extraordinaire, and Park Chan-wook, an unrivalled storyteller. As a result, the two directors, along with a number of actors, have won numerous awards in Europe and Asia, not to mention filling the shelves of DVD stores in major cultural centers of the world such as New York and London.

However, these artists and performers did not come out of nowhere. They carry on a tradition left by their ancestors who have filled Korea’s 5,000-year history with much sophistication and creativity that are embodied in paintings, literature, architecture and music. Certainly, today’s older generation of South Koreans grew up during some of the most painful periods of Korean history, when Koreans were prohibited from expressing themselves in their own language and a devastating war brought about abject poverty. Hence, the older generation grew up nostalgic of Korea’s ancient and early modern achievements. In contrast, today’s younger generation are growing up creating their own culture that is a mix of Korean and Western ideas, images and sounds. And, unlike the older generations, the younger artists are taking advantage of globalized communications to seduce those in distant parts of the globe to ride the “Korean wave.”

In addition to creating their own, South Korean artists and performers are contributing to the growth of Western culture as well. Hailed by the New York Times as “pioneer of video art whose work broke cultural barriers,” Nam June Paik is widely considered the inventor of video art, and thrived in the West. More recently, South Korean students have been flooding the world’s most prestigious institutions for classical music and art throughout Europe and the United States. The result has been impressive. Already, younger performers have won prestigious international awards, while seasoned pianists, violinists and opera singers have led internationally successful solo careers. In 2006, the Metropolitan Opera made history by selecting an Asian tenor and an Asian soprano to lead “La Traviata.” Both performers hail from South Korea.

Asia is home to two thirds of the world’s population, and expected to constitute a large bulk of the world’s wealth in several decades. Japan has certainly received much media coverage as Asia’s largest economic power. In more recent years, China has certainly swept the headlines with its expected super power status in mind. However, when Asians need time off from fuelling their respective economies, they turn on their TV’s, switch on their MP3 players or log onto the Internet. And, when they do, the Korean wave surely takes up much of the airwaves and bandwidth. As one New York Times correspondent noted, “From clothes to hairstyle, music to television, South Korea has been defining the tastes of many Chinese and other Asians for the past half decade.”

Many words and pages would be required to explain the cultural boom that is emanating from the Korean peninsula. Fortunately for those of us in the English-speaking world, the New York Times has been exemplary in their coverage, whether by their correspondents dispatched to Asia or by critics of all sorts based in New York. This book contains a selection of these articles, carefully chosen for their lasting value. It is hoped this book will shed some light on the contemporary culture of South Korea that is now forging into the West. While South Korea has been known as the “Hermit Kingdom,” that label should surely come under serious challenge considering the outward expansion of South Korea’s contemporary culture.

Peter Hyun
March 2007

Peter Hyun, a former senior editor at Doubleday and the author of “Koreana” and “Darkness at Dawn,” contributes to The New York Times, the International Herald Tribune and other journals in Asia and Europe.
The New York Times introduced many Korean films with deep insights prior to their theatrical releases in the U.S. For example, with “The Host” and “The King and the Clown”. The Times not only explained the films but also examined the Korean society.
The South Korean director Bong Joon-ho has monsters on the brain: ready to snack on your loved ones, provoke screams and provide the kind of cinematic fun you might expect from a Hollywood picture. But in a very studied way, as with all of Mr. Bong’s movies, which are laden with metaphors and ideas.

“There are a whole lot of prejudices about creature movies, that they are just childish or just sci-fi,” Mr. Bong said, speaking of his film “The Host,” which was screened on May 21 at the Cannes Film Festival. “Those prejudices poked me and intrigued me. I took it as a challenge.”

Mr. Bong has never been interested in the “Asian extreme” label that is so popular these days. Unlike peers, he has avoided hammer sprees, fishhook fun and demented sex.

His previous film, “Memories of Murder” – a dark comedy about police in a country town on the trail of a serial killer – was one of South Korea’s biggest critical and commercial successes, winning awards from San Sebastián, Spain, to Tokyo. “Barking Dogs Never Bite” – the story of a university lecturer tormented by the barking of a neighbor’s dog – similarly won acclaim all over the world for its wry observations on modern life. The “extreme” label, he said, speaking in a production office here, has been useful as a marketing tool; but “before long that tendency will die out.”

“The Host,” easily Mr. Bong’s most ambitious work, is the story of a monster that emerges from the Han River in Seoul to wreak havoc and eat a few people, and of an ordinary man who gets pulled into the fray.
Unlike his Korean peers, Bong Joon-ho avoids demented mayhem.

With a budget of just over $10 million, the film pales in size next to the average Hollywood blockbuster. (It's not even that large for a Korean movie anymore; the biggest films push toward the $20 million mark.) But careful planning meant Mr. Bong could afford hundreds of effects shots that bring the monster to life.

It was his first time dealing with international effects houses, like the Orphanage in the United States and Weta Workshop in New Zealand, and his first experience with American actors. (The United States military figures heavily in the story, which can be seen in part as an allegory for American power in the post-9/11 world.)

During an afternoon interview, Mr. Bong was dressed in a black T-shirt that read “Mise-en-scènes: Genres film festival,” his hair a wiry tangle of jet black. While talking, he moved, squirmed and gesticulated continually, checking his cellphone's constant flow of messages. He had been working 14 hours or more a day for months, struggling against deadlines to finish his creature feature in time. "The Host" will not be released until July in South Korea, but he ramped up the pace even more to get it done in time for Cannes.

Born in 1969 in Daegu (when he calls it “Korea's most conservative city,” he leaves no doubt it is not a compliment), Mr. Bong soon moved to Seoul. He watched movies more on television than in the theaters, often on the United States armed forces channel AFKN. On the small screen he liked a diverse range, from “The Bicycle Thief” to Sam Peckinpah films.

“The Peckinpah movies had a lot of cuts,” he said. “I used to notice the cuts and imagine what was missing.” But even though his father was an artist and a professor of graphic design, Mr. Bong hesitated to study film. “I was afraid to freak out my parents. That generation did not think movies were art.”

Instead he attended Yonsei University's department of sociology, which in the 1980's was a famous hotbed for the democracy movement. Another highly regarded and provocative director, Im Sang-soo (“The President's Last Bang”), graduated from the same department at the same time, although Mr. Bong said the two never knew each other in those days. Park Chan-wook (“Oldboy”) attended Sogang University, just down the street, around the same time.

While still in school Mr. Bong made a short film, then, after gathering the courage to freak out his parents, he spent a year in film school. Entering the movie business in the mid-1990’s, he worked as an assistant director on “Seven Reasons Beer Is Better Than a Girl” (which he calls “the worst movie ever in Korea”), then a couple more movies, before getting the chance to make his own film, “Barking Dogs Never Bite.”

“In the mid 1990's the Korean film industry was really open-minded,” Mr. Bong said. “Hong Sang-soo and Kim Ki-duk made their debut then. Kang Je-gyu was editing his movie right next door to where I was working.”

Since then Mr. Hong and Mr. Kim have grown into art-house favorites abroad, but their followings at home have all but dried up. Mr. Kang has revolutionized the film industry in Korea with his overt commercialism, smashing box office records twice now, but outside of Korea his films do not travel so well. Mr. Bong, however, continues to walk the line, balancing between the two sides without falling into either. “The multilevel, the conscious and the unconscious, is natural when I write scripts, when I come up with ideas and stories,” he explained.

This layering is also what draws some of Korea's top actors to Mr. Bong. “What I like about director Bong's work is that his films are not the kind you just watch once and then leave behind,” said Song Gang-ho, the star of “The Host” and “Memories of Murder.” “You find a different attraction every time you watch them. Whenever I work with director Bong, it's always delightful to share his way of looking at the world. It's quite extraordinary.”

For Mr. Bong, the film world in South Korea has completely changed since he started more than a decade ago.

“I think over the past five or six years I've felt a radical change from foreigners about Korean films,” he said. “In 2000, when I was promoting 'Barking Dogs,' all the questions were really general. But nowadays the questions are more individualized, personal.”

Next up, he said, will be a small film, about a “very destructive story between a mother and a son,” followed by a return to the special effects in a story based of a French comic book, but probably nothing more extreme than that.
Here There Be Monsters

By Aidan Foster-Carter

K

orea's strategic targets and industrial com-
plexes. That's on top of 11,200 artillery pieces, some
ready in place. Two new bases under construction in the
northeastern part of the country are thought to be for
short-range Scud missiles are based just 30 miles north of
the Taepodong-2, a long-range intercontinental ballistic
missile, which in theory could reach Alaska (although the
July 4 test was, fortunately, pretty much a flop).

First, the real world. Last week, the semiofficial Yonhap
news agency raised the alarm about a new report on
North Korea's missile threat compiled by a researcher at
a foreign ministry think tank called the Institute of Foreign
Affairs and National Security. According to the author,
Yun Deok-min, the July 4 missile tests that caused an
international furor were just part of a major expansion of
Kim Jong-il's capacity to menace his neighbors. All along
east coast, the report noted, North Korea is building
underground missile bases and silos.

As the geography suggests, the main target is Japan, in-
cluding American military bases there. Mr. Yun claimed
that some 200 Rodong missiles (with a range of up to
1,300 miles, enough to reach anywhere in Japan) and
50 SSN-6 missiles (range of up to 2,500 miles) are al-
ready in place. Two new bases under construction in the
northeastern part of the country are thought to be for
short-range Scud missiles are based just 30 miles north of
the Taepodong-2, a long-range intercontinental ballistic
missile, which in theory could reach Alaska (although the
July 4 test was, fortunately, pretty much a flop).

I suppose we shouldn't begrudge either South Koreans'
time when millions of its people have died of hunger.
Gay-Themed Film Gives Closet Door a Tug

BY NORMITSU ONISHI

SEOUL, South Korea

The film “King and the Clown” featured a love triangle involving a clown, a king, and the clown’s partner, a social phenomenon that became a huge success. In a country where homosexuality was removed from the Youth Protection Commission’s list of “socially unacceptable” acts only in 2004, the film centered on a gay love triangle in a 16th-century royal court: a young man torn between his love for a fellow clown and an amorous king.

But to everyone’s surprise, not least the director’s, in mid-March the movie became the most popular ever in South Korea’s history, seen by more than 12 million people, or one in four residents. In American terms, it would perhaps be the equivalent of “Brokeback Mountain” – to which this movie has been loosely compared – grossing as much as “Titanic.”

As a cultural phenomenon, “King and the Clown” has led to sometimes confused, sometimes uncomfortable discussions here about the nature of homosexuality, something that was rarely discussed publicly until a few years ago.

At the core of the movie, which the producers hope to take to the United States, is a tender, poetic, and touching story of two male clowns, Jang Saeng and Gong Gil, who become court jesters. The king becomes enamored of Gong Gil, and the story becomes an exploration of love and identity.

Gong Gil is the feminine, delicate-looking clown who assumes the female part in skits. Itinerant performers who depend on handouts for their survival, the clowns are condemned to death one day for a bawdy skit insulting Yonsan, a king remembered in Korean history for his tyranny. But after succeeding in making the king laugh, the clowns are pardoned and allowed to become court jesters.

The king becomes enamored of Gong Gil, and the ensuing relationship fuels Jang Saeng’s jealousy. Physical displays of affection are subtle: the king kisses the sleeping clown in one brief scene; in another showing the two clowns sleeping next to each other, Jang Saeng gently tucks in his partner.

The film’s success has led to sometimes confused, sometimes uncomfortable discussions about the nature of homosexuality, something that was rarely discussed publicly until a few years ago.

At the core of the movie, which the producers hope to take to the United States, is a tender, poetic, and touching story of two male clowns, Jang Saeng and Gong Gil, who become court jesters. The king becomes enamored of Gong Gil, and the story becomes an exploration of love and identity.

Gong Gil is the feminine, delicate-looking clown who assumes the female part in skits. Itinerant performers who depend on handouts for their survival, the clowns are condemned to death one day for a bawdy skit insulting Yonsan, a king remembered in Korean history for his tyranny. But after succeeding in making the king laugh, the clowns are pardoned and allowed to become court jesters.

The king becomes enamored of Gong Gil, and the ensuing relationship fuels Jang Saeng’s jealousy. Physical displays of affection are subtle: the king kisses the sleeping clown in one brief scene; in another showing the two clowns sleeping next to each other, Jang Saeng gently tucks in his partner.
Then, in 2000, the issue was tossed into the public area when a well-known television actor, Hong Suk Chon, became the first major figure to declare his homosexuality. Mr. Hong was immediately dropped from his show, and his career appeared over. But in 2003, in a sign of changing attitudes, the actor began a successful comeback.

“We feel that the last 10 years is the equivalent of a hundred years because so many changes occurred in such a short period,” Oh Ga Ram, an official at the Korean Gay Men's Human Rights Group, said in an interview in the organization's office in Chongno.

No other public figure has come out of the closet, and most Korean gays remain hidden. But Mr. Oh said "King and the Clown" was a “positive step” because “there is a discourse now that did not exist before.”

The discourse, though, was often confused, Mr. Oh said. Because the love triangle hinges on a feminine male clown, some viewers say the relationship is not a gay one at all. “In the minds of many Koreans now, ‘pretty males’ equal gay,” he said.

The movie's title in Korean is more direct about the nature of the relationship: “The King's Man.”

Still, as its director, Lee Jun Ik, was hesitant to define his movie as a gay-themed one and play it down as breaking taboos.

"This is not homosexuality as defined by the West," Mr. Lee said in an interview. “It’s very different from ‘Brokeback Mountain.’ In that movie, homosexuality is fate, not a preference. Here, it’s a practice.”

Mr. Lee said he had been more interested in evoking the world of itinerant clowns, many of whom were involved in same-sex relationships.

One person the director consulted was Kim Gi Bok, 77, who is considered the last surviving itinerant clown. Mr. Kim was amused at the attention he had gotten because of the film.

“Before, we were treated as beggars, but now we are considered traditional artists,” he said in an interview in Ansanong, a town two hours north of Seoul, where a center to keep alive his craft was established.

Intense relationships developed among itinerant clowns, Mr. Kim said, because they worked in all-male troupes and traveled together all the time.

“It was also difficult to get a wife,” he said. “We were beggars. Who would marry a beggar?”

As in the movie, a masculine clown and a feminine clown often became a couple. The masculine clown showed his love by buying his partner, called biri, a watch. Mr. Kim said: “They would stay together all the time, sleeping in the same room, helping each other out.”

“The biri would go into people’s kitchens and even beg for food for both of them.”

“Some of the biris were extremely beautiful – they had hair down to here,” Mr. Kim said, pointing to his waist, as his eyes lit up at the memory. He added that some clowns who did manage to marry would sometimes leave their wives for fellow clowns.

Mr. Kim himself married and had one son. He said he, too, had biris during his life, though he said the relations had not been sexual.

“Relations between men were very sincere and genuine,” Mr. Kim said. “It was an amazing, remarkable relationship, much closer than anything between a husband and wife.”

All same perhaps, but many here consider the movie a taboo-breaker in its matter-of-fact portrayal of homosexuality. Popular culture had long ignored gays or, in more recent years, relegated them to caricatured roles.

“One or two films tried to describe gay relationships in a serious way, but were unsuccessful commercially,” said Tcha Sung-Jai, one of the country’s best-known producers and a professor of film at Dongkuk University. “That’s why everyone in the industry was so surprised when ‘King and the Clown’ became a hit.”

“I cried when I saw the movie,” Mr. Tcha added, “and I’m a very strong heterosexual.”

In addition to homosexuality, other previously taboo subjects, like human rights violations during South Korea’s military rule and North Korea-related themes, have been broached recently in film. Movies have mirrored, and sometimes tried to stay abreast of, a South Korean society that has been socially and politically transformed in the last decade.

Until a decade ago, when a tiny gay rights movement was started by Korean-Americans on a few college campuses here, most Koreans had been completely unaware even of the existence of gays. Even though Seoul has long had two neighborhoods with small clusters of gay bars, Itaewon and Chongno, they remained hidden, and homosexuality went unmentioned.

Lee Jun Ik, the director, said he was focusing on traditions of behavior, not homosexuality.

By Seokyong Lee for The New York Times
Shin Sang Ok, a pioneering film director who said that his life was too unbelievable to be a movie plot, what with his introducing the kiss to North and South Korean cinema, being kidnapped by a movie-loving dictator and turning up in Hollywood to create the "3 Ninjas" movies, died Tuesday in Seoul. He was 80.

The cause was complications of a liver transplant that he received two years ago, his son-in-law, Suh Dong Yeop, told The Associated Press.

Two of Mr. Shin's films were shown at Cannes, where he was a judge in 1994. He gained some recognition in the United States through showings of his work at the Museum of Modern Art and art-house cinemas, as well as through a broader American release of a horror film modeled on the Japanese Godzilla movies.

In South Korea, however, he was a major figure of his country's film industry during the 1950's and 60's, Deadline that he was the great voice of South Korea. He directed at least 60 movies in 20 years, introducing techniques like the zoom lens and themes like the plight of women in Korean history.

"He was a true independent filmmaker who by dint of persistence and vision built up an entire industry and culture in the region," Lawrence Kardish, senior curator in the department of film and media at MoMA, said in an e-mail message. "It is said that the Shaw Brothers of Hong Kong began making their action-filled films as a positive response to Shin's work."
Mr. Shin's greatest fame in the West came when he and
his wife, from whom he was estranged, were kidnapped
in 1978 by North Korean agents. When Kim Jong II,
the North Korean dictator, demanded that he make pro-
paganda movies, he refused. After eating grass and bark
in prison for five years, he was suddenly released by Mr.
Kim, who told him he could make any movies he liked.

Mr. Shin made seven films before escaping in 1986 during
a stopover in Vienna. He and his wife turned up in Reston,
Va., where their insights into Mr. Kim’s personality, backed
up by recordings they had secretly made, were of consider-
able interest to United States intelligence officers.

Mr. Shin was born in Chunchon, at the northeastern part
of the Korean peninsula, during Japan’s colonial rule.
He graduated from what is now the Tokyo National
University of Fine Arts and Music. He started his career
as an assistant production designer on Choi In Kyu’s
“Viva Freedom!,” the first Korean film made after the
country achieved independence from Japan.

He quickly became a prolific director, completing an average
of more than two films a year. He also worked as a cinema-
tographer, and in the 1960’s produced about 300 movies.

One of the most famous films he directed was “The
Eunuch” (1968), which revolves around incarcerated concubines and enslaved castrated men and their excruciat-
ing passions. South Korea’s first onscreen kiss was in
the 1958 film “Jokha.”

In 1976 he experienced a very public, scandal-peculated di-
vorce from the woman he married in 1953, the actress
Choi Eun Hee. (They later remarried.) He soon ran afoul
of the frequently repressive government of Gen. Park
Chung Hee, and his studio was closed.

In 1978 Ms. Choi was abducted by North Korea, and,
when Mr. Shin went looking for her, he was kidnapped
too. Mr. Shin, who in addition to turning down Mr. Kim’s
initial invitation to make movies glorifying Communism,
further angered the leader by trying to escape.

After five years in prison, the couple, neither of whom
had known the other was alive, were released.

In an interview with The Seoul Times in 2002, Mr. Shin
said there was less censorship than commonly believed.

He said he introduced the word love and the kiss to North Korean movies.

Mr. Shin and his wife moved to Los Angeles in 1989 af-
after living under the protection of the Central Intelligence
Agency for three years. He said that he got the idea for
his humorous “3 Ninjas” movies, done for Disney, by
repeatedly watching “Home Alone” and trying to think of
a way to do something similar that would involve the
martial arts.

He produced, directed or wrote “3 Ninjas Knuckle Up,”
“3 Ninjas Kick Back” and “3 Ninjas: High Noon at Mega
Mountain,” at last under the pseudonym Simon Sheen. He
returned to South Korea in 1994 and continued to pro-
duce movies there.

Mr. Shin is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.
MEMORY, DESIRE AND MORE, FROM DIRECTOR RARELY SEEN

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

"Woman Is the Future of Man" was shown as part of the 2004 New York Film Festival. Following are excerpts from Manohla Dargis’s review, which appeared in The New York Times on October 8, 2004.

The unrated film, in Korean with English subtitles, begins today at the Cinema Village, 22 East 12th Street, Greenwich Village.

A sense of loss permeates the wonderfully titled South Korean film “Woman Is the Future of Man,” where memory, desire and raw self-interest clash against one another with startling poignancy.

A story about two men and the woman they separately possessed and then each abandoned, the film was directed by Hong Sang-soo, one of the most exciting and authentically individual filmmakers to emerge on the world stage recently. Wreathed in a profound melancholy, Mr. Hong’s films lyrically explore the limits of subjectivity, both its pathos and its dangers, often through different viewpoints that don’t so much cancel one another out as add another tile to the mosaic of existence.

Friends from college, the two men are Hunjoon (Kim Taewoo), a film director recently returned from a sojourn in the United States, and Munho (Yoo Jitae), a university art professor. One bright winter afternoon, Hunjoon visits Munho at his home, and the men head out for a meal at a local restaurant. Awkwardness and an undercurrent of belligerence color the meal, exaggerated no doubt by the beer bottles that begin cluttering their table. When each man spots an attractive woman standing outside the restaurant, each in turn thinks back to his relationship with Sunhwa (Sung Hyunah), a painter they knew in school.

After the meal, Hunjoon suggests they visit Sunhwa, who is said to be working in a nearby town, and so they head off in a taxi and into a rude awakening. Mr. Hong has a quiet, delicate touch and what happens between Sunhwa and the men happens quietly, delicately and with enormous feeling. There are no dramatic flourishes or lofty speeches. She quite a few of Mr. Hong’s films (characters), the friends drink too much and fall into the night with poignant outcomes.

"Woman Is the Future of Man" was shown as part of the 2004 New York Film Festival. Following are excerpts from Manohla Dargis’s review, which appeared in The New York Times on October 8, 2004.

The unrated film, in Korean with English subtitles, begins today at the Cinema Village, 22 East 12th Street, Greenwich Village.

A sense of loss permeates the wonderfully titled South Korean film “Woman Is the Future of Man,” where memory, desire and raw self-interest clash against one another with startling poignancy.

A story about two men and the woman they separately possessed and then each abandoned, the film was directed by Hong Sang-soo, one of the most exciting and authentically individual filmmakers to emerge on the world stage recently. Wreathed in a profound melancholy, Mr. Hong’s films lyrically explore the limits of subjectivity, both its pathos and its dangers, often through different viewpoints that don’t so much cancel one another out as add another tile to the mosaic of existence.

Friends from college, the two men are Hunjoon (Kim Taewoo), a film director recently returned from a sojourn in the United States, and Munho (Yoo Jitae), a university art professor. One bright winter afternoon, Hunjoon visits Munho at his home, and the men head out for a meal at a local restaurant. Awkwardness and an undercurrent of belligerence color the meal, exaggerated no doubt by the beer bottles that begin cluttering their table. When each man spots an attractive woman standing outside the restaurant, each in turn thinks back to his relationship with Sunhwa (Sung Hyunah), a painter they knew in school.

After the meal, Hunjoon suggests they visit Sunhwa, who is said to be working in a nearby town, and so they head off in a taxi and into a rude awakening. Mr. Hong has a quiet, delicate touch and what happens between Sunhwa and the men happens quietly, delicately and with enormous feeling. There are no dramatic flourishes or lofty speeches. She quite a few of Mr. Hong’s films (characters), the friends drink too much and fall into the night with poignant outcomes.
For Fans of Asian Films, Two Weeks of Brash Bliss

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

“Hollywood is so over. And Subway Cinema is proud to do its part to spread the word.” That was 2002, and the founders of the New York Asian Film Festival had thrown down the gauntlet. Calling themselves the Subway Cinema collective, the five Asian-film freaks entered the festival scene that year on a mission from God or, more accurately, the gods of cinema: entertainment or die! Uninterested in the kind of auteurist fare slated for art houses and uptown festivals, they wanted to showcase the audience-pleasing films they loved, the kind with monsters, tears and belly laughs. Art wasn’t anathema, but neither was it a fetish.

Now in its fifth year, the New York Asian Film Festival (today through July 1) has evolved from the little festival that could into one of the city’s most valuable events. Last year an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 film aficionados trekked to the Anthology Film Archives in the East Village, which has served as the festival’s base since the beginning, to watch films from the internationally acclaimed likes of Park Chanwook and Takashi Miike. Also on tap last year was the North American premiere of the Japanese master Seijun Suzuki’s delirious “Princess Raccoon,” which had screened at Cannes just the month before. It was a coup for the festival programmers and because, like so many foreign-language films, “Princess Raccoon” remains without an American distributor, it was a gift to local cinephiles.

In 1999 the Subway Cinema collective — Paul Kaze, Brian Naas, Goran Topalovic, Nat Olson and Grady Hendrix, later joined by Dan Craft — combined forces after the shuttering of the Music Palace movie theater. Located on the Bowery, that legendary Chinese-language cinema showcase had been a near high holy temple, the place where dedicated moviegoers could discover amid curls of cigarette smoke and vapors from what sometimes seemed like an entire dim sum brunch, the joys of Hong Kong cinema.

It was where some New Yorkers saw their first John Woo movies and others discovered “Raped by an Angel 4.” It was a place for epiphanies both majestic and sordid. Speaking by telephone from his home in Manhattan, Mr. Hendrix, 33, explained that while they couldn’t keep the Music Palace alive, he and his fellow enthusiasts wanted to keep their movie love burning. So, after kicking in $1,000 each, they began spreading the word, initially by mounting retrospectives dedicated to Hong Kong virtuosos like Johnnie To and Tsui Hark.

The collective began crossing borders shortly thereafter, screening 11 films from five different countries in its first festival. As in 2002, most of the films in this year’s edition are from Japan, which has a robust and, in the United States, criminally neglected national cinema. Also showing are films from Korea (seven), India (five) and Thailand, Malaysia and China (one apiece).
The crisis in foreign-language film distribution in the United States is a point of obsessive concern for those who believe the movie of the moment isn’t “The Break-Up” but the Romanian social satire “The Death of Mr. Lazarescu.” Still, despite the grim tidings—the shrinking theatrical audience, the shrunken distributor—showcases like the New York Asian Film Festival suggest all may not be lost. And Mr. Hendrix, for one, remains uncharacteristically hopeful for someone in this business.

“Kids who read manga and watch anime,” he said, “they’re into movies with female protagonists, they’re into romance and comedy. They make it a point to seek out animes with subtitles. And at some point someone in the U.S. is going to realize that is an audience that should be served.”

Over the next two weeks the festival will play 29 films, including a short, “Hair,” from the South Korean director Jang Jun-Hwan, whose “Save the Green Planet” received a limited American release last year. As usual, the selections encompass a range of genres, from hardcore horror to soft-hearted melodrama, and include multiple premieres. Some of the films arrive laden with accolades, like the epic-size Chinese family drama “Peacock” (2005), which won a significant prize at last year’s Berlin Film Festival. Directed by Gu Changwei, a cinematographer who has shot films for Chen Kaige and Robert Altman, “Peacock” follows three adult children who, beginning in the 1970’s, are trying to find their way in a country not yet in the grip of Louis Vuitton knockoffs and ennui. The hushed naturalism and unhurried rhythms of the Japanese director Yudai Yamaguchi, working with an economy of means and a bountiful imagination, tracks the supremely unhinged adventures of a group of very unusual high school students. Much like the swoon-worthy South Korean period story “Duelist” (2005), from Lee Myung-Se, this parody of juvenile delinquent films takes a satisfyingly heretical approach to traditional narrativity. In “Duelist,” a film that bridges the musical and the action movie with abandon, brandished swords lead not only to some wonderfully riotous fight scenes, but also to an awfully fine romance.

Given the festival's commitment to genre cinema it's instructive that two of the best films I've seen from this year's lineup push the limits of form almost to the breaking point. In the diverting “Cromartie High School” (2005), the Japanese director Yuki Yamaguchi, working with an economy of means and a bountiful imagination, tracks the supremely unhinged adventures of a group of very unusual high school students. Much like the swoon-worthy South Korean period story “Duelist” (2005), from Lee Myung-Se, this parody of juvenile delinquent films takes a satisfyingly heretical approach to traditional narrativity. In “Duelist,” a film that bridges the musical and the action movie with abandon, brandished swords lead not only to some wonderfully riotous fight scenes, but also to an awfully fine romance.

The New York Asian Film Festival runs from tonight through June 25 at the Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Avenue, at Second Street, East Village, (212) 505-5181; and from June 22 to July 1 at the ImaginAsian Theatre, 259 East 59th Street, Manhattan. (212) 371-6682. Information: subwaycinema.com.
FOR ONE TEENAGE BOY,
A MOTEL IS NO WAY STATION, IT’S HOME
BY STEPHEN HOLDEN

O
h, not to be 13 again! Michael Kang’s small, per
fectly observed portrait of Ernest Chin (Jeffrey
Chyau), a Chinese-American boy who lives and
works in a dingy downscale motel operated by his mother,
captures the glum desperation of inhabiting the biological
limbo of early adolescence. For anyone stranded there for
even a month, that limbo can feel like an eternity.

Ernest, a chubby, egg-roll-noshing youth, could stand
for every geeky part-time outsider who ever yearned for
some privacy and sophistication while squirming under the pre
cessual thumb of a strict, watchful parent. His
unsmiling mother, Ahma (Jade Wu), who runs a motor
inn largely patronized by couples who pay by the hour,
is a grim taskmistress who expects her son to keep the
place spotless and to mop up the messes left over from
the quickies he hears through the walls.

With a running time of only 76 minutes, “The Motel”
knows its modest place in the cinematic scheme of things.
The drama, such as it is, stems not from any convention-
al plot, but in the accruing of small, telling details that
sustain a feeling of lives in suspension. One held glance
between the mother and the son can communicate more
information than any number of speeches, for under-
neath their resentment lies a reservoir of mutual under-
standing and love that’s too volatile to put into words.

Ahma, abandoned by her husband, is the head of a
household that also includes Ernest’s bratty younger sis-
ter, Katie (Alexis Kapp Chang), and his emburled grand-
father, Gung Gung (Stephen Chen). He is regularly
harassed by Roy (Conor J. White), a bully roughly his
own age, who lives with his troubled family in the es-
tablishment and peels Ernest with racing epithets. Ernest
has a serious crush on Christine (Samantha Futerman), a
cocky, heavy-drinking Korean rake, down on his luck, who lurches into the
movie with a prostitute on his arm and becomes a tem-
porary resident of the motel. Befriending Ernest, Sam
gives the boy driving lessons and offers ridiculous advice
on seducing women. Desperate for a male role model
and emboldened by Sam, Ernest begins mounting small
acts of defiance against his mother.

In his brashest move, he steals her car, takes Christine for
a drive, makes a comical pass and, when she resists him,
tosses the keys into the woods. This incident could have
amplified into full-scale melodrama, replete with tears
and recriminations. Instead it is treated as another small
step in Ernest’s inevitable self-assertion.

“The Motel,” adapted from Ed Lin’s novel “Waylaid,” re-
fuses to designate heroes and villains. Everyone, even the
pathetic bully, against whom Ernest eventually lashes out
viciously, is viewed with a measure of compassion. Ernest
may not realize it, but this stagnant period of feeling be-
twist and between will soon come to end.

The Motel
Opens today in Manhattan.

Directed by Michael Kang; written (in English, with some subtitled
Chinese) by Mr. Kang, based on the novel “Waylaid” by Ed Lin;
director of photography, Lisa Leone; edited by Colleen Sharp and
Colin Cotter; original music by Nathan Larson; produced by
Palm Pictures and ImaginAsian Pictures. At the Village East, second Avenue at 12th street, East Village. Running
time: 76 minutes. This film is not rated.

with: Jeffrey Chyau (Ernest), Sung Kang (Sam), Jade Wu (Ahma), Samantha Futerman (Christine), Stephen Chen (Gung
Gung); Alexis Kapp Chang (Katie) and Conor J. White (Roy).
The Walter Reade Theater, home of the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the primary screening site for the New York Film Festival, used to be connected to the rest of the Lincoln Center complex by a wide plaza that stretched across West 65th Street. Because of the elaborate reconstruction and expansion of Lincoln Center in progress, that familiar bridge is gone, and the broad stairway that rose from Broadway over Alice Tully Hall is closed. To reach the mezzanine where the Walter Reade sits, you now must climb a narrow stairway tucked into the middle of the block (an escalator and elevators are also available), and from the top of it you look across 65th at Avery Fisher Hall and the Metropolitan Opera House as though gazing from a lonely parapet over a moat full of taxicabs.

The physical separation of the theater from its Lincoln Center siblings is temporary of course, but it suggests a metaphor for the festival, which is an increasingly unusual outcropping on the cultural landscape. Film festivals crowd the calendar and circle the globe, but New York’s is different. Instead of hundreds of films, it presents a few dozen, and it presents them, for the most part, one at a time, rather than in a frenzy of overscheduling. It is neither a hectic marketplace nor a pre-Oscar buzz factory, like Cannes or Toronto, or a film industry frat party, like Sundance. Its tone tends to be serious, sober, and perhaps sometimes a little sedate, even when the movies it shows are daring and provocative.

If I may trot out another metaphor, the New York Film Festival might be compared to an established, somewhat exclusive boutique holding its own in a world of big box superstores, oversize shopping malls and Internet retailers. If you want quantity – racks and shelves full of stuff to sort through in the hope of finding something that might fit your taste – wait for Tribeca, with its grab-bag programs and crowd-pleasing extras. The New York Film Festival, in contrast, prides itself on quality, refinement and selectivity. It is not so much programmed as curated. This selection is a form of criticism – it involves applying aesthetic standards and deciding that some films are better than others – and to understand this festival it helps to understand that its selection committee, led by Richard Peña, the festival’s program director, is made up of film critics. This year’s movies were chosen by Mr. Peña; Kent Jones, associate programmer at the Film Society and editor at large of Film Comment; Lisa Schwarzbaum of Entertainment Weekly; John Powers of Vogue; and Phillip Lopate, editor of the recently published Library of America anthology of American movie criticism and an all-around man of letters.

These critics, like others in their profession, incline toward material that is sometimes described as difficult or challenging, but that requires a disciplined, active attention. In previewing the movies that will be shown over the first week of the festival – and some that will come later – I have been struck by how few of them conform to the conventions of genre and narrative that dominate American commercial cinema. The split between the domestic mainstream and the world of international “art” films has rarely seemed so wide. As the big Hollywood studios, with their eyes on the global market, strive for maximum scale and minimal nuance, independent-minded filmmakers in other countries seem to be going in the other direction. Or, rather, in their own idiosyncratic directions, forging a decentralized, multifarious cinema of nuance, intimacy and formal experimentation.

Some of them veer toward abstraction, like Marc Recha’s “August Days,” in which the story is a faint shadow cast by the images, which consist mainly of views of the mountains and rivers of Catalonia. Other films mix their moods in ways that complicate traditional distinctions between comedy and drama, realism and artifice, or even present and past. All of them reward a first look – even if you don’t like what you see, you will have seen something new – and some may even change the way you look at things.

If I may try out another metaphor, the New York Film Festival might be compared to an established, somewhat exclusive boutique holding its own in a world of big box superstores, oversize shopping malls and Internet retailers. If you want quantity – racks and shelves full of stuff to sort through in the hope of finding something that might fit your taste – wait for Tribeca, with its grab-bag programs and crowd-pleasing extras. The New York Film Festival, in contrast, prides itself on quality, refinement and selectivity. It is not so much programmed as curated. This selection is a form of criticism – it involves applying aesthetic standards and deciding that some films are better than others – and to understand this festival it helps to understand that its selection committee, led by Richard Peña, the festival’s program director, is made up of film critics. This year’s movies were chosen by Mr. Peña; Kent Jones, associate programmer at the Film Society and editor at large of Film Comment; Lisa Schwarzbaum of Entertainment Weekly; John Powers of Vogue; and Phillip Lopate, editor of the recently published Library of America anthology of American movie criticism and an all-around man of letters.

These critics, like others in their profession, incline toward material that is sometimes described as difficult or challenging, but that requires a disciplined, active attention. In previewing the movies that will be shown over the first week of the festival – and some that will come later – I have been struck by how few of them conform to the conventions of genre and narrative that dominate American commercial cinema. The split between the domestic mainstream and the world of international “art” films has rarely seemed so wide. As the big Hollywood studios, with their eyes on the global market, strive for maximum scale and minimal nuance, independent-minded filmmakers in other countries seem to be going in the other direction. Or, rather, in their own idiosyncratic directions, forging a decentralized, multifarious cinema of nuance, intimacy and formal experimentation.

Some of them veer toward abstraction, like Marc Recha’s “August Days,” in which the story is a faint shadow cast by the images, which consist mainly of views of the mountains and rivers of Catalonia. Other films mix their moods in ways that complicate traditional distinctions between comedy and drama, realism and artifice, or even present and past. All of them reward a first look – even if you don’t like what you see, you will have seen something new – and some may even change the way you look at things.

The director Abderrahmane Sissako’s “Bamako,” the most politically urgent film in the festival and also the most formally audacious, combines a brazen indication...
of the world financial system with a subtle glimpse at
daily life in Africa. At the center of this film from Mali
is a mock trial, during which robed lawyers argue over
whether the World Bank and International Monetary
Fund are guilty of increasing Africa’s misery. But around
the edges, as passionate speeches are made, we witness a
wedding, the breakup of a marriage and the routines of
work and play. The juxtaposition of the abstract and con-
crete, of macromass and microcosms, makes “Bamako”
much more than the sum of its arguments. It’s a film that
needs to be seen, argued over and seen again.

But after “Bamako” (and maybe also “The Queen,”
Stephen Frears’s opening-night offering, about
Elizabeth II), there are not many overly political
films in the first third of the program: another difference
between New York and other festivals, which frequently
showcase angry, earnest denunciations of injustice and
war. There are other things to think about, and other
ways to feel. Complications of feeling are the subject of
Hong Sang-soo’s “Woman on the Beach.” Mr. Hong, a
wry, unsparring anatomist of the romantic discontent
of South Korean twenty- and thirtysomethings (with spe-
cial emphasis on the failings of South Korean men), has
made his most coherent and emotionally accessible film
yet. On the surface the story of a short, not-too-happy
love affair, filmed in a clear, unassuming style, it turns
out on closer examination to be full of subtle narrative
symmetries and visual patterns. It’s a wicked comedy of
manners in a blue key of disappointment.

Manoel de Oliveira’s “Belle Toujours” is a charming,
small-scale movie that exists entirely in reference to a
40-year-old film, Luis Buñuel’s “Belle de Jour.” It’s a se-
queland (with Bulle Ogier in the role created by Catherine
Deneuve), a homage, a parody and also a lovely medita-
tion (by a director well into his 90’s) on the passage of
time and the persistence of desire.

“Belle Toujours” is one of two films at the festival featur-
ing the great French actor Michel Piccoli (who also ap-
peared in “Belle de jour”). The other is Otar Iosseliani’s
“Gardens in Autumn,” a delightful shaggy-dog comedy
in which Mr. Piccoli shows up in drag. The movie is sur-
real in a matter-of-fact, almost offhand way, its frames
pleasingly cluttered with curious objects and odd-look-
ing people. It’s in French, but Mr. Iosseliani, who moved
to France from his native Georgia in the 1990’s, has
dral, bawdy, earthy sensibility, at once cynical and
real in a matter-of-fact, almost offhand way, its frames

There are also special programs in conjunction with the festival.
At the Kaplan Penthouse: “HBO Films Directors Dialogues,”
a three-part series, begins at 4 p.m. tomorrow with a dis-
cussion with Stephen Frears, director of “The Queen.”
Other directors to appear are Michael Apted (“49 Up”) on
Oct. 7 and Guillermo del Toro (“Pan’s Labyrinth”) on
will be shown: “El Topo” (1970) on Oct. 6 and “The Holy
Mountain” (1973) on Oct. 7; tickets are $16 and $20. At
the Walter Reade Theater, “50 Years of Janus Films” will
offer screenings of more than 30 films, through Oct. 26.
“Views From the Avant-Garde” will feature screenings of
two new and restored films through Oct. 15. Tickets are $10,
$7 for students, $6 for members and $5 for 65 and older
at weekday matinees. “Scenes From the City: 40 Years of
Filmmaking in New York” will be shown Oct. 9. “Looking
at Jazz,” on Oct. 11, is an evening of rare jazz films and per-
formances by Wycliffe Gordon and other musicians, with
the scholar and pianist Lewis Porter as host; $16. Tickets for
the Oct. 15 screenings of Guy Maddin’s “Brand Upon the
Brain” are $25. The Walter Reade Theater and the Kaplan
Penthouse are at 165 West 65th Street. Walter Reade tickets
and information: (212) 875-5600; Kaplan Penthouse tick-
ets and information: (212) 721-6500.

In the sly new indie “Conventioneers,” the spectacle
of Republicans swarming Manhattan plays like a plot
worthy of some dystopian science fiction, or perhaps
a George Romero film. So it seems to left-wing activists
like Lea Jones (Woodwyn Koons), agast at the looming
2004 Republican National Convention and determined
to thwart it with sarcastic T-shirts and street theater.
While preparing for a marathon schedule of protests, Lea
receives a call from David Massey (Matthew Modine), a
hunky former classmate at Dartmouth in town for a few
days. A lunch date turns to flirtation that morphs into
t rage on the revelation that David is an apocalyptic demon
from hell, or, as he prefers to phrase it, “a delegate.”
Later that night, over calmer nerves and numerous shots
of Southern Comfort, these polarized ideologues reach
a George Romero film. So it seems to left-wing activists
like Lea Jones (Woodwyn Koons), agast at the looming
2004 Republican National Convention and determined
to thwart it with sarcastic T-shirts and street theater.
While preparing for a marathon schedule of protests, Lea
receives a call from David Massey (Matthew Modine), a
hunky former classmate at Dartmouth in town for a few
days. A lunch date turns to flirtation that morphs into
t rage on the revelation that David is an apocalyptic demon
from hell, or, as he prefers to phrase it, “a delegate.”
Later that night, over calmer nerves and numerous shots
of Southern Comfort, these polarized ideologues reach

Rain, a Korean pop star, actor and pan-Asian heartthrob, is preparing for two concerts at Madison Square Garden this week by studying. Day and night, an English tutor trails him through Seoul, peppering him with conversational phrases as he labors to polish his singing, his martial arts-inflected dancing and, presumably, his chest baring.

“You can never be too prepared to go global.”

At 23, Rain, who has been labeled the Korean Justin Timberlake and the Korean Usher, is a serious and driven performer (with washboard abs, winsome looks and a Gene Kelly-like ability to leap through puddles while performing his hit song, “It’s Raining”). He wants nothing less than to break down barriers, build cultural bridges and become the first Asian pop star to succeed in America.

“From the United States is the dominant music market,” he said through an interpreter in a recent phone interview from Seoul. “I would really like to see an Asian make it there. I would like that Asian to be me. That’s why I’m studying the language, reading up on the culture and practicing every day to correct my weaknesses.”

Since his debut in 2002, Rain, whose real name is Ji-Hoon Jung, has been riding what is known as the Korean Wave. As South Korean products, from cellphones to the music known as K-pop, have swept across Asia, Koreans have coined a new term, hallyu, to describe the phenomenon. Through his leading roles in soap operas and his music, Rain has become the personification of hallyu, which some see as a high-quality regional alternative to American cultural dominance.

Big in Japan, huge in China and a legend in Korea, Asia’s biggest pop star is coming to America. His fans here are already screaming.
Rain is inspired by American pop music, but his interpretations provide, at the least, an Asian face and filter. His producer, Jin-Young Park, describes Rain’s music as more “sensitive and delicate” than American R & B and says that his choreography is crisper and more precise, influenced by classical dance and martial arts.

“In Rain, Asians might see the spirit of Usher or Timberlake or even Michael Jackson, but he makes the music theirs,” said Nusrat Durrani, senior vice president and general manager of MTV World. “He is a huge star in the making, but, at the same time, he is a very indigenous artist and a source of local pride.”

Last year, Rain sold out arenas across Korea, China and Japan, playing to more than 40,000 in Beijing and 20,000 in the Budokan in Tokyo. America, with its growing interest in Asian popular culture, from Pokémon to Bollywood, was the obvious next frontier.

But Mr. Park – a 34-year-old impresario who is Rain’s manager – said that Rain will be not be officially ready to cross over until approximately October. That, according to a meticulously devised business plan, is when he is expected to achieve basic fluency in English, to release an English-language album and to smite the American audience. “This is for the American music industry,” said Mr. Park, who spoke in flawless English. “He’s always worried. He thinks he’s not blessed or talented. He thinks people are being fooled, that it’s an illusion. He wants to catch up to that illusion.”

Most of the 10,000 people coming, however, will need no introduction. Like Julie Chen, 25, vice president of the Young Korean American Network in New York, who watch his company’s Asian channels are not of Asian descent.

Imigrants or children of immigrants, they live in an era when technology makes it easy to connect with their home-land. Small-time entrepreneurs have long catered to the immigrant appetite for culture from back home. But what used to happen on a neighborhood level – a Colombian dance troupe at a Queens community center – is now taking place on a much larger scale. Like Rain, foreign artists are filling mainstream venues, their fans primed by the songs, videos, television shows and films that are ever more accessible through the Web, satellite television and new media outlets targeting hyphenated Americans.

“I was told that when I’m dancing I give off the feeling of a rainy day,” Rain said, in a speaking voice that is deep and rich. “That’s how the stage name came about. “I was told that when I’m dancing I give off the feeling of a rainy day,” Rain said, in a speaking voice that is deep and rich.

Indeed, Michael Hong, chief executive officer of ImaginAsian Entertainment, said that 60 percent of those who watch his company’s Asian channels are not of Asian ethnicity. Similarly, at his company’s two-year-old East 59th Street movie theater in Manhattan, which shows only Asian films, 70 percent of the audience is non-Asian.

“The there is a great deal of interest in Asian content right now,” said Mr. Hong, who helped set up and promote the Madison Square Garden concert. “Rain is just the tip of the iceberg.”

In the recent interview, Rain said that he had been dreaming about Madison Square Garden since he was a child imitating Michael Jackson’s moves. “It is an incredible honor to perform there,” he said. And yet he is preparing himself for failure: “In the case that my music is not loved by the American people, I will work very hard to fix things and hope to please them the next time.”

Rain is a self-flagellating superstar.

In Rain, Asians might see the spirit of Usher or Timberlake.

“He thinks he’s not good at all,” Mr. Park, who spoke from Los Angeles, said in flawless English. “He’s always worried. He thinks he’s not blessed or talented. He thinks people are being fooled, that it’s an illusion. He wants to catch up to that illusion.”

Rain’s family was living in a one-room house in Seoul when Mr. Park and Rain first met. “There was something about him then, and there still is, something cool and gloomy,” Mr. Park said.

“That’s how the stage name came about. “I was told that when I’m dancing I give off the feeling of a rainy day,” Rain said, in a speaking voice that is deep and rich.

Rain said that he first discovered “the euphoria of performing during a sixth-grade talent show, after which he tried to hang around some professional dancers in his neighborhood. But he said they treated him terribly, finally bearing him up and stealing his winter jacket.
He went on to be rejected – he kept count – 18 times by artistic management companies. Again and again, he was told that he would never be “hot,” that he was too tall and “too ugly,” primarily because he lacked a “double eyelid.” Without cosmetic surgery to create a fold above his eyes – a relatively common procedure, though one often decried as a capitulation to Western beauty standards – he could forget about a show business career in Korea, he was told.

By the time he presented himself for an audition at Mr. Park’s performing arts academy, Rain was in a state of desperation. His mother was quite ill, and he himself had not been eating regularly.

Rain, then 19, gave the longest and most passionate audition he could muster, nearly four hours of singing and dancing, Mr. Park (who goes by the initials J.Y. or J.Y.P) accepted him into the JYP Academy. “He had this hunger,” Mr. Park said.

“That is true,” Rain said. “I was literally hungry.”

Mr. Park himself had made his debut in 1994 as a backup dancer for Mr. Park. Mr. Park, who still writes all his songs, created Rain’s first album, “Bad Guy,” in 2002. With the second album, “Running Away From the Sun,” Rain said that he began asserting himself in the realm of choreography. “By the time his third album came out in 2004, they stopped calling him little J.Y. and started calling me Rain’s producer,” Mr. Park said.

Soap operas are the engine of celebrity in Asia for Koreans, and so Rain’s move into television was a calculated one. “We saw Korean drama flowing all over Asia,” Mr. Park said. “I said to Rain, ‘Since you know how to act, we should use this to make you go overseas.’ As soon as his second TV drama, ‘Full House,’ exploded all over Asia, we went over to hit them with concerts.”

In Rain’s most recent soap opera, “A Love to Kill,” he plays a martial arts fighter. To alter his physique for the role, he told Korean journalists, he was jumping rope 2,000 times a day and eating only chicken breast and mackerel.

“Mr. Park said he believed that other Asian pop stars have failed in the United States by trying “to impersonate what was going on here.” He said that he and Rain wanted to avoid “being another couple of Asian dudes trying to do black music,” by embracing their inner delicacy and letting their Asian-ness show.

The moment is ripe, Mr. Park said. “Every market has been tapped except for the Asian market, and that’s 5 percent of America,” he said. “That’s our base. But I believe that we can move beyond that, and I believe that the American music industry needs to partner with us to make inroads into Asia, too.”

Mr. Park said that it has been easier for him, working as a songwriter in the United States, than it will be for Rain since “songs don’t have color.” But Rain is convinced that he has crossover appeal based on his own informal market research: he had women – “real American women” – climbing all over him at a bar in Los Angeles last year.

At the end of the interview, Rain was asked if he took ket research: he had women – “real American women” – climbing all over him at a bar in Los Angeles last year.

He promised his mom that he was going to be the No. 1 singer in the whole world,” he said. “That’s why he never parties, never drinks, never goes out and practices hours every day.”

It was Mr. Park who, with 20 CD’s in his backpack, set their global journey into motion. He took off for Los Angeles and went door to door “being nobody.” After a year, he got his first call, from Bad Boy, P. Diddy’s entertainment company, expressing interest in one of his songs for the rapper Mase. After that, the collaboration with Americans began.

Mr. Park said he believed that other Asian pop stars have failed in the United States by trying “to impersonate what was going on here.” He said that he and Rain wanted to avoid “being another couple of Asian dudes trying to do black music,” by embracing their inner delicacy and letting their Asian-ness show.

The moment is ripe, Mr. Park said. “Every market has been tapped except for the Asian market, and that’s 5 percent of America,” he said. “That’s our base. But I believe that we can move beyond that, and I believe that the American music industry needs to partner with us to make inroads into Asia, too.”

Mr. Park said that it has been easier for him, working as a songwriter in the United States, than it will be for Rain since “songs don’t have color.” But Rain is convinced that he has crossover appeal based on his own informal market research: he had women – “real American women” – climbing all over him at a bar in Los Angeles last year.

At the end of the interview, Rain was asked if he took some pride in defying those naysayers who once thought he would never be “hot.”

“Yeah, sure!” Rain answered in English, and then switched to Korean, leaving his female interpreter in a sputter of giggles.

“Um,” she said. “He say, um: ‘You have to come see me in my concert, and you have to be attracted to me!’”
**Korean Superstar**

By JON PARELES

Rain, a 22-year-old Korean pop singer who is a superstar in Asia, is out to conquer the United States next. It won't be easy.

His first step was two sold-out shows at the Theater at Madison Square Garden, last night and Thursday night. The audience on Thursday was about 85 percent Asian, at least 90 percent female and always ready to scream. Like Rain, they were following the drum of a Michael Jackson concert from the early 1990's; songs that switched between stack beats and sweet choruses, angular group dances and tough-guy preening that gave way to professions of love.

Slender and wiry, Rain, known in Korean as B.I. (pronounced "bee"),

Rain

Theater at Madison Square Garden

also acts in soap operas. He's a product of the globalization that pumps American products through worldwide media channels. People who fear mass-market threats to local styles need look no further for an example. If there's anything beyond the lyrics that's particularly Korean about Rain's songs, it's not obvious.

On the three albums he has released since 2002, Rain and his songwriter, producer, promoter and manager, Jin Young Park, have imported and digested pop-R&B from the English-speaking world, emulating it with Korean lyrics. Since Rain's voice is lower and huskier than Mr. Jackson's, he doubles in other pop-R&B approaches: the acoustic-guitar ballads of Babyface, the light funk-pop of Justin Timberlake, the croming of George Michael and the importings of Usher. Seeing him onstage was like watching old MTV videos dubbed into Korean.

The moment Rain appeared onstage, he was mimicking Mr. Jackson's costumes and moves: a fitted leather jacket, a dark suit and slouch hat, the freeze-frame postures. He's a fine dancer and a passable singer.

At first, he tried Mr. Jackson's tense demeanor, but soon he was smiling, "I'm lonely," he announced, "I need a girlfriend," and he brought a young woman onstage from the audience, handing her a teddy bear and a bouquet of roses before giving her a chaste hug. (Perhaps with crossover in mind, the woman he chose was one of the few non-Asians in the audience.) By the end of the show Rain was dedicating a ballad to his late mother. Rain seems like a nice guy, but he doesn't have the tormented charisma of Jackson, the relaxed sex appeal of Usher or the quick pop reflexes of Mr. Timberlake.

The show was a combination of slick video-era effects — at one point, Rain jumped, and the buildings in a video image behind him shook — and odd moments. Mr. Park took the stage repeatedly while Rain changed costumes. Speaking in hip-hop-style English, he reminded everyone that he wrote all the songs, he introduced Sean Combs (Diddy) and the teenage singer JoJo to praise Rain, and he performed his own songs from the mid-1990's. Given his voice, he was wise to make Rain the vehicle for his newer material. The obstacle to Rain's intended United States career is that by the time Mr. Park has figured out how to imitate the latest English-speaking hit, American pop will have jumped ahead of him. Perhaps collaborators like Diddy could help Mr. Park keep Rain up to date. But for the moment, here in the United States, Rain sounded like a nostalgia act.

Rain singing the songs of his mastermind producer-promoter, Jin-Young Park, at Madison Square Garden.
MUSIC REVIEW

An Opera Singer

By ANNE MIDGETT

Call it enterprising. You’re an opera singer who has had a notable career, and you’re not being heard in New York as much as you once were. You’re celebrating your 20th year onstage, and no one is rushing to acknowledge it. You didn’t even get to sing at Joseph Volpe’s farewell gala.

Sumi Jo
Carnegie Hall

at the Metropolitan Opera last month. What do you do? If you’re the coloratura soprano Sumi Jo, you rent Carnegie Hall and give your own party.

Ms. Jo celebrated her career on Friday night with a kind of aggressive vivaciousness, a pair of leather pants, a lot of high notes and three gowns, each more glittery than the last. Backing her up was the fine Orchestra of St. Luke’s, conducted by Will Crutchfield, who led Ms. Jo’s most recent New York-area appearance, in Bellini’s “Sonnambula” at the Caramoor Festival in Katonah, N.Y., last summer and will conduct her there again in “I Puritani” in July.

For an opera singer, one reason to do this kind of solo appearance is to let the public see you as an individual, rather than as the character you’re playing. And Ms. Jo left little doubt that the main purpose of the evening was to showcase herself. She threw out big arias with the same insouciance that she brought to her career, focusing more on entertainment than on style or musical detail.

Pieces were oddly juxtaposed starting with the opening set, which put together a flashy Vivaldi aria with showy variations by a 19th-century composer, Heerich Fesen. The Vivaldi aria served as an inadvertent reminder of why starting with a warm-up piece is a good idea.

Ms. Jo’s pitch was approximate, and her lower register was drowned out by the orchestra. (Mr. Crutchfield, who has more power to him, did not let this happen in subsequent pieces.) But she got considerably better later in the program: her intonation improved, her coloratura smoothed, and she held her concluding top notes, slightly frayed but secure, out to remarkable lengths.

But the persona that came across was that of a stereotypical diva, without any demonstration of truly compelling artistry to support it. Ms. Jo sang a lot of tough pieces — “Ah vous jeuex, mes amis” from Thomas’s “Hamlet”; “O luce di quest’anima” from Donizetti’s “Linda di Chamounix”; and, the audience’s favorite, a hammered-out rendition of the aria of Olympia, the mechanical doll, from “Tales of Hoffmann.” (That audience was medium-size, late arriving and generally enthusiastic.)

But emotionally, her most convincing performances were of a Korean song, “When Spring Approaches” by Lim Rangha, and of her third encore, Puccini’s “O mio babbiuno cara,” which she performed after announcing to the audience that she was dedicating the evening to her father, who died two years ago. Here, there was a kind of connectedness and beauty that made one want to hear her sing again.

How stark was the contrast to Violette’s Act 1 scene from “La Traviata,” badly phrased and unconvincing, which seemed, like so much of the rest, a lot of virtuosic notes, to get the opera world to pay attention may, alas, take more than an evening like this.
KATONAH, N.Y., July 8

When Will Crutchfield began directing his Bel Canto at Caramoor series at the Caramoor International Music Festival here in 1992, he insisted on the flexibility offered in the series title. He mainly wanted to give new life to the bel canto repertory, a distinct body of Italian opera defined historically by the careers of Rossini and Verdi, at either end, and stylistically by a focus on the beauty and the virtuosic potential of the voice, to the virtual exclusion of other theatrical and operatic values, like sensible librettos and deeply considered orchestral writing.

But Mr. Crutchfield also took the view, in common with other bel canto adherents, that comparatively few modern singers understood true bel canto singing. And while he expressed every confidence that he could persuade singers to adopt his ideas, and thereby rescue this repertory from its reputation as a junkyard of vacuous, formulaic clatter, he also argued that his series should take its name literally – simply as “beautiful singing” – and periodically offer works by better composers from other eras, from Purcell and Gluck to Handel and Mozart.

Mr. Crutchfield has largely delivered on his promise to make his singers think carefully about the expressive possibilities of bel canto singing. If anyone needed evidence that he could turn a sow’s ear into something closer to a silk purse, his account of Bellini’s “Puritani,” which opened this year’s series on Saturday night, was it.

The opera, first heard in 1835, was Bellini’s last, and it has the usual bel canto maladies, starting with a libretto so poorly conceived that even Mr. Crutchfield, a former music critic for The New York Times, describes parts of it as “absurd to the point of hilarity.” Opera fans summarily dismiss complaints about librettos as being beside the point. But if the point is the idealized exploration of emotion as magnified by music, it is a serious problem when this emotion arises from a laughable text. It becomes merely the facsimile of emotion, a guess at what characters might feel if they lived in the alternate universe of the bel canto sensibility.

That’s a questionable goal, but Bellini and his colleagues had a solution: the mad scene. For the central character in “I Puritani” – Elvira, the daughter of a Roundhead nobleman during the English civil war – virtually the entire opera is a mad scene. She is to be married to Arturo, a Stuart loyalist, but on their wedding day, he runs off to save the life of Enrichetta, the deposed queen. This drives Elvira over the edge and lets Bellini move her from despair to flightiness and back through the three acts.

These moments, with Elvira’s madness supplying the built-in suspension of disbelief, are the opera’s best: except for Arturo’s third-act music, everyone else has little more than dull boilerplate. The connecting tissue draws fully on the style’s vulgarities – the insistently on-the-beat cymbal-crashing, chirpy wind writing and unimaginative harmonic progressions – yet offsetting those are wonderful brass choir passages and even some sublety in the aria accompaniments.

Judging from the consistent and tightly matched work of the estimable cast, Mr. Crutchfield’s advice about bel canto singing is that a pianissimo packs more punch than a shout, and he’s on to something. Sumi Jo, as Elvira, made her flightiness magical by keeping her sound on a tight leash, and if that made certain leaps sound more cautious than virtuosic, her caution helped her nail the role’s high notes.

Barry Banks, as Arturo, began with a slightly constricted sound, and his range of color was never vast. Yet he brought considerable power and suppleness to Arturo’s music, and he didn’t shy away from the falsetto high F that caps his last act “Crudeli, crudeli.”

The performance also benefited from the solid, shapely contributions of Daniel Mobbs as Giorgio, Elvira’s uncle; Eric Jordan as Gualtiero, her father; and Weston Hurt as Riccardo, her rejected suitor. Laura Vlasak Nolen and David Ekstrom sang the smaller roles of Enrichetta and Bruno, and Mr. Crutchfield drew an alert and generally well-polished performance from the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Caramoor Bel Canto Soloists and the Concert Chorale of New York.

The Caramoor International Music Festival runs through Aug. 12; (914) 232-1252. Will Crutchfield is to conduct a program of Mozart arias on July 16 and Rossini’s “Tancredi” on July 22.
“I’m worried,” Shin Joong-hyun said in the dimness backstage, standing in front of a full-length mirror, in a white suit and white boots that lifted him a couple of inches above 5 feet. “My voice is terrible. It’s cracked.”

Known as the godfather of rock ‘n’ roll for popularizing the genre in South Korea, Mr. Shin, at age 68, was in the final months of a farewell tour. Early this year, he had already moved into an as-yet unfinished house in the countryside. But before retreating there for good, he would add finality to a long career in which he emerged as “Jackie Shin” on American Army bases in a postwar South Korea ground down to dust, rose as a homegrown rock poet and then fell with his stubborn refusal to write a song glorifying the nation’s military dictator. In a new South Korea that has left him bewildered, and a little embittered, Mr. Shin has recently been rediscovered.

So on a recent Sunday evening, Mr. Shin set about to thrill a middle-aged crowd in this southeastern city one last time. Backstage, he ensconced himself in a chair facing the mirror, leaned back and shut his eyes, until someone yelled out, “It’s time!”

On stage, bothered by a poor sound system, Mr. Shin sang hesitatingly at first. Two giant television screens zoomed in on his face, his white hair shaved close to the scalp, as he strained to read the lyrics. “My memory is not so good anymore,” he said, and my eyes are not so good.”

‘The music we played shouldn’t taste like kimchi, but it should ooze butter.’ Shin Joong-hyun
The music we played shouldn’t taste like kimchi,” Mr. Shin said of the spicy pickled vegetable that is the Korean national dish, “but it should ooze butter.”

Around the same time the Beatles scored their first hits in the United States, Mr. Shin formed the first Korean rock band, “Add 4,” in 1964. Influenced by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix – he is often compared to both, the Beatles for his songwriting and Hendrix for his guitar playing and lone-wolf style – he wrote a series of classic hits and began the careers of other artists with his songs.

At his peak, one morning in 1972, a fateful phone call would derail his career. A caller identifying himself as an official in the presidential Blue House asked Mr. Shin – in a “tone that was not unpleasant” – to write a song for Park Chung-hee, South Korea’s military ruler from 1961 to 1979. Mr. Shin declined “in a nice way,” he said.

But something, it seemed, was ruffling him. At a post-concert party, he was feeling “exhausted” and in no mood to sign autographs. After the concert, Mr. Shin patiently signed autographs.

As he entered his late teens in the years after the Korean War, resources were few in South Korea. He bought a violin – “because it was the only instrument in the music store” – but found it too difficult to learn and eventually turned it in for an acoustic guitar. A friend gave him the money to buy an electric guitar, which gave him entry into the only place Korean musicians could perform regularly: American military bases.

Mr. Shin played jazz in the officers’ club, sang country for the sergeants and rock ’n’ roll for the troops. He mimicked an American accent so well that the soldiers – who would shout, “We want Jackie!” – mistakenly believed he was fluent in English. At the base, he ate fried chicken and drank Dr Pepper. He met his future wife, Myeong Joong-gang, who was Korea’s first female rock ’n’ roll drummer in a band called Blue Ribbons.

“It was out of my mind for a few days,” Mr. Shin said, explaining that the concert had exhausted him. Several concerts were left, though thankfully, they were spread out.

It was only in recent years that his music was rediscovered, and young musicians recorded covers of his songs. But he played on, an electric guitar strapped across his left shoulder, going through, with increasing confidence, the rock classics that would be his epitaph. As he neared the end of the first set, he sang two of his most famous songs, “Beauty” and “Beautiful Rivers and Mountains,” and the television screens showed the pleasure on his face as the crowd clamored for more.

The lost years, though, have added a bitter edge to Mr. Shin, who never raked in the big money that goes to Western rock stars. He makes about $10,000 a month now, and complaints that he is being cheated.

He describes current popular music as “demented.” Like many in his generation, Mr. Shin remains fiercely pro-American and rails at the youth’s misgivings and criticisms about America.

“It is a pity that young people don’t know anything,” he said. “They’re pathetic. It’s because of the U.S. we have what we have.”

At the concert here, however, Mr. Shin basked in his fans’ embrace. “We love you,” said Chang Young-woo, 46, a restaurant manager, adding, “When I listen to his songs, I feel as if I’m a high school student again.”

After the concert, Mr. Shin patiently signed autographs. But something, it seemed, was ruffling him. At a post-concert party, he was feeling “exhausted” and in no mood to drink or eat. His manager had booked a hotel here. “But I didn’t feel that I could sleep,” Mr. Shin said, “so I decided to go back to Seoul.” He drove alone on the main highway to Seoul, but he soon started running out of gas.

“At that hour, there were no gas stations on the highway that were open,” he said, “so I had to get off the highway and search for an open gas station. I was running out of gas.”

It seemed to take ages before he found a station and was able to get back on the highway. Dawn was about to break when Mr. Shin at last made it home.

The only remaining hits of his career, “Beauty” and “Beautiful Rivers and Mountains,” are recorded by the band, “Add 4,” in 1964. Influenced by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix – he is often compared to both, the Beatles for his songwriting and Hendrix for his guitar playing and lone-wolf style – he wrote a series of classic hits and began the careers of other artists with his songs.

He describes current popular music as “demented.” Like many in his generation, Mr. Shin remains fiercely pro-American and rails at the youth’s misgivings and criticisms about America.

“People don’t know anything,” he said. “They’re pathetic. It’s because of the U.S. we have what we have.”

At the concert here, however, Mr. Shin basked in his fans’ embrace. “We love you,” said Chang Young-woo, 46, a restaurant manager, adding, “When I listen to his songs, I feel as if I’m a high school student again.”

After the concert, Mr. Shin patiently signed autographs. But something, it seemed, was ruffling him. At a post-concert party, he was feeling “exhausted” and in no mood to drink or eat. His manager had booked a hotel here. “But I didn’t feel that I could sleep,” Mr. Shin said, “so I decided to go back to Seoul.” He drove alone on the main highway to Seoul, but he soon started running out of gas.

“At that hour, there were no gas stations on the highway that were open,” he said, “so I had to get off the highway and search for an open gas station. I was running out of gas.”

It seemed to take ages before he found a station and was able to get back on the highway. Dawn was about to break when Mr. Shin at last made it home.
So, belatedly, there was music under the stars on Thursday evening, as the New York Philharmonic performed in Cunningham Park, Queens. There had been no stars and thus no music the night before, when torrential rain forced the cancellation of the Philharmonic’s concert of the same program on the Great Lawn of Central Park, an event that will not be made up (though the Philharmonic is to play a second program in Central Park on Tuesday).

Sharing the stage in this program were the first two dynamic women in the Philharmonic’s all-female parks lineup this summer: Jennifer Koh, the violinist, and Xian Zhang, the orchestra’s associate conductor. (On Tuesday Marin Alsop conducts, and Leila Josefowicz is the violin soloist.)

Ms. Zhang opened the program on this calm and breezy evening with a jubilant, polished rendition of Tchaikovsky’s “Festival Coronation March” and was joined by Ms. Koh in Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto in D Major (Op. 35).

Ms. Zhang, in her white jacket, and Ms. Koh, in a floor-length strapless pink gown, made a visibly arresting duo, poised and elegant. But where Ms. Zhang’s gestures were precise and controlled, Ms. Koh was more the flamboyant free spirit. Her fiery, rhapsodic playing was well balanced against Ms. Zhang’s firm control and steady pulse.

Like all war horses, the Tchaikovsky concerto needs imagination and flair to revive it, and Ms. Koh, once she could be heard again, particularly shone. Her rich, burnished tone was so powerful that a listener could almost imagine it soaring above the crowded lawn, unaided by a microphone.

Chasing the stage in this program were two dynamic women in the Philharmonic’s all-female parks lineup this summer: Jennifer Koh, the violinist, and Xian Zhang, the orchestra’s associate conductor. (On Tuesday Marin Alsop conducts, and Leila Josefowicz is the violin soloist.) Ms. Zhang opened the program on this calm and breezy evening with a jubilant, polished rendition of Tchaikovsky’s “Festival Coronation March” and was joined by Ms. Koh in Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto in D Major (Op. 35).

Ms. Koh, a young graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, has excelled in new-music circles and has a strong track record in contemporary works. Here she built on her equally strong record in repertory staples with the concerto that won her a silver medal at the 1994 Tchaikovsky violin competition in Moscow.

The Philharmonic was acutely attuned to Ms. Zhang after intermission as well, in a decisive performance of Dvorak’s vivacious Eighth Symphony. Ms. Zhang evoked both the sunny, pastoral lyricism of the Czech folk tunes and the work’s darker, stormier hues, coaxing warm, singing lines from the strings in the lushly melodic and beautifully phrased opening, and the woodwind and brass playing throughout. The rousing conclusion touched off an enthusiastic ovation. How could it not?

The program will be repeated tonight at Heckscher State Park in East Islip, N.Y., and Monday night at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx; newyorkphilharmonic.org.

Moonlit Verdi, Loud Enough For Blankets In Back Row

BY STEVE SMITH

Before the Metropolitan Opera’s performance of Verdi’s “Traviata” on the Great Lawn of Central Park on Tuesday night, Peter Gelb, the company’s new general manager, welcomed the audience to the 40th season of free summer performances. He seized the opportunity to promote several new initiatives: a free dress rehearsal of Puccini’s “Madama Butterfly” on Sept. 22, television broadcasts and Internet downloads, and a family-friendly condensation of Mozart’s “Magic Flute” during the Met’s winter break.

This is the new face of populism, Metropolitan Opera style, but the evening’s performance followed the model the company has favored for four decades: vocalists in evening wear planted in front of an orchestra, with everyone highly amplified. It’s an unnatural mode for presenting – and listening to – opera, but it attracts large throngs. The police estimate, Met officials reported, was an unusually specific 30,760.

That’s not to suggest the evening held no attraction for Met cognoscenti. The performance was the company debut of Wookyung Kim, a promising young South Korean tenor who won first prize in Placido Domingo’s Operalia competition in 2004, as Alfredo. His Violetta was the soprano Hei-Kyung Hong, a Met regular who is, incidentally, also South Korean. The baritone Charles Taylor, impressive in Donizetti’s “Lucia di Lammermoor” last season, sang Germont.

These artists will reprise their roles on the Met stage in January, making this presentation something of a sneak preview. On the whole it was a satisfying peek. Ms. Hong handled her part with characteristic grace, despite some technical difficulties late in the first act, which were cruelly amplified. She was strongest in the most emotionally fraught arias, during the second and third acts.

Mr. Kim’s voice was ardent and penetrating, Mr. Taylor’s suitably gruff and authoritative. Characterization of the complex relationships between these principals was relatively slight, but there was ample reason to expect more from the forthcoming indoor performances; eminently clear was how good these singers sounded together. The conductor Derrick Inouye provided accompaniment that was stylish and sturdy, save for a few breathlessly wobbly passages in the final act.

Near the stage the sound was slightly strident, but some 200 yards away, on a dusty baseball diamond, voices seemed richer, the orchestra better blended. Of course from so far away the stage might have been an iPod screen. Perhaps Mr. Gelb could add a few Jumbotrons to his already bulging shopping list of inclusive devices.

“La Traviata” will be performed tomorrow night in Marine Park, Brooklyn; next Tuesday in Richmond County Bank Ball Park, Staten Island; and next Friday in Brookdale Park, Bloomfield, N.J.
Trying to Appeal to Youth With One of Their Own

Rear orchestra-section seats at Avery Fisher Hall on Friday night were awash with young people, presumably invited by a New York Philharmonic interested in updating its audience. For those willing to put Ludacris or My Chemical Romance aside for an evening and give classical music a chance, there were a number of apparent come-ons at work.

Joyce Yang, an enterprising competition warrior scarcely out of her teens, was there as role model, playing that white-hang favorite of all career-hungry young pianists: Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. After intermission Lorin Maazel led the orchestra in Beethoven's equally famous (though maybe not to a lot of Friday's audience) 'Eroica' Symphony.

The Rachmaninoff is a handful of touching and inventive moments surrounded by circus-act feats of pianism. Rachmaninoff may have been too good a pianist for his own

New York Philharmonic:
Avery Fisher Hall

The program repeats Tuesday night at 7:30 at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center: (212) 875-5656; sold out, but returns may be available.

Chung I. Lee/The New York Times

The pianist Joyce Yang performed Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the New York Philharmonic on Saturday.

good. Conventional virtuosity seems to have bored him, hence this piece's obstacle course of difficulty. Ms. Yang nailing all the hard parts and showed enough sentiment and good sense during the flashes of inspired sweetness to make one want to hear her in other repertoire.

The worth of the Beethoven performance depended on who was listening. Veterans with literally thousands of 'Eroica' under their belts were probably depressed. A great orchestra sounded dutiful but not terribly involved. The vague togetherness in the string sections, uncharacteristic in an ensemble of this fineness, did not signal careful rehearsal.

The most arresting moments, unfortunately, were Mr. Maazel's willful slowness in the finale and his perverse hesitations and exaggerated accents in the Funeral March.

One hopes that some of the young people were oblivious to all that and simply taken by the music itself. When brought to life, it is quite a piece for any age group.
An Affectionate Homecoming for Masur

If psychologists ever made a study of post-departure syndrome, they might begin with Kurt Masur’s return to New York with the London Philharmonic. In his time as music director of the New York Philharmonic, Mr. Masur was received as something of a drill sergeant in charge of a wayward platoon, a kind of terrier medicine designed to purge the orchestra of its loose ways. But waves of friendship greeted him at Carnegie Hall on Monday and Tuesday nights, a genuine warmth like nothing he experienced during his years in New York. Were all those happy listeners remembering with a new perspective, or had they simply forgotten? Maybe affection grows as the sustained power to influence our musical lives goes away. I was always a fan, and it was good to have him back.

A year ago illness forced Mr. Masur to cancel a similar visit. At 79 he is erect but frail. The vigorous conducting technique is now withdrawn and minimal, but other means have been found. While the physically active conductor goes out and gets performance, Mr. Masur has learned to stand quietly and let performances come to him, the positive electric charge becomes a magnet.

In two concerts of repertory standards, this appealing orchestra seemed to know what was on its conductor’s mind and also to like him personally. Rough edges and inexact entrances on Monday were a small price to pay for music making of such good will.

“Les Preludes” by Liszt — big-boned and hearty — began Monday’s program; the Brahms Second Symphony ended it. Mr. Masur likes to divide long phrases into shorter ones, producing semi-detachments that are not quite full breaths. Created in an austerity seemingly aimed at preventing passionately lyrical music from sinking into sentiment.

Between Liszt and Brahms came Prokofiev’s Second Piano Concerto. Its soloist, Elisabeth Leonskaja, was to be thanked for halfway humanizing music of such open hostility. She was in confident command of Prokofiev’s fluid, often vicious scenes of technical difficulty, and the nastiness lesser musicians bring to this music was softened to something almost moving, occupying a place somewhere between regret and sentiment.

On Tuesday Sarah Chang played the Sibelius Violin Concerto. The purity of her tone and its breadth, deep carrying power was fitting, indeed touching in exposed moments, as was the recklessness with which she attacked the difficult finale. At other times the throbbing vibrato and almost theatrical bowing sounded more like beautiful violin playing than Sibelius.

Tuesday also brought Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony, a piece that has also been occupying the New York Philharmonic a few blocks to the north this week. The mileage on this well-traveled masterpiece precludes anyone saying anything new about it, but the London players were involved down to their toes in an honest and deeply earnest performance.
Eight months ago a mysterious image showed up on YouTube, the video-sharing site that now shows more than 100 million videos a day. A sinewy figure in a swimming-pool-blue T-shirt, his eyes obscured by a beige baseball cap, playing electric guitar. Sun poured through the window behind him, he played in a yellow haze. The video was called simply “guitar.” A black-and-white title card gave the performer’s name as funtwo.

The piece that funtwo played with mounting dexterity was an exceedingly difficult rock arrangement of Pachelbel’s Canon, the composition from the turn of the 18th century known for its solemn chord progressions and its overexposure at weddings. But this arrangement, attributed on another title card to JerryC, was anything but plodding; it required high-level mastery of a singularly demanding maneuver called sweep-picking.

Over and over the guitarist’s left hand articulated strings with barely perceptible movements, sounding and muting notes almost simultaneously, and playing complete arpeggios through a single stroke with his right hand. Funtwo’s accuracy and velocity seemed record-breaking, but his mouth and jawline — to the extent that they were visible — looked impassive, with none of the exaggerated grimaces of heavy metal guitar heroes. The contrast between the soaring bravado of the undertaking and the reticence of the guitarist gave the 5-minute, 20-second video a gorgeous solemnity.

By Virginia Heffernan

Web Guitar Wizard Revealed at Last

Funtwo’s video captivated millions. Who was he?

Eight months ago a mysterious image showed up on YouTube, the video-sharing site that now shows more than 100 million videos a day. A sinister figure in a swimming-pool-blue T-shirt, his eyes obscured by a beige baseball cap, playing electric guitar. Sun poured through the window behind him; he played in a yellow haze. The video was called simply “guitar.” A black-and-white title card gave the performer’s name as funtwo.

The piece that funtwo played with mounting dexterity was an exceedingly difficult rock arrangement of Pachelbel’s Canon, the composition from the turn of the 18th century known for its solemn chord progressions and its overexposure at weddings. But this arrangement, attributed on another title card to JerryC, was anything but plodding; it required high-level mastery of a singularly demanding maneuver called sweep-picking.

Over and over the guitarist’s left hand articulated strings with barely perceptible movements, sounding and muting notes almost simultaneously, and playing complete arpeggios through a single stroke with his right hand. Funtwo’s accuracy and velocity seemed record-breaking, but his mouth and jawline — to the extent that they were visible — looked impassive, with none of the exaggerated grimaces of heavy metal guitar heroes. The contrast between the soaring bravado of the undertaking and the reticence of the guitarist gave the 5-minute, 20-second video a gorgeous solemnity.
Like a celebrity sex tape or a Virgin Mary sighting, the video drew hordes of seekers with diverse interests and attitudes. Guitar sites, MySpace pages and a Polish video site called Smog linked to it, and viewers thundered to YouTube to watch it. If individual viewings were shipped records, “guitar” would have gone gold almost instantly. Now, with nearly 7.35 million views — and a spot in the site’s 10 most-viewed videos of all time — funtwo’s performance would be platinum many times over. From the perch it’s occupied for months on YouTube’s “most discussed” list, it generates a seemingly endless stream of praise (riveting, sick, better than Hendrix), exegesis, criticism, footnotes, skepticism, anger and awe.

The most basic comment is a question: Who is this guy? If you follow the leads, this Everest of electric-guitar virtuosity, like so many other online artifacts, turns out to be a portal into a worldwide microculture, this one involving hundreds of highly stylized solo guitar videos, of which funtwo’s is but the most famous. And though they seem esoteric, they have surprising implications: for YouTube, the dissemination of culture, online masquerade and even the future of classical music.

Johann Pachelbel, the great one-hit wonder of the baroque period, originally composed his Canon in D Major for three violins, at least one chord-playing instrument (like a harpsichord or lute) and at least one bass instrument (like a cello or bassoon). With its steady walking rhythm, the piece is well suited to processional, and the bass line is extremely easy to play, a primer on simple chords: D, A, B minor, G-sharp minor, G. A sequence of eight chords repeats about 30 times.

The exacting part is the canon itself: a counterpoint played over the bass, originally by the three violins. The first violin plays variation A, then moves on to B, while the second violin comes in with A. By the time the first violin gets to C, the second starts in with B, and the third violin comes in with A: like three people singing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

With 28 variations, the piece becomes supercharged with complexity only to revert to a simpler structure as it ends. If you hadn’t heard it a thousand times before — in the movie “Ordinary People,” in commercials, at all those weddings — it might blow you away.

Last year Jerry Chang, a Taiwanese guitarist who turns 25 on Thursday, set out to create a rock version of the song, which he had been listening to since childhood. It took him two weeks. Others, like Brian Eno, had done so before him, and some listeners say his arrangement is derivative of one composed for the video game “Pump It Up.” But one way or another, his version, “Canon Rock,” rocked.

Once he had his arrangement on paper and in his fingers, since sweeping is above all a function of motor memory — Mr. Chang decided to publish his work. In the arena of high-speed guitar heroics, though, an audio recording is not enough; the manual virtuosity is almost like a magic trick, and people have to see it to believe it. So he sat on his bed in front of a video camera, fired up his recorded backing track and played his grand, devilish rendition of “Canon Rock.” He then uploaded the video to a Web site he had already set up for his band and waited for a response.

Before long he was inundated with praise, as well as requests for what are called the “tabs,” or written music, and the backing track, or digital bass line, which fans of his work downloaded and ran on their own computers. They then hoisted up their Fenders and Les Pauls to test their skills against JerryC’s. One of these guys was funtwo.

By following a series of clues on JerryC’s message board and various “Canon Rock” videos, I was able to trace funtwo’s video to Jeong-Hyun Lim, a 23-year-old Korean who taught himself guitar over the course of the last six years. Now living in Seoul, he listens avidly to Bach and Vivaldi, and in 2000 he took a month of guitar lessons. He plays an ESP, an Alfee Custom SEC-28OTC with gold-colored detailing. A close analysis of his playing style and a comparison of his appearance in person with that of the figure in the video, left little doubt that Mr. Lim is the elusive funtwo.

Recently he e-mailed me an account of how he came to make his YouTube video. His English is excellent, from years spent at Auckland University in New Zealand, where he plans to return in March.

“First time when I saw JerryC’s ‘Canon’ video, it was so amazing, I thought I might play it,” he wrote. “So I practiced it by myself using tab and backing track from Jerry’s homepage.” On Oct. 23, 2005, he uploaded his video to a Korean music site called Mule. From there an unknown fan calling himself guitar90 copied it and posted it on YouTube with the elegant intro: “this guy is great!!” Repeatedly newcomers to the comments section on YouTube suggest that the desktop computer visible on
YOUNG PLAYERS FULFILL A CHRISTMAS TRADITION AT CARNEGIE HALL

BY ALLAN KOZINN

The New York String Orchestra includes performers on woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, but why tamper with a name that has both cachet and tradition, however inaccurate it is nowadays. The group springs into being every December, when a few dozen young musicians (63 of them this year) come to New York from around the country for the New York String Orchestra Seminar. The program, 10 days of chamber and orchestra coaching for musicians between 15 and 22, is sponsored jointly by Carnegie Hall and the New School. It includes a pair of concerts at Carnegie Hall, the first always a relatively short, intermission-free program on Christmas Eve.

This year the Christmas Eve concert was devoted fully to Mozart, whose 250th anniversary year is quickly and, at times, a hint of portamento applied to Baroque and Classical era works. Gradually Mr. Laredo has updated his interpretive approach, and the orchestra’s sound. And on Sunday evening its Mozart was fully in the current style. The broadened chasm between piano and forte is part of it. So are relatively trim textures, and the breakneck tempos Mr. Laredo took, to the evident joy of the players, whose vigorous account of the “Impresario” Overture made it into something more than a curtain raiser.

In the Sinfonia Concertante, with Mr. Laredo conducting from the viola and Jennifer Koh as the violin soloist, the most notable moments were in the slow movement. There the violin, with its low-lying line, nearly matches the viola in tone, and Ms. Koh and Mr. Laredo played the serene dialogue with a meltingly beautiful sound.

Tacked among the piano sonatas, chamber pieces and song sequences of Schubert's last year is a curious yet compelling composition called “Der Hirt auf dem Felsen” or “The Shepherd on the Rock.” Musically, it is a duet between a singer and a clarinet with piano accompaniment, or maybe it is a trio equally distributing importance among the participants.

Song recitalists rarely bring along a clarinetist to their concerts, and chamber ensembles rarely insert vocal music in the middle of theirs. The Musicians from Marlboro series at the Metropolitan Museum has, on the other hand, the fluidity of personnel to make performances like this happen. Marlboro is a place in Vermont where students, young professionals and well-established musicians mix and match for chamber music. Met Museum concerts like one on Friday are a kind of working winter vacation for a summer festival.

“Der Hirt auf dem Felsen,” with texts mostly by Wilhelm Müller, is an elaborate rustic love lament. Musical ideas change from verse to verse, giving us a number of songs in one; the general impression is of an operatic “scena.” Hyunah Yu was the soprano here. She has a voice of nice personal quality and an enthusiasm for style, diction and inner motivation that works well. The eagerness can approach overkill but mostly avoids it. Alexander Fiterstein was the excellent clarinetist. For the piano part both here and in three other Schubert songs there was the wise hand of Gilbert Kalish.

Wind ensembles took up the rest of the evening. Elliott Carter’s “Eight Études and a Fantasy” for four winds are from Mr. Carter’s distant past (1950). The seven brief snippets have not yet arrived at the composer’s later and more original style, but the Fantasy at the end, with its crowd scene of opposing meters, is a clue to what was to come. Carl Nielsen’s Quintet, with its amiable lyricism and broad humor, wouldn’t have hurt a fly. The Beethoven E-flat Quintet was anchored by Mr. Kalish, whose musical intelligence and commitment led his younger colleagues by example.

Valérie Tessé Chermiset was the flutist, Rudolph Vrbisky the oboist and Paul S. LaFollette III the hornist: all fine players.


BY BERNARD HOLLAND

SCHUBERT’S FAREWELL LAMENT OF RUSTIC LOVE

The New York String Orchestra includes performers on woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, but why tamper with a name that has both cachet and tradition, however inaccurate it is nowadays. The group springs into being every December, when a few dozen young musicians (63 of them this year) come to New York from around the country for the New York String Orchestra Seminar. The program, 10 days of chamber and orchestra coaching for musicians between 15 and 22, is sponsored jointly by Carnegie Hall and the New School. It includes a pair of concerts at Carnegie Hall, the first always a relatively short, intermission-free program on Christmas Eve.

This year the Christmas Eve concert was devoted fully to Mozart, whose 250th anniversary year is quickly and, at times, a hint of portamento applied to Baroque and Classical era works. Gradually Mr. Laredo has updated his interpretive approach, and the orchestra’s sound. And on Sunday evening its Mozart was fully in the current style. The broadened chasm between piano and forte is part of it. So are relatively trim textures, and the breakneck tempos Mr. Laredo took, to the evident joy of the players, whose vigorous account of the “Impresario” Overture made it into something more than a curtain raiser.

In the Sinfonia Concertante, with Mr. Laredo conducting from the viola and Jennifer Koh as the violin soloist, the most notable moments were in the slow movement. There the violin, with its low-lying line, nearly matches the viola in tone, and Ms. Koh and Mr. Laredo played the serene dialogue with a meltingly beautiful sound.

The program ended with an appealingly rambunctious reading of the Symphony No. 36.

Hyunah Yu was the soprano here. She has a voice of nice personal quality and an enthusiasm for style, diction and inner motivation that works well. The eagerness can approach overkill but mostly avoids it. Alexander Fiterstein was the excellent clarinetist. For the piano part both here and in three other Schubert songs there was the wise hand of Gilbert Kalish.

Wind ensembles took up the rest of the evening. Elliott Carter’s “Eight Études and a Fantasy” for four winds are from Mr. Carter’s distant past (1950). The seven brief snippets have not yet arrived at the composer’s later and more original style, but the Fantasy at the end, with its crowd scene of opposing meters, is a clue to what was to come. Carl Nielsen’s Quintet, with its amiable lyricism and broad humor, wouldn’t have hurt a fly. The Beethoven E-flat Quintet was anchored by Mr. Kalish, whose musical intelligence and commitment led his younger colleagues by example.

Valérie Tessé Chermiset was the flutist, Rudolph Vrbisky the oboist and Paul S. LaFollette III the hornist: all fine players.
2006 was a milestone year for contemporary Korean artists, a couple of whom received remarkably positive attention from the American press for exhibitions held in New York.
Nam June Paik, 73, Dies; Pioneer of Video Art Whose Work Broke Cultural Barriers

BY ROBERTA SMITH

Nam June Paik, an avant-garde composer, performer and artist widely considered the inventor of video art, died Sunday at his winter home in Miami Beach. He was 73 and also lived in Manhattan.

Mr. Paik suffered a stroke in 1996 and had been in declining health for some time, said his nephew, Ken Paik Hakuta, who manages his uncle’s studio in New York.

Mr. Paik’s career spanned half a century, three continents and several art mediums, ranging through music, theater and found-object art. He once built his own robot. But his chief means of expression was television, which he approached with a winning combination of visionary wildness, technological savvy and high entertainment values. His work could be kitschy, visually dazzling and profound, sometimes all at once, and was often irresistibly funny and high-spirited.

At his best, Mr. Paik exaggerated and subverted accepted notions about both the culture and the technology of television while immersing viewers in its visual beauty and exposing something deeply irrational at its center.

He presciently coined the term “electronic superhighway” in 1974, grasping the essence of global communications and seeing the possibilities of technologies that were barely born. He usually did this while managing to be both palatable and subversive. In recent years, Mr. Paik’s enormous American flags, made from dozens of sleek monitors whose synchronized patterns mixed everything from pinups to apple pie at high, almost subliminal velocity, could be found in museums and corporate lobbies.
Mr. Paik was affiliated in the 1960’s with the anti-art movement Fluxus, and also deserves to be seen as an aesthetic innovator on a par with the choreographer Merce Cunningham and the composer John Cage. Yet in many ways he was simply the most Pop of the Pop artists. His work borrowed directly from the culture at large, reworked its most pervasive medium and gave back something that was both familiar and otherworldly.

He was a shy yet fearless man who combined manic productivity and incessant tinkering with Zen-like equanimity. A lifelong Buddhist, Mr. Paik never smoked or drank and also never drove a car. He always seemed amused by himself and his surroundings, which could be overwhelming; a writer once compared his New York studio to a television repair shop three months behind schedule.

Mr. Paik is survived by his wife, the video artist Shigeko Kubota.

NOW IN MOVING PICTURES: THE MULTITUDES OF
NIKKI S. LEE

BY CAROL KINO

E ven after a long face-to-face conversation, it’s hard to say for certain what Nikki S. Lee is really like. That’s partly because this South Korean-born artist has always trafficked in her unnerving talent for assuming different identities.

For “Projects,” a series of photographs that won her notoriety soon after they were first shown in group shows and art fairs in 1998, Ms. Lee transformed herself through a blend of clothes, makeup, diets, hair extensions, tanning salons, colored contact lenses, dance lessons and sheer grit to infiltrate wildly different milieus — tourists, yuppies, strippers, rappers, schoolgirls and retirees, among others — and posed for casual snapshots with her new acquaintances.

For her “Parts” series (2002-4), she had herself photographed with one different man after another who was later sliced off the picture, leaving only a trace of his presence, like an arm or foot. While this put the focus squarely on Ms. Lee, it also implied that her identity mutated with each romantic entanglement.

As a result, said Ms. Lee, 35, who speaks English somewhat haltingly and with a heavy Korean accent, “When people meet me the first time, they are like, ‘Oh, you are different than I thought.’ ”
In her latest project, an hourlong film that is to be shown this week at the Museum of Modern Art, she makes am-
ple use of that confusion. 

Titled "A K A Nikki S. Lee," the film purports to be a documentary about the real Nikki, a rather plain, seri-
ous young woman who is in turn making her own docu-
mentary about her alter ego, Nikki Two, the effervescent
exhibitionist who appears in the photographs. Yet as the true Ms. Lee explained in an interview in her East Village
apartment, "Nikki One is supposed to be real Nikki, and
Nikki Two is supposed to be fake Nikki. But they are
both fake Nikki."

The movie opens as Nikki One is being interviewed in a
book-lined studio. "In this documentary," she says sol-
lemnly, "I create Nikki Lee based on what people think
her character is." The scene then switches to the more
fashion-conscious Nikki Two, lounging in a Venetian
water taxi on her way to stay with wealthy collectors and
visit the Venice Film Festival. She is soon seen shopping
at Missoni, hobnobbing with movie folk (most notably
Jeremy Irons) at a reception at the Peggy Guggenheim
Collection on the Grand Canal and padding around the
collectors' apartment in her nightgown, wearing an eye-
shade that reads "Princess."

To make the film, which she began working on in early
2005, Ms. Lee frequently traveled with one of two cam-
eramen who were assigned to document her "real" life.
Most of the events did in fact take place – a trip to South
Korea to act in a movie called "The Girl Who Has Many
Selves" (her bit part was edited out); a stay in Paris, where
she had meetings with critics who were interested in her
work with this kind of concept?' That's my way of working."

Other scenes, however, are pure fabrication, most no-
tably those that present Nikki One in her book-lined
studio, a fake set that Ms. Lee constructed in a rented
Williamsburg loft with leased furniture and borrowed
books. Here Nikki One earnestly explains the direc-
tion of her faux documentary to an unseen interviewer and
discusses her work with two visitors: RoselEE Goldberg,
the performance art curator, and Leslie Tonkonow, Ms.
Lee's real-life dealer who discovered her in art school.
Ms. Lee also played fast and loose with the dates, just as she
did with the camera date-stamps on her "Projects" photos.
In making the film, "I kind of followed real events," Ms.
Lee said in the interview for this article. "But I kind of
arranged them." For instance, she asked the collec-
tors, Tony and Heather Pedesta, if she could stay with
them in Venice; she also set up the film's final scene: a
long, almost mystical tracking shot in which, seen only
from the back, she matches determinedly down a pier at
Manhattan's annual Armory Show on the Hudson to the
music of Philip Glass and drops off an envelope at Ms.
Tonkonow's booth.

On screen Nikki One is seen wailing, "This is not my
work," and then trudging miserably around the city. The
show's pre-opening dinner unfolds as it actually did, with
a slide projection instead of real artwork. Yet Ms. Lee
seemed to be more invigorated by the experience than
before. She told the photographer she recalled the first
"Project," the one in which she made a fake studio at her
East Village apartment, "I think for Nikki it was the best part of the film."

Certainly this interplay between fact and fiction adds to
the provocatively layered concept of her work. But the audience
eventually comes to sense that this capacity may not be hers alone, that per-
haps we all contain multitudes. Similarly, as the film progresses, the concept of fact ver-
sus fiction, or Nikki One versus Nikki Two, seems to
waver away, as Ms. Lee demonstrates her unusual knack
for finding common ground with strangers, even with-
out the use of costumes and props.

In one scene, shot at an open-air street market in Mexico
City, Ms. Lee, wearing what looks like every type of attire,
happens upon a woman packing up trinkets in a newspaper
with a man and ends up pitching in to help. The scene
concludes with upbraiding laughter, as the artist wraps
up her new friend's hands and feet, jokingly instructs her
'_ENDIANID IN A WESTERN SOCIETY IS MORE LIKE, 'I Am Myself,' " she said, "I think, therefore I exist.' In Eastern cultures it is more
we think about group.' "

Emotional exchanges, like being in love or being close to
a friend, also differ. In South Korea, for instance, were
she to introduce one friend to another, and they became
friends on their own, "that would be rude," Ms. Lee said,
while in the United States it might seem natural.

Thinking about such differences inspires her. After a while,
she said, she begins to wonder, "How am I going to make a
work with this kind of concept? That's my way of working."

For all her reputed mutability, Ms. Lee seems sure of her-
selves." She said her favorite scene in her new film is the
long tracking shot that shows her striding through the
Army Show, looking determinedly forward. "Artist
Nikki going through a lot of art and not even looking at
it," she chuckles.

Yet when asked if she had learned anything from inhab-
iting her many roles, Ms. Lee seemed momentarily be-
mused. Finally, she said, "One thing I really learned is,
Yes, I'm right. I'm able to do that." So I have confidence in
my confidence."

A K A N I K K I S. L E E
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Every day, hundreds of tourists snap photographs of a crowd-and-car-jammed Times Square. The average picture takes—what?—15 seconds to shoot? The same picture of the same place takes the Korean photographer Atta Kim eight hours. And his Times Square ends up with only an eerie trace of a human presence, like a deserted movie set.

Other pictures by Mr. Kim, who is making an outstanding New York solo debut in a show titled “Atta Kim: On-Air” at the International Center of Photography, have required less time. A photograph of a soccer game: two hours. Of a couple having sex: one hour. Still others go way beyond the eight-hour mark. “Monologue of Ice,” with its mysterious lozenge of pollen-yellow light hovering in the dark, is the product of a marathon 25-hour shoot.

And what is that picture of? A block of ice melting. Mr. Kim put the ice in a room and left the lens of his camera open to record the process of physical change as a solid form returned to fluid. Naturally, the transformation was slow. But who would have guessed that it would be so spectacularly photogenic—molten-looking and radiant?

Many of the large-format photographs in Mr. Kim’s show were made over time. His is an art of duration and of simultaneity. When he leaves his lens open for an hour on a couple making love, every movement made in that hour is in the picture, though condensed into an explosive blur. His view of Times Square leaves all the stationary elements—buildings and such—in crisp focus, but reduces traffic to a shimmering haze, a ghost of motion. Other famous New York intersections get the same treatment.

When Real Time Turns Out to Be the Most Surreal of All

BY HOLLAND COTTER
In overlaid images Jesus becomes his disciples, and they become him.
A Korean Turns Old Paper Into Quietly Abstract Art

By SONIA KOLESNIKOV-JESSOP

SINGAPORE — For three years the South Korean artist Kwang-Young Chun has been buying discarded Korean books and storing them in air-conditioned warehouses. He has accumulated more than 20,000, spending, he said with a laugh, “a small fortune in the process.”

He doesn’t buy the books for content but for the handmade mulberry paper they are printed on. These small pieces of paper, sometimes 100 years old, have been the cornerstone of his art for the last 20 years.

“I noticed some trendy restaurants and coffee shops in Seoul were decorating their walls with old mulberry paper, and I started to panic,” he said.

Paper that ‘contains the soul of the people who touched it’

that one day I wouldn’t be able to find those books anymore,” he said in an interview here, where he recently completed a printmaking project at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. Works from this project will be on view here from Sept. 2 to 23. Mr. Chun may also show some of the prints when he exhibits his mulberry paper work in Manhattan this fall.

Scraped at the Kim Foster Gallery on West 26th Street in Chelsea (Sept. 7 to Oct. 31) and wall pieces at the Michelle Rosenfeld Gallery on East 29th Street (Sept. 7 to Oct. 31).

Handmade mulberry paper was once found in every corner of a traditional Korean home, used to cover walls, doors and even windowpanes, or to dress up utensils and decorative objects. Mr. Chun closely associates it with his childhood in a small village, he said. There he would watch his uncle, a doctor, hang patients small bundles of medicinal herbs wrapped in mulberry paper inscribed with wishes for good health.

“I can still remember all these bundles hanging in tight clusters from the ceiling of his house,” he said.

Mr. Chun, 82, has devoted two decades to his “Aggregation” series. He uses old mulberry paper to wrap thousands of thick plastic-foam triangles and ties them with twisted mulberry paper “threads.” He then glues the pieces onto panels or strings them together into free-standing installations. Art critics have described the work as having “a surface alive and brilliantly” and called it “a kind of painting that is not really a painting.”

Irene Lee, the print institute’s director, said: “His flatter works look like trompe l’oeil, as they create the illusion of depth. It’s a little like bas-relief in the contemporary manner. This is what makes his work so very different. The works can look like carpets when seen close up, or like the Milky Way when viewed from a distance.”

Wrapping and assembling are integral parts of Korean culture. Bojagi, or square wrapping cloths, date to the 14th century and are used for carrying and storing objects. But the quiet abstraction and modernity of Mr. Chun’s work also reflects his contact with Western culture. Beginning in the late 1960s he spent more than 10 years in the United States, first as an art student and then as a Celler Field painter in Philadelphia. His work at the time was characterized by large, flat areas of color, on which he would layer sections of a hue.

“I'd worked in a factory making high-quality print fabrics when I was a young student,” he said. “It was all very colorful, and I was certainly influenced by the mix of oils and chemi-
The New York Times covered various aspects of the graceful movements in traditional to contemporary Korean dance. Also, The New York Times reviewed favorably the works of Korean female playwrights, whose works spotlight the life of Korean-Americans and their cultural deviations in the U.S.
DANCE REVIEW

A New York

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Kang Sun Young has been designated Korea’s Intangible Cultural Asset No. 92. An active teacher and cultural politician in South Korea, she has “travelled the world,” according to one of the several speakers who welcomed her from the stage of the New York State Theater on Tuesday night. But at 81, she had not yet made her New York debut.

Tuesday’s performance before a large audience, mostly Korean, rectified that omission. An outsider hardly knew what to expect. This could have been a gaudy Korean revue intended to fill a too-large stage.

The theater was in fact too big for all the subtleties to register. (Ms. Kang’s home ball seats 400, as opposed to the State Theater’s 2,700.) But the yawning cavity had been cleverly modified with a false proscenium of hanging fabrics. The whole event turned out to be genuinely effective and, as far as one could tell, plausible respectful of Korean dance tradition.

The two-and-a-half-hour program was a sampler, although not everything in Korean dance was sampled; masked dance drama was missing for instance. Still, the variety of the 11 excerpts was impressive.

Korean dance, like Korea, has been subjected to millennia of invasion and foreign influence. As one religion succeeded another, with different cultural and social agendas, and as invaders swept down the peninsula, Korean dance mutated and evolved. The 20th century was particularly difficult, what with the collapse of the 500-year-old Confucian

Debut at 81, Exploring Korea’s Traditions

Members of the Kang Sun Young Dance Company performing Tuesday night at the New York State Theater.

Kang Sun Young

New York State Theater

Yi dynasty, Japanese occupation, World War II, the Korean War and the hardening division of the country. Ms. Kang is a disciple of Han Seong Jun, who helped revive traditional dance in the 1980’s. In Confucian times women were excluded from ceremonial performance. Ms. Kang’s company on Tuesday consisted of 37 female dancers (including herself) and 2 men, along with 14 musicians, who made wonderfully pungent sounds from the pit.

One of the more admirable aspects of Asian dance is the room offered for performers of every age. Many in Ms. Kang’s troupe were no longer young — not 81, but up there — even if some of the more athletic maneuvers, like the gracefully posed mass-onstage drumming, were turned over to the younger dancers.

Korean dance costumes consist of many-layered, multicolored skirts and tops, small hats and turned-up white booties. The dance itself is based on heel-to-toe steps, to sometimes trickily syncopated triple and triple meters. There is much use of the upper body, long scarves or Chinese-style “water sleeves” and handheld percussive props. There are also all manner of hand gestures and facial expressions, harder to perceive from afar. Everything is synchronized, often in elegantly choreographed patterns. Most of the dances, except for one comic dance-drama, looked hieratic and solemn.

There’s nothing like an invasion to change the local choreography.

but always beautiful. Even the potentially tacky projections looked good.

Advance publicity hinted coyly that Ms. Kang’s Tuesday performance might be “possibly her last time onstage.” This was modified by a speaker to “might possibly be one of her last performances.” Whatever. There she was at the end, hitching up her skirt to reveal some fancy footwear and having what looked like a high old time. The audience had a high old time too.
Dreamlike Patterns, Delicate And Slow

There is a sense of tradition, but no traditional dance in Sin Cha Hong's "Pilgrimage," a work that gently alludes to life's journey through a succession of calm, minimalist scenes that sometimes evoke the stylized stage pictures of Robert Wilson or Butoh performers.

Ms. Hong, who spent 20 years in New York before returning to her native Korea in 1980, created "Pilgrimage" in 1981, and the piece, which was performed Monday night at La MaMa Annex, has mostly worn well. In the opening section, seven dancers in long robes and conical caps move in silence on small stilts, arms draped over bamboo sticks they carry on their shoulders. To the sounds of birds, water and rhythmic percussion overlaid by a fluted melody, they form lines and semicircles with little bending movements and small, repetitive arm gestures.

After sudden, stiff falls to the ground, the dancers writhes out of their outer robes as if emerging from cocoons, then move in near-slow motion, crouching and bringing their cupped hands to their mouths as if drinking. Ms. Hong fashions delicate patterns as the dancers circle an individual, or separate into small groups, but she retains a stylized unity throughout these discrete events that gives "Pilgrimage" the illogical continuity of a dream.

Pilgrimage

La MaMa Annex

Only once does a single figure — in a voluminous white robe — hold the stage alone, and this minimal solo, in which the arms and upper body move slightly, possesses a surprising dramatic resonance. Here, Ms. Hong is aided by a skillful (uncredited) lighting design and the appealing score (put together by Masaru Saga and Myung-woo Na), which mixes nature sounds with traditional instrumentation and occasional song. "Pilgrimage" can occasionally feel neuritic — and interludes for two small dancers in white masks who seem to represent guiding spirits are jarring twice — but it is mostly rewarding in its visual beauty and unforced tranquility of purpose.
MYUNG SOO KIM DANCE PROJECT
(Wednesday and Thursday)

Ms. Kim, who channels ancient Korean shamanistic rituals through modern dance, will perform six solos in costumes inspired by vivid Korean traditional dress. (Through June 18.) At 8 p.m., the Duke on 42nd Street, 229 West 42nd Street, (212) 239-6200 or telecharge.com; $35, $25 for students and 65+. (Dunning)

ARTS, BRIEFLY
Compiled by Steven McElroy

ALL SEATS ARE CHEAP SEATS

For the third consecutive year, City Center will present "Fall for Dance," bringing together 10 companies from around the world for a festival of 16 programs. This year's event, from Sept. 28 through Oct. 8, has expanded to 16 nights, from 8 to accommodate more people viewing for the popular (and affordable) $10 tickets. One of the festival's goals is to build new audiences for dance, and it seems to be working: a survey of audience members last year found that 12 percent of attendees under age 30 had never seen a dance performance before. Among this year's participants are the New York-based Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and Stephen Petronio Company as well as the Yi-Jo Lin Sun Dance Company, above, from Korea and Coleman Lambeux & Cambpignie from Montreal, both appearing in New York for the first time. Full schedule: nycitycenter.org.
Watch the Antics

Koosil-ja (she only uses her first name) — born in Japan of Korean parents and based in New York since 1981 — had a fascinating idea for her new “Dance Without Bodies,” seen Wednesday night at the Kitchen. Several interesting ideas actually.

The main one was for her and her dancing partner, Melissa Guerrero (Koosil-ja is the one with glasses), to dance in a moment-to-moment emulation of the movements on three video monitors, groups of which were dotted about the space.

She has described this technique as falling between choreography and improvisation and was apparently led to it by her experience of working with the Wooster Group, several leading members of which are listed as donors for this production.

But she also divided the Kitchen into two symmetrical performing areas, back to back. Each audience could see the other stage and audience projected live on its own rear wall. The two dancers dashed from side to side, sometimes leaving one stage empty (but that audience still saw them, projected).

Koosil-ja, foreground, with Melissa Guerrero projected in background.

on Either Stage, Then Go to the Videotapes

Koosil-ja

The Kitchen

The dancing was vigorous and energetic, and fascinating to check against the three different video offerings. To my eye the women spent more time with the upper-left screen, depicting scenes from feature films, than with the one to its right, or the lower one, of animated films. But sometimes they would dip into one or the other two sources, and sometimes they managed to combine two or even three.

All of this was carried on in an atmosphere of light-hearted good cheer, reflected in Mr. Matter's mostly electro-pop music and above all in Koosil-ja's goofy costumes, fashioned dresses adorned with doodads and split to reveal what looked like translucent plastic slips, all topped off by aviator caps that seemed to be made of some kind of sparkling, silver-lamé fabric.

Profound? No. Fun? Yes. And at one hour, it never overstayed its welcome, like so much of downtown dance.
A CHOREOGRAPHER SHOWCASES AN ASSORTMENT OF PERSONALITIES

By Jennifer Dunning

Sunhwa Chung has at least three personalities, to judge from the evening presented by her Ko-Ryo Dance Theater on Wednesday at the Flamboyan Theater at Clemente Soto Vélz. The first is the adept modern-dance choreographer behind “Petals in the Wind,” a duet on the program. The second is a delicately compelling performer of Korean traditional dance. And the third is something of a mystery.

“Petals in the Wind,” a 1999 duet danced to turbulent music by Hans Zimmer, is a familiar portrait of a man and a woman who shift continuously between dependence and independence. Ms. Chung expresses those shifts chiefly through grappling partnering and by having one dancer turn away from the other. But there are some excitingly surprising devices, like Yoshinori Ino’s fast travel toward Claire Malaquias, his foot scuffing as if to kick her.

Ms. Chung is exquisitely fluid in the soft turns and bobs of Korean dance in “Of Love and Memories,” a 1995 solo she also choreographed. Best of all are her long, lyrical arms and expressive hands, and her odd mix of reticence and lushness. She pulls out all the stops in “Il-haw Il-Missing Episode,” a dance for five (Maki Hatake, Mr. Ino, Ms. Malaquias, Akemi Nishi and Ryoji Sasamoto) that makes imaginative use of the magical Flamboyan stage space, enhanced, too, by Miriam Niloa Crowe’s lighting.

There are suggestions of urban street corners at night and the couples and solitary individuals who inhabit them. Once more, Mr. Ino stands out for his powerful presence and sophistication as a performer. But here, as in the opening dance, a premiere called “Life Is Every Day,” Ms. Chung does not know when to stop. There, though, the similarities end. It was hard to imagine that the same artist choreographed this meandering, confusing new group dance, performed within lines formed by two long ropes and set to a collage of contemporary music.

The Ko-Ryo Dance Theater will perform through Sunday night at the Flamboyan Theater at the Clemente Soto Vélz Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets, Lower East Side; (212) 868-4444.

Father in a funk? Brother grappling with a shameful secret? Barren silences casting a pall over the dinner table?

Forget family therapy. Gather the troops, hop in the S.U.V., fill the tank and head for the open highway. There's nothing like a road trip to knit back together those fraying family bonds. As indie movies like "Little Miss Sunshine" and "Pieces of April" affirm, tight quarters, fast-food pit stops and kitschy motels form the postcard-perfect backdrop for the regeneration of domestic fellow feeling, always laced with a little bit of distancing attitude, of course.

This increasingly familiar genre – call it the dysfunctional family road-trip comedy-drama – is transposed to the stage in Julia Cho's tender-hearted "Durango," a new play about a Korean immigrant and his two sons squabbling, soul-baring and eventually healing, just a little, as they tool around the Southwest.

The play, which opened last night at the Public Theater in a sensitive production directed by Chay Yew, is cooked with mostly familiar ingredients. The generation gap that can yawn particularly wide in immigrant families is by no means fresh theatrical ground. The subterranean racism that confronts minorities in the heartland also strikes familiar chords, as does the mournful lament for the American dream shimmering feebly at the vanishing point on the horizon. Even the fantastic sequences in which the troubled high-schooler, Jimmy (Jon Norman Schneider), takes refuge in fantasies of fictional superheroes have a been-there feeling.

And yet Ms. Cho, a young playwright of clear promise, develops even the potentially hackneyed themes with a laconic, natural ease that earns respect and admiration. Nothing in "Durango" feels particularly new, but nothing in it feels contrived or dishonest, either. (Which is more than you can say for some of those indie movies.)

After a twangy musical prelude that sets a lonesome tone, the play opens with a particularly affecting, unadorned scene set in a bland-looking office. A man stands rigidly behind a desk, his eyes locked on its empty surface. In thickly accented English, he trades small talk about the family – one son, Isaac (James Yaegashi), is heading to med school; the other, Jimmy, is a star of the high school swim team – with the fellow awkwardly shifting in a chair beside him.

Only when Boo-Seng Lee (James Saito) stoops to retrieve a box of personal effects from the floor, an exhausted houseplant peeking over the cardboard rim, do we find a source for the sad tension quietly oozing from him. He's just been laid off and is being ushered out of the office building immediately by Jerry (Ross Bickell), the friendly security guard, who's almost as embarrassed as he is.
As Boo-Seng stands rigid, unable to face the next moment, Jerry gently prods him: “Mr. Lee? I have to be at another office by 4. Let’s go.”

Felled from his reverie, Boo-Seng mechanistically replies: “Yes. Let’s go.”

That everyday phrase is used with resourceful cunning, by Ms. Cho throughout “Durango,” accruing new resonance with each repetition. She has a gift for imbuing homely details with a just perceptible varnish of poetic feeling. Someone in the play is always impatiently saying, “let’s go” to someone else, but all three of the Lee men are revealed to be painfully aware of their own tendency to stand stock still, emotionally speaking. The road trip that provides the dramatic impetus of “Durango” may be a near-cliche, but it is nevertheless an apt metaphor for a drama that gently contemplates how hard it can be to move forward in life, even when you can see the right road stretching out before you.

Returning home, Boo-Seng interrupts the silence over dinner to announce gruffly that it’s time for a family vacation. “I have some time off,” he explains. This calms Jimmy, who has experienced little family togetherness since the death of his mother some years ago. But Isaac, broody and uncomfortable, would rather stay at home. He has to be blackmailed into going by Jimmy, who wins him over by giving him a peek at his secret notebook, where he defeats his anxieties by proxy through the exploits of comic strip superheroes.

Although he bores the boys with an enthusiastic pep talk about Korean history, Boo-Seng has never learned the language of real communication. When the family stops at a motel for the night, he must unload his grief on a silent woman who has just checked in. “Why did I want so little?” he thinks, “Who taught me to want so little for myself?”

When these women rule the world.

BY ANITA GATES

The best parodies start with great titles. So Young Jean Lee’s hysterically funny “Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven,” now at the HERE Arts Center, is perfect, because the show is actually about minority rage, mudfish in tofu, femininity’s inner viciousness and a secret Korean plot to rule the world.

“You may laugh now, but remember my words when you and your offspring are writhing under our yoke,” says Beckye Yamamoto as the young woman known only as Korean-American.

Ms. Yamamoto is priceless, having already set the politically incorrect tone with the opening line, “Have you ever noticed how most Asian-Americans are slightly brain-damaged from having grown up with Asian parents?”

After a few more shockingly racist comments, she points out that some American men ”like that retarded quality.”

Ms. Yamamoto’s contemporary outspokenness is nearly equaled by the behavior of the three pretty, giggling Korean dancers in brightly colored traditional dresses. They speak in Korean much of the time, but audiences will notice that the word “sex” comes up quite often.

In English, one of the women perkyly suggests to the others, “Shall we play ‘hookers and johns’?” More than once, a particularly young dancer announces with a demure smile that being a prostitute is fun. Later the three women (Jun Sky Kim, Haerry Kim and Jennifer Lim) take turns, with the potently gruesome humor of a Quentin Tarantino movie, miming horrible ways to commit suicide.

Now and then a white American couple (Juliana Francis and Brian Bickerstaff) appear, arguing about sex, alcoholism, petty theft and their relationship in general. In the middle of this Mr. Bickerstaff’s character announces: “You know what’s awesome? Being white.”

But Ms. Lee’s play, which also directed brilliantly, is not only about that sort of supposedly ingenious extreme. Just when the largely Caucasian audience thought it had caught up to Ms. Lee’s off-and-on ironic point of view, she called our bluff again. Whites are bigoted, everybody’s bigoted, and isn’t it great that it’s all out in the open now, and we can laugh about it? But not really.

The New York Times has focused on the rising popularity of Korean food, reviewing numerous Korean cuisines, from traditional styles of seasonal dishes to modern foods that can be tasted in New York.
TRADITIONAL FLAVORS OF THE LUNAR NEW YEAR

BY DANA BOWEN

Two sisters sat at an ingredient-strewn table at Vietcafe, gossiping as they prepared the sticky rice cakes that are adored across Vietnam at this time of year. Lan Tran Cao, the younger of the two and the owner of Vietcafe, a TriBeCa restaurant, spoke of a relative’s recipe.

“The way she seasons it is different,” she said to her sister, Nga Thi Tran. Clearly, “different” meant not as good.

A cook, Mai Nguyen, walked in and spotted the women mashing dried mung bean balls into banana leaves with great force. “Ah, banh chung!” she sang, and smiled. For her, the bundles contained distant memories of New Year’s celebrations in Hanoi.

Lunar New Year begins on Sunday, and in many traditional Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese households in New York, the cooking is under way. Chefs like Ms. Cao find themselves in a peculiar spot at the beginning of the Year of the Dog, poised between a public hungry to learn about the world’s cuisine and a community where many culinary traditions are slipping.

“Nowadays, everybody buys these,” she said of the banh chung, a requisite dish for Tet Nguyen Dan, Vietnam’s New Year and its most important holiday. Buying them in Chinatown is certainly easier than soaking the rice overnight, stuffing it in banana leaves with pork belly and beans, wrapping the cakes in foil, simmering them for 12 hours and draining them for another few hours.

But to Ms. Cao, the effort is worth it. On Saturday she will serve them at Gallery Vietnam (attached to her restaurant) for her annual Tet party. Last year more than 40 families attended, many of them American with adoptive children born in Vietnam. She’ll describe the significance of the altar table, where departed relatives’ favorite foods are set out. Her niece will direct a play about the rice cakes’ fabled origins.

As she worked, Ms. Cao and her sister recalled the New Year’s of their childhood in Saigon, when their faces turned red from eating dyed watermelon seeds. Ms. Cao remembered how her father, a Hanoi native, made blunt squares of banh chung (as compared to the south’s round version) without the wooden molds she now relies on. Their family would make 70 cakes before the holiday to snack on with pickled greens during the week, when stores were closed.

Michael Huynh, the Saigon-born chef of Bao Noodles and Bao 111 in the East Village, was well aware of this practice. “Anything made with fish sauce lasts,” said Mr. Huynh, who serves thit kho to – a sticky-sweet pork dish with funky undertones of nuoc mam – on his Tet menus. The candied bites of the pork, he said, are typical of the holiday’s practical yet satisfying recipes.

Korean New Year, Solnal, is greeted with steaming bowls of rice cake soup called duk gook – “comfort food,” said Moon Sun Kwak, who serves it at Dok Suni and Do Hwa, her family’s restaurants in Manhattan. Her mother, Myung Ja Kwak, who is the chef, slowly simmers beef bones into a marrow-rich broth as the base for the soup.

“It’s so healthy,” the elder Ms. Kwak said as she dropped homemade dumplings into the soup in Do Hwa’s kitchen. Not all versions of the soup have dumplings; it’s the duk, or rice cake slivers, that matter. “You eat it so you can turn a year older.”

Many Korean Americans observe both Jan. 1 and the Lunar New Year, treating the later date with more reverence. Ms. Kwak recalled eating the rice cake soup for breakfast as a child in North Korea, before performing a solemn bowing ritual to honor her elders.

Jennifer Maeng, who owns Korean Temple Cuisine in the East Village, remembers her family spending a week pre-
FOR A FELICITOUS START

dumplings at Do Hwa in Greenwich Village

Korean Rice Cake Soup with Dumplings (Duk Mandu Gook)

Adapted from Myung Ja Kwak

Time: About two hours

For the dumplings:

- 12 ounces mung bean sprouts, chopped
- 1 cup diced onion
- 12 ounces kimchi, strained and chopped
- 4 ounces firm tofu, crumbled
- 1/4 pound ground pork
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 package dumpling wrappers, thawed as much liquid as possible.
- 1 egg, beaten

For the soup:

- 8 cups beef broth, preferably Korean (see note)
- 1 bunch scallions
- 1/2 pound lean beef, in thin slivers
- 1 pound frozen Korean rice cakes, sliced (see note)
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

1. Make dumplings: Place a large pot of water over high heat. When it boils, add sprouts and onions and cook until sprouts are soft, about five minutes. Drain in colander and rinse under cold water.

2. In a large mixing bowl, combine sprouts and onions with kimchi. Working in batches, transfer a handful of vegetable-tofu mixture on a large piece of cheesecloth or clean, porous cloth, fold up edges and twist, squeezing out liquid. Empty back into mixing bowl. When fully drained, return vegetables to colander in sink. Add tofu, tossing to combine. Press down on vegetables with your hands, draining as much liquid as possible.

3. Working in batches, place a scant tablespoon of filling in center of a wrapper, brush rim with egg, and fold, forming a half moon. Pinch closed tightly. Place over medium low heat. As soon as it melts and turns golden, twist, squeezing out liquid. Empty back into mixing bowl. When done, transfer to colander, top with parchment paper and weigh down with a heavy, water-filled pot. Drain for at least a half-hour.

4. In a large mixing bowl, combine pork, oil, garlic and salt. Add drained vegetables and mix well with your fingers.

5. Place a scant tablespoon of filling in center of a wrapper, brush wrapper rim with egg, and fold, forming a half moon. Pinch closed with your fingers and squeeze out air. Wrap end tips around until they touch, dab with egg and pinch together: it will look like a tortellini. Transfer to a parchment-lined plate and repeat until you have about 20 dumplings.

6. Make soup: Place a large pot filled with broth over high heat. Prepare scallions: discard white parts, chop a few inches of green part into rounds and slice remainder lengthwise. When broth boils, add beef and 3 to 4 dumplings a person (freeze unused dumplings), reduce heat to medium and cook 5 to 7 minutes.

7. Add frozen rice cakes and scallion slices and cook until cakes are soft, another two minutes. Add eggs and gently stir. Shut off heat and season with black pepper. Ladle into bowls and garnish with scallion rounds, sesame seeds and seaweed, if using.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings.

Note: For beef broth, dashida powder is sold in bags at Korean markets. Dissolve one teaspoon per cup of boiling water. Korean rice cakes, called duk, are sold in the freezer section of Korean markets; the wide slices are the most traditional.

KOREA’S TASTE OF SUMMER IS A LONG, COOL SLURP

BY ELAINE LOUIE

JUNG-HYUN KIM was 3 years old when his mother fed him a dish that changed his life.

It was a bowl of homemade buckwheat noodles – naeng myun – that she made in their home in Pyongyang, now North Korea. The noodles nested in cold, mild beef broth topped with slices of tender beef brisket, sweet Asian pear, lightly pickled white radish, cucumber and half a hard-boiled egg. Eating it was as close to an epiphany as a little boy can get.

“There’s a little bit of sweetness, and a little bit of sourness,” said Mr. Kim, 73, through an interpreter, a daughter, Jenny Chia. “It’s very refreshing and very cool. If you ask me why I love it, I love it. Does there have to be a reason?”

In 1961, after settling in Seoul, South Korea, he opened a restaurant named Dae Dong specializing in naeng myun, the first of five of those restaurants he would open in Korea, Paraguay and New York before retiring. “If I want to eat it, I have to spend a lot of money,” he said recently over a bowl at Dae Dong in Flushing. “But if I do a naeng myun business, I can eat it whenever I want, and as often as I want.” He ate it daily, three times a day, until he retired in 1999.

He is not alone in his love for the cold noodles, one of Korea’s most popular dishes, especially in the summer. The noodles, sometimes called Pyongyang naeng myun, are a light, one-dish meal with bursts of flavor – a crunch of mildly vinegared radish, a spurt of crisp, juicy pear and, of course, the savory noodles.
A spicy, brothless version called Hamhung naeng myun, which originated in the city of that name in North Korea, is made with slightly chewier sweet-potato noodles and a sauce of minced fresh chilies, fresh red bell peppers, garlic, ginger, onions, sugar or honey, ground sesame seeds and sesame oil. It's topped with the same pyramid of brisket, pear, radish, cucumber and egg.

At Kang Suh, at 1250 Broadway (32nd Street) in Manhattan, and also at the Yonkers branch, the dish is served with a ladle of cold beef broth added to the noodles. A variation is topped with very chewy, raw skate rather than brisket.

The best naeng myun are freshly made. At Dae Dong at 17 West 32nd Street in Manhattan, Sang Sup Seo, the chef, mixed the dough from buckwheat flour, regular wheat flour, hot water and a splash of carbonated water mixed with rice vinegar, "to hold the dough together," he said. With his fingers, he mixed it in the bowl of a machine that kneaded it and then extruded it in a cylinder 14 inches long by 3 1/2 inches across, enough for 6 servings.

The chef placed some dough into the steel cylinder of an automated noodle-making machine. He pressed a lever, pushed a button, and a cylinder pressed the dough through a perforated cap in 294 slender strands. The fragile pale beige noodles, each 2 feet long and a scant one millimeter in diameter, dropped out of the machine directly into a pot of boiling water.

Mr. Seo twirled the noodles around for a minute and a half, removed them to a sink of cold water to stop the cooking, and then to a sink of ice water to make them firm.

Mr. Seo, the chef at Kum Gang San at 49 West 32nd Street, who has been making naeng myun for 40 years, had to push the dough through the old-fashioned machines using "brute force," he said through an interpreter.

When the noodles were presented to Mr. Kim, he added a tablespoon of rice vinegar and a teaspoon of mustard, and gently mixed the noodles. (Waiters offer to cut the noodles in half with scissors, since a skein of one-foot-long noodles is easier to eat than one of two-foot-long noodles.)

Mr. Kim of Dae Dong recalled using a wooden noodle-making machine when he was growing up. The apparatus weighed about 30 pounds, and was communally owned by three or four families. When his family wanted to use it, a family member went to the neighbor's house, dismantled the machine, and carried the parts home.

Chang Lai Ahn, the chef at Kum Gang San, said, "They will become one chunk in 15 minutes." Mr. Kim recalled using a wooden noodle-making machine when he was growing up. The apparatus weighed about 30 pounds, and was communally owned by three or four families. When his family wanted to use it, a family member went to the neighbor's house, dismantled the machine, and carried the parts home.

The clock is ticking.
$25 AND UNDER

Korean Fried Chicken

Peter Meck

Hey why you wanna go and do that?” T.I. asks over and over in “Why You Wanna,” one of the many hip-hop hits to gazele beer by at Restaurant Forte Baden Baden. It echoes a question from a friend when I tried to lure him to this Koreatown restaurant with the promise of deep-fried rotisserie chicken. He couldn’t fathom why they would want to go and do that.

One answer explains why humans deep-fry just about anything: because they can. Another is evident as soon as a platter of the chicken hits the table. The rotisserie keeps the flesh moist (even the cut-ofy breast meat common to all lesser chickens) and the deep-fryer ensures crackling crisp skin. Why other cultures have not picked up on this Korean innovation is a question I can’t answer.

Piles of the twice-cooked chicken, available in large portions ($14.95) or mammoth ones ($18.95), are accompanied by a little heap of deep-fried garlic cloves, a bowl of pickled dill onion radish and French fries or onion rings (choose the fries). A red squat bottle of ketchup is ready for the fries; a clear squat bottle of a vinegar hot sauce for the bird.

The restaurant has nerved above the Koreatown fray in a boxy secondary-story space for more than a decade. A suite of uncoordinated signage identifies it: the awning says BBNT, a flag flies the colors of Restaurant Forte, and a mailbox in the grungy first-floor hallway (from which you might on an elevator or a flight of stairs) identifies it as Baden Baden, the name everyone calls it.

Baden Baden is one of New York City’s few hofs. Korean restaurants where beer is the drink of choice, instead of soju or sake, and fried chicken is a specialty of the house. The presence of the term hof seems uncertain; an acquaintance said it was derived from a Korean mispronunciation of hops, the ingredient that adds bitterness to beer.

At this and other hofs, the interior is meant to evoke a German pub or beer hall, and here they’ve succeeded at least halfway (the pitchers of beer on nearly every table help). The significance of the faux military costumes the waiters wear was lost on me, and So Reum Kim, the manager of the Manhattan location (there are outposts of the restaurant in Palisades Park, N.J., and Atlanta), couldn’t do better than to say they made it easier to know who worked there and who didn’t. Fair enough.

Beyond the uniforms, the fried chicken and the hip-hop is a menu turn in two directions: industrial-grade fried food (moozaerella sticks, onion rings and their ilk) and Korean dishes not usually seen at street-level Koreatown restaurants.

Restaurant Forte Baden Baden
35 West 25th Street, second floor, Koreatown, G139.13.5.6296.

Best Dishes: Fried chicken with French fries, marinated seaweed, pig’s feet with vegetables.

Price Range: Small dishes, $4.95 to $6.95; main dishes, $12.95 to $18.95.

Credit Cards: All major cards.

Hours: 4:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday; 1 a.m. on Sunday.

Wheelchair Access: Accessible.

With Beer and a Beat

A simple noodle soup in a kimchi-stained broth, kimchi somgyu ($12.95), would be the perfect way to wrap up a long night on the town. The best dishes are culled under the heading Chef’s Specialties. All are doled out in massive portions and might be oddly called sir-fries. Most eaters may want to opt for the sliced pigs’ feet and vegetables ($11.95), one of the more compelling and unusual presentations of pigs’ feet I’ve seen. It appears they have been cooked, boned and compromised into a sizable form. Those marbled slices, which in texture fall somewhere between gelatinous and chewy, are then cooked with root vegetables in a simmering amount of dark sesame oil, the flavor of which permeates the whole of the dish.

Those inclined to order seafood should try the sea snails ($12.95), which resemble baby corns after they have been liberated from their shells. (They may be exactly that; Mr. Kim couldn’t help me determine an English translation for the dish.) The sea animals in question are baked in sesame oil and a spicy sauce, then tossed with cold, crisp slices of cucumbers and apples just before the dash hits the dining room.

My friends and I were trying to figure out who was going to take home the leftover pigs’ feet at the end of my final visit to Baden Baden when another T.I. song, “What You Know,” came on. “What you know about that?” he demanded repeatedly.

As far as hofs go, more than I did before I stumbled upon Baden Baden. And as far as the somewhat obscure world of Korean food beyond bobaig, I know I want to know, as T.I. would have it, all about that.
$25 AND UNDER
Dana Bowen

Korean Simplicity

It sounded like a fine idea: Momofuku Noodle Bar spawns a grab-and-go satellite peddling its addictive pork buns and giving its chef-owners, David Chang and Jean-Georges Vongerichten hyper-creative enterprises from formal kitchens—a chance to experiment with fast food.

But that was only part of the plan. The first clue is that Momofuku, the Bar, which opened this summer, is bigger and better looking than its brother nearby. Wrapped in dark wood with mood bar stools, row-card tables and a life-size John McEnroe poster (which a friend of Mr. Chang’s swipe from a bus stop circa 1985) it feels too cool for a mom reviving around noon—a Korean term for wrapped and handheld foods.

Here, you have your pick of three, built to order behind a counter line. The horror look-a-likes (85) are as big as my forearm, stuffed with rice, caramelized onions, and creamy sauce with Korean sauce mayonnaise.

Three fillings are offered: deeply flavored Berkshire pork butt (with smoky black beans and funky homemade red kimchi paste), mild organic chicken (with adobo beans and white kimchi paste), or braised tofu (with edamame and whipped tofu, the consistency of sour cream).

Early on, there were distracting pockets of hot and cold. By my next visit, steam mechanics had improved, making for a more flavorful and melded meal.

There’s something more familiar about encountering those flavors in the rice bowl (85), where the same ingredients are generously piled on with a potent mix of nutty soybean paste and chile-garlic sauce. Nip it lat with checktops or make soams with the accompanying lettuce leaves.

Lastly, there are hoisin-sliced steamed buns (95), which aren’t tucked with pork belly, as at the original Momofuku, but with the same shredded meats and slaw in the soams.

That’s it. Three things. No salads, soups or sides to round out a meal. It was enjoyable enough, but it all seemed a little too pared down for a Momofuku production, where there’s complexity even at a lunch counter.

Then, a few weeks ago, they introduced a late-night menu, and it all made sense. Five nights a week, after the soam bar closes, a spirited crew of chefs—Mr. Chang, Mr. Bocu, Tien Ho, formerly of Feat Bistro, and Joshua McFadden, late of Lupa—run a restaurant in a restaurant that goes far to explain the venture.

Most chefs working the kitchen hour offer abbreviated menus. Here, that equation is flipped with diverse, carefully crafted dishes, from fried cauliflower (85) to spicy tripe stew (11), emerging late. The restaurant’s transformation, which includes table service, a comforting kitchen and some well-paired beers and sparkling wine options, is as intriguing as watching a strung-tied wallflower reveal an inner wild child.

You can’t help but wonder which chef realized that. So, Korean rice cakes (81) were dead ringer for gnocchetti, especially when sliced and tossed with a rich, kimchi-fingered pork sauce. It was Mr. McFadden.

The house-made charcuterie—warm whole-head terrine (135), as luxurious as melted bone marrow, and a sandwich stuffed with chucky chicken liver pate, ham, headcheese and slaw (85)—are the work of Mr. Ho.

Under a cheeky section of the menu labeled “Pork” (as if the meat wasn’t pervasive) four wonderful long-aged country hams (85) are offered, sliced paper-thin with chunky apple butter and toasted bread. The only disappointments were soggy spring rolls (11), the news that the hand-made corn dog were already off the menu.

SNACKS BY DAYLIGHT: Momofuku Noodle Bar is in the East Village.

Morphs Into Lavishness

SNACKS BY DAYLIGHT: Momofuku Noodle Bar is in the East Village.

cauliflower chat (85) to spicy tripe stew (11), emerging late. The restaurant's transformation, which includes table service, a comforting kitchen and some well-paired beers and sparkling wine options, is as intriguing as watching a strung-tied wallflower reveal an inner wild child. You can’t help but wonder which chef realized that. So, Korean rice cakes (81) were dead ringer for gnocchetti, especially when sliced and tossed with a rich, kimchi-fingered pork sauce. It was Mr. McFadden.

The house-made charcuterie—warm whole-head terrine (135), as luxurious as melted bone marrow, and a sandwich stuffed with chucky chicken liver pate, ham, headcheese and slaw (85)—are the work of Mr. Ho.

Under a cheeky section of the menu labeled “Pork” (as if the meat wasn’t pervasive) four wonderful long-aged country hams (85) are offered, sliced paper-thin with chunky apple butter and toasted bread. The only disappointments were soggy spring rolls (11), the news that the hand-made corn dog were already off the menu, and the fact that the only way to get a soam—which would hit the spot after a movie or a drizzle—is to splurge on the bo sam feast (165) for eight. That includes an entire, slow-roasted pork butt, a dozen oysters, and a table full of sides and condiments. Mr. Chang said the daytime menu will soon offer more options. Last week, there was a new brisket sam, and ginger glazed noodles.

Saturday, he hinted, items from the late-night menu may even see the light of day.
A Korean-

It was a particularly disappointing rendition of jjajangmyun that set my friend off. A restaurant in Manhattan had spilled but not sated her craving for this Korean-Chinese dish of noodles in an oniony black bean sauce. So with a list of Korean restaurants in northeastern Queens and her nice car, we set out to slurp our way along Northern Boulevard and look for a place that would satisfy. Jjajangmyun has roots in China, but Korean cooks have adopted it and made it their own. At Korean-Chinese restaurants in New York, just about every table has a bowl of jjajangmyun on it, along with two or three other dishes that make up the triumvirate that groups of diners always seem to order: a seafood noodle soup in a bright red broth called jjampong and a plate of crispy deep-fried pork or chicken served in a sticky sweet sauce that is almost comestible.

On our noodle tour, two dowdy but brightly lit places snagged our attention — and filled our appetites.

Guh Song

(727 Bell Boulevard (9th Avenue), Oakland Gardens, Queens; (718) 281-3110)

BEST DISH JiJangmyun

PRICE RANGE $4.85 to $8.85 for most dishes

CREDIT CARDS All major cards

HOURS 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS Three on one level

It is followed by an easy “jang” (rhymes with Chang) and “myun,” a stirring of “mee-am,” for the noodles. All together the word is pronounced “jJa-jang-myun.” With a little practice, saying it is as easy as pie. If pie was two syllables longer and crammed with consonants.

Chinese Hybrid With an Oniony Bite

Sam Won Gabh in Flushing won points for the fresh-tasting, tender noodles in its jjajangmyun. But Guh Song, a 25-year-old place in Oakland Gardens, bested all comers with its deeply flavored sauce.

Regardless of where you go, a course of punch will precede the main courses: plates of kimchi, electric-yellow daikon pickles and the not-so-date-friendly combination of raw white onion slices that are meant to be dipped into a dense and pungent fermented black bean sauce. They help to stoke a thirst for a cold lager or simple and strong Korean sojin, two natural tablemates to jjajangmyun.

A quick aside here for those who are like me, have trouble getting their mouths around all those jjs: the first syllable, jja is the tough one, something between a “juk” and an “choo.”
Will success spoil Doo-Ri Chung? Over the last few years, as her fashion line, Doo.Ri, has become that rare thing in fashion, a quiet and reliable smash, Ms. Chung has learned that running a good business is like looking after a child—a hungry one.

Her weekly volleyball game: a thing of the past. Ditto cooking dinner. "We never see our apartment," Ms. Chung said. Her husband, Jeffrey Green, has joined her as a business partner, so at least she gets to see him.

Ms. Chung's fine-tuned creations resonated with enough serenity and glamour for her to have received the 2006 CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund award last month, but those luxuriant qualities are in shorter supply in her life, certainly more so than when she was merely dreaming and planning her solo act while working in Geoffrey Beene's design studio.

"There's so much about fashion that's not about design," she said with a patient smile. In her clever way, she does what she can for a little diversion. For one, she is growing an herb garden in the south window of her studio in the notions district off Fifth Avenue as a nod to her erstwhile domestic life. And watching over the enterprise is a ghostly little presence that, like Ms. Chung herself, is caught between being and becoming.

A gift from her husband last year, it is a Munny doll, a $25 white vinyl toddler from Kidrobot. It was designed by the store's owner, Paul Budnitz, in 2005 as a do-it-yourself version of the myriad cartoonish Kidrobot figures. Munny is meant to be personalized in whatever manner its master chooses: Magic Marker, crayon, decal, paint, biomimetic, etc. As a devotee of "problem-solving," Ms. Chung said, she has seen the Munny as a kind of metaphor for her own life as an entrepreneur as well as in her strange domestic life, and it would seem the enterprise is a glorious little presence that, like Ms. Chung herself, is caught between being and becoming.

"I love it all white," she said. "I love its potential," she said. "It's so great that someone came up with the idea of this, something that everyone can have their different visions of." The doll brings to mind her brief foray running a retail store, during which she learned two valuable lessons: one, that a simply constructed dress changes enormously depending on how those wearing it project themselves. "It's really more about personality than size," she said. "It's about getting the personality out itself." (The second lesson: "I didn't like retail.")

But inasmuch as the Munny hints at the limitless possibilities the future may hold, it is also a charming token of the irony-rich, retro-mad pop-culture world that, as a hot fashion designer, she is regularly called on to interact with, an obligation she views with suspicion bordering on alarm.

"This really contradicts what I do," she said of the Munny. "It's very whimsical, and my clothes aren't whimsical. They're analytical. I don't do retro. I don't believe in it." Indeed, the Munny doll, quiet and need-free, is just about the only figure of the irony-rich, retro-mad pop-culture world that, as a hot fashion designer, she is regularly called on to interact with, an obligation she views with suspicion bordering on alarm.

In her clever way, she does what she can for a little diversion. For one, she is growing an herb garden in the south window of her studio in the notions district off Fifth Avenue as a nod to her erstwhile domestic life. And watching over the enterprise is a ghostly little presence that, like Ms. Chung herself, is caught between being and becoming.

A gift from her husband last year, it is a Munny doll, a $25 white vinyl toddler from Kidrobot. It was designed by the store's owner, Paul Budnitz, in 2005 as a do-it-yourself version of the myriad cartoonish Kidrobot figures. Munny is meant to be personalized in whatever manner its master chooses: Magic Marker, crayon, decal, paint, biomimetic, etc. As a devotee of "problem-solving," Ms. Chung said, she has seen the Munny as a kind of metaphor for her own life as an entrepreneur as well as in her strange domestic life, and it would seem the enterprise is a glorious little presence that, like Ms. Chung herself, is caught between being and becoming.

"I love it all white," she said. "I love its potential," she said. "It's so great that someone came up with the idea of this, something that everyone can have their different visions of." The doll brings to mind her brief foray running a retail store, during which she learned two valuable lessons: one, that a simply constructed dress changes enormously depending on how those wearing it project themselves. "It's really more about personality than size," she said. "It's about getting the personality out itself." (The second lesson: "I didn't like retail.")

But inasmuch as the Munny hints at the limitless possibilities the future may hold, it is also a charming token of the irony-rich, retro-mad pop-culture world that, as a hot fashion designer, she is regularly called on to interact with, an obligation she views with suspicion bordering on alarm.

"This really contradicts what I do," she said of the Munny. "It's very whimsical, and my clothes aren't whimsical. They're analytical. I don't do retro. I don't believe in it." Indeed, the Munny doll, quiet and need-free, is just about the only figure of the irony-rich, retro-mad pop-culture world that, as a hot fashion designer, she is regularly called on to interact with, an obligation she views with suspicion bordering on alarm.

"This really contradicts what I do," she said of the Munny. "It's very whimsical, and my clothes aren't whimsical. They're analytical. I don't do retro. I don't believe in it."
At first glance, the sprawling COEX mall here seems like any other urban shopping destination. On a late-summer Thursday, there were the bustling stores and lively restaurants, couples on dates and colleagues mingling after work.

But then there were the screams. Frantic, piercing, the shrieks echoed down the corridors from one corner of the vast underground complex. There hundreds of young people, mostly women and girls, waved signs and sang slogans as they swirled in the glare of klieg lights. It was the kind of fan frenzy that anywhere else would be reserved for rockers or movie legends.

Or sports stars. In fact the objects of the throng’s adoration were a dozen of the nation’s most famous athletes, South Korea’s Derek Jeters and Peyton Mannings. But their sport is something almost unimaginable in the United States. These were professional video gamers, idolized for their mastery of the science-fiction strategy game StarCraft.

With a panel of commentators at their side, protected from the throbbing crowd by a glass wall, players like Lim Yo-Hwan, Lee Yoon Yeol and Suh Ji Hoon lounged in logo-spangled track suits and oozed the laconic bravado of athletes the world over.

And they were not even competing. They were gathered for the bracket selection for a coming tournament season on MBC Game, one of the country’s two full-time video game television networks. And while audiences watched eagerly at home, fans lucky enough to be there in person waved hand-lettered signs like “Go for it, Kang Min” and “The winner will be Yo-Hwan.”
Are online gaming champions the rock stars of the 21st century? Fifty million Koreans can't be wrong.

Lee Chung Gi, owner of the Intercool bang, said: “It’s impossible for students in any country to study all the time, so they are looking for interesting things to do together. In America they have lots of fields and grass and outdoor space. They have lots of room to play soccer and baseball and other sports. We don’t have that here. Here, there are very few places for young people to go and very little for them to do, so they found PC games, and it’s their way to spend time together and relax.”

Top pro gamers in South Korea don’t get much chance to relax. Just ask Lim Yo-Hwan. Mr. Lim, 27, is the nation’s most famous gamer, which makes him one of the nation’s most famous people.

“Normally our wake-up hours are 10 a.m., but these days we can sleep in until around 11:30 or noon,” he said at the SK Telecom StarCraft team’s well-guarded training house in Seoul. “After we wake up we have our breakfast, and then we play matches from 1 p.m. until 5. At 5 p.m. we have our lunch, and then at 5:30 for an hour...

In Seoul’s dense Shinlim district, Huh Hyeong Chan, a 42-year-old math tutor, seemed to be the respected senior citizen at the Intercool PC bang, which covers two floors, smoking and nonsmoking.

‘Among people in their 20’s and 30’s I think there is no one who hasn’t been to a PC bang because it’s become a main trend in our society,” he said from his prime seat at the head of a row of computers. “Most people think it’s good for your mental health and it’s a good way to get rid of stress. If you exercise your brain and your mind in addition to your body, that’s healthy.”

And cheap. At most PC bangs an ergonomic chair, powerful computer and fast Internet link cost no more than $1.50 an hour.

All in all it was a typical night in South Korea, a country of almost 50 million people and home to the world’s most advanced video game culture. Where more than 20,000 public PC gaming rooms, or “bangs,” attract more than a million people a day. Where competitive gaming is one of the top televised sports. Where some parents actually encourage their children to play as a release from untenable academic pressure. Where the federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism has established a game development institute, and where not having heard of StarCraft is like not having heard of the Dallas Cowboys. The finals of top StarCraft tournaments are held in stadiums, with tens of thousands of fans in attendance.

Noh Yun Ji, a cheerful 25-year-old student in a denim skirt, had come to the COEX with 10 other members of one of the many Park Yong Wook fan clubs. “I like his style,” she said of Mr. Park, who plays the advanced alien species called Protoss in StarCraft. “I watch basketball sometimes, but StarCraft is more fun. It’s more thrilling, more exciting.”

South Korea’s roughly $5 billion annual game market comes to about $100 per resident, more than three times what Americans spend. As video games become more popular and sophisticated, Korea may provide a glimpse of where the rest of the world’s popular culture is headed.

“Too often I hear people say ‘South Korea’ and ‘emerging market’ in the same sentence,” said Rich Wickham, the global head of Microsoft’s Windows games business. “When it comes to gaming, Korea is the developed market in the same sentence,” said Rich Wickham, the global head of Microsoft’s Windows games business. “When it comes to gaming, Korea is the developed market, and it’s the rest of the world that’s playing catch-up. When you look at gaming around the world, Korea is the leader in many ways. It just occupies a different place in the culture there than anywhere else.”

Lee Chung Gi, owner of the Intercool bang, said: “It’s impossible for students in any country to study all the time, so they are looking for interesting things to do together. In America they have lots of fields and grass and outdoor space. They have lots of room to play soccer and baseball and other sports. We don’t have that here. Here, there are very few places for young people to go and very little for them to do, so they found PC games, and it’s their way to spend time together and relax.”

Top pro gamers in South Korea don’t get much chance to relax. Just ask Lim Yo-Hwan. Mr. Lim, 27, is the nation’s most famous gamer, which makes him one of the nation’s most famous people.

“Normally our wake-up hours are 10 a.m., but these days we can sleep in until around 11:30 or noon,” he said at the SK Telecom StarCraft team’s well-guarded training house in Seoul. “After we wake up we have our breakfast, and then we play matches from 1 p.m. until 5. At 5 p.m. we have our lunch, and then at 5:30 for an hour...

In Seoul’s dense Shinlim district, Huh Hyeong Chan, a 42-year-old math tutor, seemed to be the respected senior citizen at the Intercool PC bang, which covers two floors, smoking and nonsmoking.

‘Among people in their 20’s and 30’s I think there is no one who hasn’t been to a PC bang because it’s become a main trend in our society,” he said from his prime seat at the head of a row of computers. “Most people think it’s good for your mental health and it’s a good way to get rid of stress. If you exercise your brain and your mind in addition to your body, that’s healthy.”

And cheap. At most PC bangs an ergonomic chair, powerful computer and fast Internet link cost no more than $1.50 an hour.

Are online gaming champions the rock stars of the 21st century? Fifty million Koreans can’t be wrong.

Lee Chung Gi, owner of the Intercool bang, said: “It’s impossible for students in any country to study all the time, so they are looking for interesting things to do together. In America they have lots of fields and grass and outdoor space. They have lots of room to play soccer and baseball and other sports. We don’t have that here. Here, there are very few places for young people to go and very little for them to do, so they found PC games, and it’s their way to spend time together and relax.”

Top pro gamers in South Korea don’t get much chance to relax. Just ask Lim Yo-Hwan. Mr. Lim, 27, is the nation’s most famous gamer, which makes him one of the nation’s most famous people.

“Normally our wake-up hours are 10 a.m., but these days we can sleep in until around 11:30 or noon,” he said at the SK Telecom StarCraft team’s well-guarded training house in Seoul. “After we wake up we have our breakfast, and then we play matches from 1 p.m. until 5. At 5 p.m. we have our lunch, and then at 5:30 for an hour...
and a half I go to my gym, where I work out. Then I come home and play until 1 a.m. After 1 I can play more matches or I can go to sleep if I want.”

Mr. Lim sat in what might be called the players’ lounge: a spacious parlor of plush couches and flat-screen televisions. In an adjoining apartment, the focus was on work. More than a half-dozen other members of the team sat at rows of PC’s demolishing one another at StarCraft, made by Blizzard Entertainment of Irvine, Calif. Outside, guards for the apartment complex kept an eye out for overzealous fans.

“Without covering myself up in disguise it’s really difficult to go out in public,” Mr. Lim said. “Because of the Internet penetration and with so many cameras around, I don’t have privacy in my personal life. Anything I do will be on camera and will be spread throughout the Internet, and anything I say will be exaggerated and posted on many sites.”

“It’s hard because I can’t maintain my relationships with friends,” he added. “In terms of dating, the relationships just don’t work out. So personally there are losses, but I don’t regret it because it was my choice to become a pro gamer.”

Hoon Ju, 33, the team’s coach and a former graduate student in sports psychology, added: “Actually when he goes out we know exactly where he is at all times. That’s because the fans are constantly taking pictures with their cellphones and posting them to the Internet in real time.”

Mr. Woo of the federal game institute estimated that 10 million South Koreans regularly follow eSports, as they are known here, and said that some fan clubs of top gamers have 700,000 members or more. “These fan clubs are actually bigger in size than the fan clubs of actors and singers in Korea,” he said. “The total number of people who go spectate pro basketball, baseball and soccer put together is the same as the number of people who go watch pro game leagues.”

The celebrity of South Korea’s top gamers is carefully managed by game-TV pioneers like Hyong Jun Hwang, general manager of Ongamenet, one of the country’s full-time game networks. “We realized that one of the things that keeps people coming back to television are the characters, the recurring personalities that the viewer gets to know and identify with, or maybe they begin to dislike,” he said. “In other words, television needs stars. So we set out to make the top players into stars, promoting them and so on. And we also do a lot of education with the players, explaining that they have to try to look good, that they have to be ready for interviews.”

For his part Mr. Lim cultivates a relatively low-key image. He knows that at 27 he is nearing the end of his window as an elite player. There are 11 pro teams in the country, he said, and they are full of young guns looking to take him down. But he said experience could make up for a few milliseconds of lost reflexes.

“The faster you think, the faster you can move,” he said. “And the faster you move, the more time you have to think. It does matter in that your finger movements can slow down as you age. But that’s why I try harder and I work on the flexibility of my fingers more than other players.”

Despite the stardom of pro gamers, in most Korean families it’s all about school. That is a big reason the game marker in South Korea is dominated by personal computers rather than by game consoles like Sony’s PlayStation and Microsoft’s Xbox that are so popular in the United States and Europe.

(“The deep historical animosity Koreans feel toward Japan, home of Sony and Nintendo, is another reason.”)

“In Korea it’s all study, study, study, learn, learn, learn,” said Park Youngmok, Blizzard’s Korean communications director. “That’s the whole culture here. And so you can’t go buy a game console because all it is is an expensive toy; all it does is play games. But a PC is seen here as a dream machine, a learning machine. You can use it to study, do research. And if someone in the household ends up playing games on it” – he paused, shrugged and grinned – “that’s life.”

Cho Nam Hyun, a high school senior in a middle-class suburb south of Seoul, knows all about it. During his summer “vacation” he was in school from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. (During the school year he doesn’t finish classes until 10 p.m.) On his desk in his family’s impeccable apartment sits a flip chart showing the number of days until his all-important university entrance exams.

But no matter how hard he studies, Mr. Cho tries to get in just a little gaming, and with his parents’ encouragement. “They are at school all the time, and then they have additional study classes,” said his mother, Kim Eun Kyung, “so games are the best way to get rid of their stress.”

His father, Cho Duck Koo, a photographer, added: “Certainly the games can be a distraction, and now that he is studying for the university exam he plays much less, but in general gaming helps the children with strategic thinking and to learn to multitask. We’ve told him if he goes to university we will get him the best PC possible.”

It’s all part of a dynamic that has taken technologies first developed in the West – personal computers, the Internet, online games like StarCraft – and melded them into a culture as different from the United States as Korean pajeon are from American pancakes.

Is South Korea, where gaming is encouraged and viewed as a communal activity, leading a trend?

Sitting outside another packed soundstage at another cavernous mall, where around 1,000 eSports fans were screaming for their favorite StarCraft players over the Quiet Riot hard-rock anthem “Cum On Feel the Noize,” a pinstriped banker illustrated how South Korea has become the paragon of gaming culture.

“We’re not just the sponsors of this league,” Kim Byung Kyu, a senior manager at Shinhan Bank, one of the country’s largest, said proudly. “We’re the hosts of this league. So we have a bank account called Star League Mania, and you can get V.I.P. seating at the league finals if you’ve opened an account.”

“When I’m in the U.S., I don’t see games in public,” he added. “The U.S. doesn’t have PC bangs. They don’t have game television channels. What you see here with hundreds of people cheering is just a small part of what is going on with games in Korea. At this very moment hundreds of thousands of people are playing games at PC bangs. It’s become a mainstream, public part of our culture, and I don’t see that yet in the U.S. In this regard, perhaps the United States will follow and Korea will be the model.”

When it comes to soccer madness, South Korea is generally not regarded as the equal of countries in Latin America or Europe. But it had a sort of conversion experience in 2002, when South Korea and Japan jointly played host to the World Cup. The South Korean team went on an unexpected winning streak, ultimately beating Spain to earn a berth in the quarterfinals.

In anticipation of this year’s World Cup, large groups of immigrants from soccer-mad countries like Mexico and Senegal have been rallying around the teams of their native countries in ethnic enclaves around the city. On Tuesday, it was the South Koreans’ turn to go crazy, as their national squad made its debut in the World Cup. The country’s late-blooming soccer fanaticism was proudly displayed in the mostly commercial blocks huddled around the base of the Empire State Building, where the reverberations of that famous 2002 victory could be felt and heard.

Early on Tuesday, hundreds of Koreans converged on a tree-dotted plaza on West 32nd Street near Broadway — the heart of a cluster of bars, restaurants and other businesses collectively known as Koreatown. Dressed in the signature red of Team Korea’s uniforms, they had come to watch their national soccer team square off against the team fielded by the West African nation of Togo. The match was displayed on an enormous outdoor television screen that is permanently affixed to the wall of an office building on 32nd Street.

By the time the game began at 9 a.m., a sea of red jerseys and thrumming inflatable noisemakers had spilled across the street, with the crowd chanting “Dae Han Min Guk!” (“Republic of Korea!”) in a thunderous voice.

Kang Seok Lee, 22, a spiky-haired student at Borough of Manhattan Community College, wore a red shirt emblazoned with the yellow words “Again, Corea!” He stood beside Jay Shin, 29, proprietor of a clothing boutique on 32nd Street near Fifth Avenue, who had closed his shop for the morning. Mr. Shin wore a red cowboy hat, a shredded red T-shirt and red sunglasses. His girlfriend, Yunni Choi, 30, was ablaze in outsized sunglasses, cowboy boots, elbow-length gloves, a bow tie and plastic devil horns — all red, of course.

“I don’t know about soccer,” said Ms. Choi, who immigrated to Woodside, Queens, from South Korea in 2002. Neither did many others in the crowd, who were drawn to 32nd Street less by an appreciation for the beauty of a perfect penalty kick than by straightforward ethnic pride.

That pride burst the confines of the plaza at 32nd Street. Korean restaurants and bars from 32nd to 36th Streets, and from the Avenue of the Americas to Park Avenue, seemed to be full of Koreans glued to television sets showing the match.

Outside Shilla, a sleek restaurant on 32nd Street near Broadway, fans lined up in front of a wide-screen television set mounted in the foyer. A few doors down the street, at the Players Lounge and Sports Bar, a packed house watched the match on multiple screens while guzzling breakfasts of Hite beer — a Korean brand — and free shots of vodka mixed with lemonade.

“I could die right now!” shouted an exultant 34-year-old actress named Mi Sun Choi, moments after South Korea put the finishing touches on a tense 2-1 victory.

The frenzied atmosphere had swept up even some of her non-Korean friends. “You put on the red,” Michael Horan said. “And it makes you part of the action.”

Correction: June 25, 2006, Sunday. A story last week about Korean soccer fans misstated the South Korean team’s results in the 2002 World Cup tournament. South Korea defeated Spain to earn a place in the semifinals, not the quarterfinals.
South Korea Becomes New Face of L.P.G.A.

Less than three years ago, when the veteran L.P.G.A. player Jan Stephenson said that “Asians are killing the tour,” even she probably could not imagine the impending dominance of South Koreans in women’s golf. It has been a swift overtaking, one that has been somewhat rocky for both the tour and the parade of women who seemingly came from nowhere to win events. But as the L.P.G.A. busily sells the largely American faces of youth — Michelle Wie, Paula Creamer, Natalie Gulbis and others, a mostly ponytailed gang in designer pastels — the expanding array of South Koreans is taking over.

“Maybe it’s going to be the Korean Tour pretty soon,” the Korean pioneer Se Ri Pak said with a tongue-in-cheek grin. “Hopefully, everybody loves us.”

Entering Thursday’s start of the Women’s World Match Play Championship at Hamilton Farm Golf Club, South Koreans held the Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 8 spots on the tour’s money list. Eleven players from South Korea — a country of about 48 million, one-sixth the size of the United States — are ranked in the top 30 of the Rolex world rankings, more than the United States (eight), Japan (five) or any other country.

South Koreans have won 8 of this season’s 17 L.P.G.A. events. Most remarkable is the depth of the talent; the eight events were won by eight different South Korean women, all of them under the age of 30. South Korean victories in 2006:

1. LPGA Rookie of the Year
2. Jimenez Classic
3. ShopRite LPGA Classic
4. Evian Masters Championship
5. Wendy’s Championship
6.separator
7. LPGA Futures Tour Championship
8. Jemison Challenge

A country one-sixth the size of the United States has won nearly half of this year’s titles.

L.P.G.A., which had evolved in some respects into a mini-major, is in the midst of a renaissance of sorts no one expected. Korea is the hot new country in women’s golf, the country of the future for the tour, the story of the future in women’s golf, the country that is going to dominate women’s golf.

South Korea is the new face of the tour.

Korean troops, led by the L.P.G.A. in early 2004, set out to grow the game in Korea by building a tour in the Asian country. They were helped by a dedication to the game in the country, a strong academy system and a strong economy. But the tour did not forecast the current domination by South Koreans. A record 20 players from Korea are on the tour.

A Korean player is now at the top of the money list, and a Korean player is now at the top of the worlds rankings. And the Koreans are winning every tournament they enter, and they are winning every event they enter, and they are winning every event they enter.

“We’ve always had great players,” said Pak, who was a dominating rookie in 1998, a year after there were no South Koreans on tour. Now there are 32, and another 36 playing on the Futures Tour.

South Koreans Show Depth While Dominating

Eight of the 17 tournaments played this season have been won by eight different South Korean women, all of them under the age of 30. South Korean victories in 2006:

1. LPGA Rookie of the Year
2. Jimenez Classic
3. ShopRite LPGA Classic
4. Evian Masters Championship
5. Wendy’s Championship
6. separator
7. LPGA Futures Tour Championship
8. Jemison Challenge

A country one-sixth the size of the United States has won nearly half of this year’s titles.

L.P.G.A., which had evolved in some respects into a mini-major, is in the midst of a renaissance of sorts no one expected. Korea is the hot new country in women’s golf, the country of the future for the tour, the story of the future in women’s golf, the country that is going to dominate women’s golf.

South Korea is the new face of the tour.

Korean troops, led by the L.P.G.A. in early 2004, set out to grow the game in Korea by building a tour in the Asian country. They were helped by a dedication to the game in the country, a strong academy system and a strong economy. But the tour did not forecast the current domination by South Koreans. A record 20 players from Korea are on the tour.

A Korean player is now at the top of the money list, and a Korean player is now at the top of the worlds rankings. And the Koreans are winning every tournament they enter, and they are winning every event they enter, and they are winning every event they enter.

“We’ve always had great players,” said Pak, who was a dominating rookie in 1998, a year after there were no South Koreans on tour. Now there are 32, and another 36 playing on the Futures Tour.

South Koreans Show Depth While Dominating

Eight of the 17 tournaments played this season have been won by eight different South Korean women, all of them under the age of 30. South Korean victories in 2006:

1. LPGA Rookie of the Year
2. Jimenez Classic
3. ShopRite LPGA Classic
4. Evian Masters Championship
5. Wendy’s Championship
6. separator
7. LPGA Futures Tour Championship
8. Jemison Challenge

A country one-sixth the size of the United States has won nearly half of this year’s titles.

L.P.G.A., which had evolved in some respects into a mini-major, is in the midst of a renaissance of sorts no one expected. Korea is the hot new country in women’s golf, the country of the future for the tour, the story of the future in women’s golf, the country that is going to dominate women’s golf.

South Korea is the new face of the tour.

Korean troops, led by the L.P.G.A. in early 2004, set out to grow the game in Korea by building a tour in the Asian country. They were helped by a dedication to the game in the country, a strong academy system and a strong economy. But the tour did not forecast the current domination by South Koreans. A record 20 players from Korea are on the tour.

A Korean player is now at the top of the money list, and a Korean player is now at the top of the worlds rankings. And the Koreans are winning every tournament they enter, and they are winning every event they enter, and they are winning every event they enter.

“We’ve always had great players,” said Pak, who was a dominating rookie in 1998, a year after there were no South Koreans on tour. Now there are 32, and another 36 playing on the Futures Tour.
A country one-sixth the size of the United States has won nearly half of the this year’s titles.

In late 2003, Stephenson, an Australian who won three L.P.G.A. majors, expressed concern that many Asian players were unwilling to acclimate themselves to the Tour’s culture, to speak English, to smile for the fans and schmooze sponsors.

Her views fueled debate — much of it a one-sided wrath toward Stephenson, who later apologized. But the controversy awakened the L.P.G.A., which had seemed to consider the various nationalities on its Tour to be more of a happenstance than an issue or an opportunity.

Kyumin Shim, hired by the L.P.G.A., in early 2004, serves as a sort of liaison between the Tour and its growing South Korean contingent. A Korean-born 26-year-old, Shim moved with his family to Florida when he was 13. That his job title is “player-sponsor relations coordinator” seems increasingly appropriate; during Wednesday’s pro-am event, which was delayed and moved to Hamilton Farm’s par-3 course because of heavy morning rains, about one-third of the players partnered with amateurs were South Korean.

Some joked on the tee boxes and greens with their playing partners. A few spoke a little, offering shy smiles or “nice shots” and walking down the middle of the fairways as their partners and caddies — most of them American — drove down the cart paths to the green.

Shim spends many of his hours off the course with the South Korean players, going to dinner and talking with them in hotel rooms. He is a sort of big brother, helping them adapt to American culture and expectations.

He said players are increasingly receptive to making themselves more accessible for the American news media and fans, and have learned some of the nuances and traditions of the Tour, such as visiting the volunteer tent for autographs and pictures after a victory.

In the past couple of years, the tour has hired a language consultant, who comes to nearly every tournament to teach the South Korean players English, often putting them through mock news interviews. Shim said that 10 to 15 of the South Koreans on Tour require an interpreter, a duty he sometimes performs, but the number is decreasing.

“They want us to speak more English,” said the 20-year-old Seon Hwa Lee, who won the ShopRite L.P.G.A. Classic last month and gets tutored in English every week. “Like in the pro-am — how do you say! — be more comfortable with the amateurs, and with interviews.”

Many of the South Koreans take their lead from the 28-year-old Pak, who won the first two majors she played in 1998 and won the McDonald’s L.P.G.A. Championship last month, bringing South Korea’s journey in the World Cup from the top of the sports news there.

“Se Ri winning a major and coming back and doing interviews and everything by herself, that looked really good on her,” Shim said of Pak’s victory last month. “Now, these young girls are noticing that stuff. ‘Hey, if I’m able to speak, they’ll love me more.’ They’re finally realizing that.”

Pak harbors no resentment that the South Koreans seem to get far less attention in this country than similarly young American women with little more than potential on their résumés.

“This is America,” Pak said. “And it’s a culture thing. You want to see America do better than a different country.”

For now, on the L.P.G.A. Tour, that is not happening. But the South Korean players are adjusting to the L.P.G.A., while the L.P.G.A. adjusts to the South Koreans. And the fans have a wide world of options to cheer.
Her aunt isn’t just glomming onto a new fad. The Korean jjimjilbang, a tradition of thermotherapy, purification and skin rejuvenation, dates back many centuries. Claims for the curative effects of some of these treatments can be found in the Dongeunobogam, an herbal medicine book written for a Korean king around 1600.

“Korean people like to sweat a lot,” said Ms. Hong’s mother, Helen Hong, who emigrated to the United States from Korea. “They enjoy hot sauce, spicy food, hot tubs, hot saunas. During the holidays they come here a lot. They want to get sober.”

Young B. Cho, the manager of the three-year-old facility, said he knows of no other sauna of its kind in the United States. The clientele is predominantly Korean, drawn mostly from the sizable community in nearby Fort Lee, N.J. But patrons come from Manhattan (it’s a 20-minute bus ride, with directions at www.kingsaunausa.com) and points as far away as Toronto.

Esther Kwon, 27, of Centreville, Va., for example, recently met up at the spa with her friend Erica Hung, 28, of Boston.

Many of the patrons are Japanese, who have a similar tradition of hot-springs bathing. “I like Japanese onsen better, but there are no onsens in New Jersey, so I have been coming here for two years,” said Tadan Kitanka, 61, who works for a fresh fish wholesaler in Elizabeth, N.J.

Russians, also a spa-loving people, come, too. Maria Panaev, 43, and her husband drove all the way from Providence, R.I. “In the Russian bathhouses in Brooklyn, they serve alcohol,” she said. “Here it’s about sauna. We can consume alcohol later.”

The Panaevs’ friend, Leo Skabichevski, 46, who lives in Ashford, Conn., has been a spa regular for three years. “Here it is a very meditative atmosphere,” he said. “There’s no such thing as people checking out each other. All of us need time to relax, and this is an incredible way to do it. There’s no time limit here, so you can spend hours and hours going from one room to another.”

And that’s just what they do. The spa’s most popular sauna room, for women only, is the Bul Hanzung Mok, constructed of imported yellow loess soil, jade, ceramic, salt and granite. “These materials are known to emit plenty of long wavelengths of infrared rays that deeply penetrate into the skin,” a sign informs patrons.

Devotees are handed a jute potato sack to protect them from the extremely hot floor, which is heated by a fire of oak logs. Essentially the room is a kiln, offering a preview of eternal damnation while also creating an internal warming sensation that is like nothing this reporter has ever experienced. Eggs baked inside it every morning are ever-vigilant from long years of attendance, make sure uninitiated newcomers do it right.

Finally, the ultimate treatment after a day of sweating our impurities and soothing to soften the skin is a Korean body scrub ($65), a thorough exfoliation of virtually every body part. Middle-aged Korean women called ajuma, wearing black bras and panties (just as they do in Korea), emerge from the steaming sauna, their skin combed over in rolled sheets, leaving a softer, lighter complexion over the whole body. It is not for the sensitive.

For $70 more, there is traditional Korean massage, which includes deep pressing to reach the inner organs. Patrons first lie on the heated floor of the coed Bulgama sauna to loosen muscles. The Bulgama’s central feature is a ceramic brick oven heated to 800 degrees to emit infrared rays. Mr. Cho said that sitting in the Bulgama for 20 minutes a day cured his back pain within a week. “Before I used to do acupuncture twice a year, but after I did this, it’s gone,” he said.

Several patrons, including a man who drives 30 miles to arrive promptly at 6:15 a.m., come to the Bulgama daily to rid themselves of body aches, he said. After all that sweating, it is essential to get rid of the toxins that have been secreted onto the skin. That’s where the whirlpool baths – with temperatures ranging from scalding to chilly – come in. In the separate men’s and women’s facilities, everyone is naked, and the sight of dozens of women of all ages and sizes scrubbing one another’s soapy backs is a Bacchanalian scene right out of a classical painting. Typically, self-appointed matrons, ever-vigilant from long years of attendance, make sure uninitiated newcomers do it right.

Open 365 days a year, and dedicated to a good sweat.
At 3:30 a.m. in a temple in South Korea the sound of the moktak – a wooden percussion instrument that Buddhist monks play every morning to start the temple’s day – jolted me awake. I pulled myself up from my floor mat, straightened my itchy gray uniform and stumbled through the pre-dawn darkness to the temple, where pink lotus lanterns illuminated a small group of people waiting to begin their morning prostrations.

I was at the Lotus Lantern International Meditation Center on an overnight trip run by an organization called Templestay Korea. Created by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism – the largest Buddhist order in Korea – the program aims to allow visitors to “sample ordained lifestyle and experience the mental training and cultural experience of Korea’s ancient Buddhist tradition,” according to its Web site. Although the program only began in 2002 on the occasion of the World Cup soccer tournament held in Korea and Japan, it has grown swiftly over the last four years from 14 temples to 50, with 52,549 participants in 2005.

The meditation center on Ganghwa Island, about two hours from Seoul by public transportation, certainly seems like the sort of place that could inspire calm. The grounds are nestled between rice paddies and a leafy forest, and the center’s brightly painted temple sits several stone steps up from a gentle brook and a small pond stocked with lotus flowers and koi. Monks wander silently, occasionally gathering at an outdoor wooden table and offering tea and small snacks to guests.
But be forewarned—the point of the temple stay is not, as the pictures on its Web site might make it seem, to lounge next to a brook nibbling crackers as you consider what it means to reach nirvana. The point is to live like a monk. And monks, it turns out, keep strict schedules, are vegetarian and spend a lot of time silently meditating in positions that can become, quickly and without much warning, incredibly uncomfortable for those unused to them.

I got my first hint of this austere lifestyle when I arrived and was greeted by Cho Hyunm-jerry, who introduced herself in fluent English. In the guesthouse, she showed me the communal bathroom and the small room my friend and I would stay in, which was unfurnished except for sleeping pads, blankets and small pillows. Then, after we’d dropped off our bags, Ms. Cho handed us our clothes for the weekend: two identical extra-large sets of baggy gray pants and vests, along with sun hats and blue plastic slippers. We looked like we’d stepped out of a propaganda poster for Maoist China.

My friend and I would stay in, which was unfurnished except for sleeping pads, blankets and small pillows. Then, after we’d dropped off our bags, Ms. Cho handed us our clothes for the weekend: two identical extra-large sets of baggy gray pants and vests, along with sun hats and blue plastic slippers. We looked like we’d stepped out of a propaganda poster for Maoist China.

On this particular temple stay, the first activity was community work time. Clad in our Mao suits, we followed Ms. Cho to the garden, where eight or so other guests squirted between raised rows of dirt, piles of potatoes scattered around them. Our job was to sort the potatoes into piles of small, medium and large, as monks walked by, examining our efforts. We worked in silence, sweating under the afternoon sun, and were rewarded when we’d finished with small, freshly boiled potatoes, lightly salted and offered to us by a grinning Vietnamese monk.

After our snack, we wiped the dirt off our pants and gathered in the temple, where Ms. Cho showed us how to arrange our slippers neatly at the door, and taught us how to prostrate according to the Korean Buddhist tradition: kneel down, touch your forehead to the floor and rest your hands, palms up, on the ground. We then meditated silently for half an hour, a slight breeze blowing through the open doors at our backs as we sat cross-legged on our prayer mats, trying to clear our minds.

Meditation and prostration, both essential parts of monks’ lives, are included in every overnight temple stay program, as are meal or tea ceremonies, lectures on Buddhism and exceptionally early wakeups calls. Beyond that, though, programs differ. Most average about 30,000 South Korean won (approximately $33, at 972 won to the U.S. dollar) a night, but temple stays can range anywhere from a few hours to a few months, depending on your budget and enthusiasm.

They also offer different activities. Lorus Lantern’s programs included walking meditations through the temple grounds, calligraphy practice, a traditional Buddhist meal ceremony and a discussion about Buddhism led by the temple’s head monk. But other temples offer Buddhist martial arts, stone rubbings, hiking and painting. And the buildings themselves can also vary, from newly built meditation centers to temples that are more than a thousand years old.

Golgulsa Temple, for example, about five hours from Seoul on public transportation, was built by an Indian monk in the sixth century and is surrounded by ancient stone caves. Its program is more physically active than the other temples’, offering training in a Korean Buddhist martial art called sunnudo that incorporates traditional martial arts with yogalike poses, weapons training and breathing exercises.

Musanga Temple, about two hours from Seoul, caters to people who don’t want to limit their stay but still want to “inspire yourself into practice.” It sounds horrifying, and after a moment’s thought, I realized why: the temple stay had demonstrated how difficult it would be for me, with my anxieties and preoccupations, to live like a monk. Which, when I think about it, may have been the point.

A revelation from living like a monk:
It’s really hard to live like a monk.
Traces of old Korea are impossible to find in the posh Cheongdam-dong district of Seoul. The streets here are lined with spacious Prada and Louis Vuitton stores and with fusion restaurants whose menus and decor are hyped by the Korean-language editions of Vogue and Cosmopolitan. Trendy wine bars have sprung up everywhere so that sophisticated Seoulites can now sip New World vintages at tables overlooking a skyline bejeweled with shimmering skyscrapers.

For a city decimated by war 50 years ago, Seoul is certainly in amazing shape. But many of the spectacular changes that have occurred in South Korea over the last few decades are viewed by the Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk with skepticism and disapproval.

The winner of several international awards, this 45-year-old writer and director is perhaps best known in the West for “Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ... and Spring” and “3-iron.” A quiet, lyrical film, “Spring, Summer” chronicles five seasons in the lives of a Korean Buddhist monk and his young protege, who live in a small wooden house on a raft in the middle of a mountain lake. Each vignette is filmed in a way that makes the viewer experience the passing of time as well as the changes of season. “3-iron,” on the other hand, concerns a young man who roams the streets of Seoul on his motorcycle, breaking into and inhabiting the houses of their vacationing owners. It depicts a modern, middle-class South Korea, similar in some ways to the United States. With their contrasting visions – ancient versus modern, pastoral versus urban, philosophic versus pragmatic – the films point to a duality at the heart of contemporary South Korea, and also in their director.

Kim Ki-duk has had no training in the arts or film. His formal education ended with elementary school. As a teenager, he worked in factories, manufacturing buttons and electronic gadgets, a microscopic cog in South Korea’s “miracle economy.” He began making films more than a decade ago, and many of their magical, idyllic images and oddball characters are drawn from his life. Despite fame and some fortune overseas, Kim has yet to be embraced at home, and he does not have the same cult following in Korea that he does in Europe and the United States. Yet Kim insists he couldn’t be happier, living on the outskirts of Seoul, eating Korean food and enjoying all things traditionally Korean. He does not, however, wear a Korean flag pin on his lapel, nor does he suggest that his country and its culture are superior to others. He simply feels more comfortable in familiar surroundings.

Kim questions the foreign values that have challenged Korea’s millennia-old culture, altering what had been to hard-working South Koreans “our way of life.” But he readily admits that not all South Koreans share his pejorative view of Westernization and rapid change, certainly not those in the entertainment industry of which he is a part. Today, Seoul is Asia’s pop-culture capital, with teenagers and hip adults emulating stylish South Korean singers and movie stars throughout Asia, whether at nightclubs, karaoke bars or plastic surgeons’ offices. Kim describes a current generation gap in which parents lead traditional, family-oriented lives starkly different from those of their children – adoring fans of “Friends” and “Sex and the City” who pursue cash-rich careers and live alone in brand-new studio apartments, eating pizza and sandwiches, which require far fewer utensils and are less of a hassle to prepare.

Yet, in Seoul, traditional single-story Korean houses still stand next to chic glass-panel buildings whose interiors smell of paint. Sales clerks – whether in a European couture shop in Cheongdam-dong or a McDonald’s in some suburb – bow courteously to every customer. And you can get a cup of espresso or spiked coffee in the Paris-style cafes, but you can also find green-tea milkshakes and sweet-potato pastries, long a staple of the old Korean snacking culture, sold on the streets by elderly vendors.

So contemporary South Korea isn’t entirely modern, nor is it a country whose economy depends on foreigners visiting ancient tourist attractions. It is, as Kim knows, a country of juxtapositions, at times extreme, often exciting. “Understanding black leads to understanding of white,” he says. “They are reciprocal. Therefore, I think they are the same.”
China’s Youth Now Looking to South Korea for Inspiration

By Norimitsu Onishi

As part of what the Chinese call the Korean Wave of pop culture, a television drama about a royal cook, “The Jewel in the Palace,” is garnering record ratings throughout Asia, and Rain, a 23-year-old singer from Seoul, drew more than 40,000 fans to a sold-out concert at a sports stadium here in October.

At Korea City, on the top floor of the Xidan Shopping Center, a warren of tiny shops sell hip-hop clothes, movies, music, cosmetics and other offerings in the South Korean style.

To young Chinese shoppers, it seemed not to matter that some of the products, like New York Yankees caps or Japan’s Astro Boy dolls, clearly have little to do with South Korea. Or that most items originated, in fact, in Chinese factories.

“We know that the products at Korea City are made in China,” said Wang Ying, 28, who works for the local branch of an American company. “But to many young people, ‘Korea’ stands for fashionable or stylish. So they copy the Korean style.”

From clothes to hairstyle, music to television dramas, South Korea has been defining the tastes of many Chinese and other Asians for the past half decade. As part of what the Chinese call the Korean Wave of pop culture, a television drama about a royal cook, “The Jewel in the Palace,” is garnering record ratings throughout Asia, and Rain, a 23-year-old singer from Seoul, drew more than 40,000 fans to a sold-out concert at a sports stadium here in October.
But South Korea’s “soft power” also extends to the material and spiritual spheres. Samsung’s cellphones and televisions are symbols of a coveted consumerism for many Chinese. Christianity, in the evangelical form championed by Korean missionaries deployed throughout China, is finding Chinese converts despite Beijing’s efforts to rein in the spread of the religion. South Korea acts as a filter for Western values, experts say, making them more palatable to Chinese and other Asians.

For a country that has been influenced by other cultures, especially China but also Japan and America, South Korea finds itself at a turning point in its new role as exporter.

The transformation began with South Korea’s democratization in the late 1980’s, which unleashed sweeping domestic changes. As its democracy and economy have matured, its influence on the rest of Asia, negligible until a decade ago, has grown accordingly. Its cultural exports have even caused complaints about cultural invasion in China and Vietnam.

Historically, Christianity made little headway in East Asia, except in South Korea, whose population is now about 30 percent Christian and whose overseas missionary movement is the world’s second largest after the United States.

Today, in China, South Korean missionaries are bringing Christianity with an Asian face. South Korean movies and dramas about urban professionals in Seoul, though not overtly political, present images of modern lives centering on individual happiness and sophisticated consumerism. They also show enduring Confucian-rooted values in their emphasis on family relations, offering to Chinese both a reminder of what was lost during the Cultural Revolution and an example of an Asian country that has modernized and retained its traditions.

“Three Guys and Three Girls” and “Three Friends,” South Korea’s homegrown version of the American TV show “Friends.” As for “Sex and the City,” its South Korean twin, “The Marrying Type,” a sitcom about three single professional women in their 30’s looking for love in Seoul, was so popular in China that episodes were illegally downloaded or sold on pirated DVD’s.

“We feel that we can see a modern lifestyle in those shows,” said Qu Yuan, 23, a student at Tsinghua University here. “American dramas also show the same kind of lifestyle. We know that South Korea and America have similar political systems and economies. But it’s easier to accept that lifestyle from South Koreans because they are culturally closer to us. We feel we can live like them in a few years.”

“They seem to have similar lifestyles,” Ms. Qu said. “They have friends and go to bars. They have good mobile phones and good cars and lead comfortable lives.”

Her classmate, Huo Kan, 23, said, “American dramas are too modern.” Ms. Qu said, “They’re postmodern.” Ms. Huo added, “Something like ‘Sex and the City’ is too alien to us.”

Jin Yexi, 25, a graduate student at Beijing University, said, “We like American culture, but we can’t accept it directly.”

“And there is no obstacle to our accepting South Korean culture, unlike Japanese culture,” said Ms. Jin, who has studied both Korean and Japanese. “Because of the history between China and Japan, if a young person here likes Japanese culture, the parents will get angry.”

Politics also seems to underlie the Chinese preference for South Korean-rafted American hip-hop culture. Messages about rebelliousness, teenage angst and freedom appear more palatable to Chinese in their Koreanized versions.

Kwon Ki Joon, 22, a South Korean who attends Beijing University and graduated from a Chinese high school here, said his male Chinese friends were fans of South Korea hip-hop bands, like H.O.T., and its song, “We Are the Future.” A sample of the song’s lyrics translate roughly as: “We are still under the shadows of adults/Still not free/To go through the day with all sorts of interferences is tiring.”

To Mr. Kwon, there is no mystery about the band’s appeal. “It’s about wanting a more open world, about rebelliousness,” he said. “Korean hip-hop is basically trying to adapt American hip-hop.”

Like many South Koreans, Oh Dong Suk, 40, an investor in online games here, said he believed that South Korea’s pop culture was a fruit of the country’s democratization. “If you watch South Korean movies from the 1970’s or 1980’s, you could feel that it was a controlled society,” Mr. Oh said.

Hwang In Choul, 35, a South Korean missionary here, also sees a direct link between South Korea’s democratization and its influence in China. After restrictions on travel outside South Korea were lifted in the late 1980’s, South Korea’s missionary movement grew from several hundred to its current size of 14,000 missionaries.

Mr. Hwang, who since 2000 has trained 50 Chinese pastors to proselytize, is among the 1,500 South Korean missionaries evangelizing in China, usually secretly.

“Under military rule, it was simply not possible to come out of South Korea, and even our activities inside the country were monitored,” Mr. Hwang said. “We had the potential to be missionaries out in the world, but we were constrained. We had the passion, but we couldn’t express our passion.”

Until South Korea and China, enemies during the Korean War, normalized relations in 1992, North Korea had a stronger presence here, with its embassy, restaurants and shops. Back then, South Korea remained unknown to most Chinese, or suffered from a poor image.

“If a Japanese television set stopped working, the Chinese would say something’s wrong with the power lines,” said Ohn Dae Sung, the manager of a Korean restaurant, Suboksong, who has been here since 1993. “If a South Korean television set stopped working, they’d say it was the fault of the set.”

The Korean Wave has been gathering for some time, with its roots traceable to several developments, including the Seoul Olympics in 1988. The first civilian president was elected in 1992, ending nearly 32 years of military rule and ushering in tumultuous change.

A newly confident South Korea has pursued an increasingly independent foreign policy, often to Washington’s displeasure, warming up to China and to North Korea. Social changes that took decades elsewhere were compressed into a few years, as new freedoms yielded a rich civil society, but also caused strains between generations and the sexes, leading to one of the world’s highest divorce rates and lowest birth rates.

As South Korea quickly became the world’s most wired nation, new online news sites challenged the conservative mainstream media’s monopoly; press clubs, a Japanese colonial legacy that controlled the flow of news, were weakened or eliminated. Unlike other Asian nations, South Korea has tackled head-on taboo subjects in its society, including the legacy of military rule and collaboration during Japanese colonial rule.

Here, at a computer center on a recent evening, young Chinese could be seen playing South Korean online games. Cyworld, the largest online community service in South Korea, is announcing its arrival in China by plastering ads on city buses.

“Thanks to the Korean Wave and South Korea’s new image, being Korean helps business,” said a South Korean restaurant manager.

“I’m sure there is a connection, though we don’t have exact figures,” Jim Sohn, the chief executive of LG Electronics China, said in an interview inside the company’s brand new $400 million headquarters here.

Another company that has benefited from the Korean Wave’s “positive effect” is Hyundai, said Um Kwang Heum, president of its Chinese division. Though a latecomer to China, Hyundai signed a joint venture agreement with Beijing Automotive Industry Holdings in 2002 and has already become No. 2 in sales among automakers in China.

Thanks to its local partner, Hyundai’s cars have been chosen by the Beijing government to replace the city’s aging taxis before the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Hyundai Elantras will make up most of the city’s taxi fleet in time for the Olympics, which are expected to be a turning point for China, just as they signaled South Korea’s entry onto the world stage in 1988 and postwar Japan’s in 1964.

For all of South Korea’s influence in China, though, few Chinese expect the Olympics and democratization to dovetail as they did in Seoul.

A local television production company, Beijing Modern English Film and TV Culture, proposed a Korean-language program for adults in 2004 but was rejected 10 times by the Chinese authorities for unexplained reasons. Eventually, it successfully pitched a cartoon, “Happy Imitation of Korean Sentences.”

“As long as it was a kids’ show, it was O.K.,” said Sun Hogan, a producer at the company.

“The government,” he added, “is definitely a little nervous about the popularity of the Korean Wave.”
Standing amid snow-covered fields and squat white farmhouses, with fingers chapped from years of planting red peppers and ginseng, Ban Ki-jong proudly traced his village’s destiny in the shape of a nearby mountain.

“See how it looks like a crane,” he pointed, “with its wings spread open, ready to fly?”

Feng shui tells us this is a perfect shape for funneling natural forces into the village,” Mr. Ban continued, referring to an ancient belief that some sites are blessed by geography. “So we’ve known for three centuries that a great man would emerge here. Now, he’s finally come.”

That man is Mr. Ban’s cousin, Ban Ki-moon, who will take the reins of the United Nations as secretary general on Jan. 1. He was born 62 years ago in this tiny village of about 100 residents in South Korea’s rustic center. (The village is called No. 1 to distinguish it from another nearby village, Sangdong No. 2.) As the villagers celebrate their native son, they are not alone in turning to traditional ideas to explain so august a birth in such humble surroundings.

Since Mr. Ban’s selection by the United Nations in October, almost 2,000 practitioners of feng shui, or pungsu in Korean, have descended on the village, trying to divine the source of its good fortune, local officials said. So a host of stories and accounts of Mr. Ban’s birth and childhood have emerged, many that make him sound like a sagacious Confucian scholar out of Korea’s dynastic past.
Geomancy and divination may seem out of place in a nation leading the charge into the information age with the world’s highest Internet penetration rates. But like many countries that have experienced rapid economic growth in recent decades, South Korea has been grappling with how much of its traditional culture to give up in the name of modernity and higher living standards.

At the same time that Mr. Ban’s appointment marks South Korea’s emergence as an economic powerhouse and robust democracy, the reaction here attests to the tenacity of many old beliefs. To many local residents, his success stands as an affirmation of those ways.

“We now live in a global era, but we are still Koreans,” said Han Sang-youn, principal of Chungju High School, Mr. Ban’s alma mater. “Mr. Ban shows our values should be kept for future generations.”

The school, in the nearby city of Chungju, where Mr. Ban and his family moved when he was 3, has begun incorporating stories of Mr. Ban’s life into its curriculum, Mr. Han said. One recounts how, in the aftermath of the Korean War, Mr. Ban learned English by walking six miles to a fertilizer factory to converse with its American advisers.

In another, he is a young diplomat turning down a prized posting in Washington in favor of cheaper India so he can send money back to his parents. Many stories mention that he spent evenings and weekends studying, and that he was always at the top of his class.

“Mr. Ban is a role model, like an old-style Confucian scholar,” Mr. Han said. “We exhort our students to produce a second Mr. Ban.”

But in a reminder of how hard it is to build legends about the living, friends and relatives question some claims. Jeong Mu-dong, 66, a former classmate, said Mr. Ban was only an average student, at least until sixth grade. Mr. Ban’s mother, Shin Hyun-sun, 86, said he walked only three and a half miles to the fertilizer factory.

Chungju officials say they are struggling to balance modern tributes with ancient precedent in honoring Mr. Ban. In October, 50,000 people gathered in a soccer stadium for a celebration. City officials also want to name a street, a park and even a restaurant after Mr. Ban, but some fret that notables of yore were honored only after retirement, or death.

“In old times, we used to put up stone tablets in front of city gates to honor great men,” said Kwon O-dong, the city’s planning director. “Should we do the same now?”

Cho Jun-hyung, a retired television station manager who is now a feng shui master, said Mr. Ban’s appearance fulfilled a 2,500-year-old Chinese prophecy, first uttered by Confucius himself, that a “world dominator” would emerge from the northeast, meaning neighboring Korea.

Sangdong, the village where Mr. Ban was born, now gets so many visitors — regular tourists as well as feng shui masters — that it plans to install a parking lot and rebuild Mr. Ban’s birthplace, a farmhouse that collapsed 30 years ago.

Mr. Cho says Sangdong has exceptionally good feng shui because it sits at the navel of the Korean Peninsula, and a nearby row of three mountains channel in natural forces.

“This is very rare geography,” he said. “In America, Massachusetts and Ohio have similar alignments, which is why they produce so many presidents.”

Another feng shui master, Choi Young-ju, offers a different explanation: a mountain near Chungju is shaped like Mr. Ban’s face, a sure sign of good fortune. A Chungju city official, Jeon Dong-cheol, said Mr. Ban should have appeared 1,000 years ago but was thwarted when a rival kingdom built a stone pagodalike tower that blocked natural forces from reaching Chungju.

Mr. Ban’s mother, Ms. Shin, a Buddhist, said her son succeeded because of hard work and good karma built up by a lifetime of generosity. She said her son gave her money to buy meals for the elderly and even for the security guard in her apartment complex. “Good fortune has come back to him,” she said.

In Sangdong, where a third of the residents share the Ban family name, Mr. Ban is seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by the family ancestors who settled the village around 1700.

On a stone wall in the village’s center are etched the names of 22 generations of Bans, including the new secretary general. Overlooking the village are rows of small earthen mounds, the Ban family tombs.

It is here every October that the Ban family gathers to worship their ancestors and retell stories of their deeds. Until now, the most revered ancestor was an 18th-century government official praised by a king.

“One day, Ban Ki-moon’s story will be the most honored one,” said Ban Ki-jong, the ginseng farmer. “He has brought honor and good fortune to his village.”
# THE LIST OF 2006
The New York Times Articles on Korean Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>By</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2, 2006</td>
<td>Norimitsu Onishi</td>
<td>China’s Youth Look to Seoul for Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 25, 2006</td>
<td>Dana Bowen</td>
<td>Traditional Flavors of the Lunar New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2006</td>
<td>Deborah Sontag</td>
<td>The Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31, 2006</td>
<td>Roberta Smith</td>
<td>Nam June Paik, 73, Dies; Pioneer of Video Art Whose Work Broke Cultural Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26, 2006</td>
<td>Saki Knafo</td>
<td>The Jazz Is Cool, but Karaoke Reigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2006</td>
<td>Manohla Dargis</td>
<td>Memory, Desire and More, From Director Rarely Seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 2006</td>
<td>Bernard Holland</td>
<td>Schubert’s Farewell Lament of Rustic Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19, 2006</td>
<td>Peter Hyun</td>
<td>Lost Seoul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2006</td>
<td>Lawrence Van Gelder</td>
<td>Just Around the Corner: Philharmonic Music in the Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31, 2006</td>
<td>Norimitsu Onishi</td>
<td>Gay-Themed Film Gives Closer Door a Tug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2006</td>
<td>Robert Simonson</td>
<td>What’s the Korean Word for ‘YO’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9, 2006</td>
<td>Ian Buruma</td>
<td>Mr. Vengeance: How the Korean film director Park Chanwook made the art of getting even his own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2006</td>
<td>Douglas Martin</td>
<td>Shin Sang Ok, 80, Korean Film Director Abducted by Dictator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23, 2006</td>
<td>S. T. Vanairsdale</td>
<td>Asian Films Land Pied-a-Terre On the Upper East Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 2006</td>
<td>John Rockwell</td>
<td>The Earth, a Baobab Tree And Displaced Peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2, 2006</td>
<td>Anne Midgette</td>
<td>Lost-and-Found Tale for the Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2, 2006</td>
<td>Lawrence Van Gelder</td>
<td>Avery Fisher Grant Winners Named</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19, 2006</td>
<td>Jennifer Dunning</td>
<td>A Choreographer Showcases an Assortment of Personalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23, 2006</td>
<td>A.O. Scott</td>
<td>A Look at Italian Politics, A Peek at American Films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 2006</td>
<td>Norimitsu Onishi</td>
<td>In Deep South, North Koreans Find a Hot Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28, 2006</td>
<td>Mark Russell</td>
<td>Horror! He Likes Ideas and Metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28, 2006</td>
<td>David Colman</td>
<td>A Mask? Smmmokin!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the complete list of 2006 The New York Times Articles on Korean Culture according to our research up to this time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUNE-AUGUST</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25  June 2, 2006  By Laura Kern  Film in Review; Typhoon</td>
<td>51  September 1, 2006  By Holland Cotter  Remembrance of an Art Scene in Downtown Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26  June 5, 2006  By Anne Midgette  An Opera Singer Gives a Party, in Celebration of Herself</td>
<td>52  September 20, 2006  By Peter Meehan  Korean Fried Chicken With Beer and a Beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28  June 9, 2006  By Jennifer Dunning  Myung Soo Kim Dance Project</td>
<td>54  September 29, 2006  By A.O. Scott  New York Film Festival Quietly Demands Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29  June 11, 2006  By Holland Cotter  The Week Ahead June 11-17</td>
<td>55  September 30, 2006  By John Rockwell  Annual Sampler Ranges From Tableaus to a Pas de Deux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30  June 16, 2006  By Jennifer Dunning  Dance: Myung Soo Kim</td>
<td>56  October 1, 2006  By Carol Kino  Now In Moving Pictures: The Multitudes of Nikki S. Lee One-Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31  June 16, 2006  By A.O. Scott  Her Boyfriend Is So 2004: Can Love Conquer That?</td>
<td>57  October 6, 2006  By Laura Kern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32  June 16, 2006  By Manohla Dargis  For Fans of Asian Films, Two Weeks of Brash Bliss</td>
<td>58  October 8, 2006  By Seth Schiesel  The Land of the Video Geek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33  June 18, 2006  By Saki Knafo  Beer for Breakfast</td>
<td>59  October 18, 2006  By Peter Meehan  Dinner, with Dawn as a Chaser: The late, late croed finds more places to end the night with a good meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34  June 18, 2006  By Jason Zinoman  Candor As a Cure For Writer's Block Get to work, Sandra Oh said. So Diana Son did just that.</td>
<td>60  October 20, 2006  By Nathan Lee  Film in Review; Conventioneers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35  June 24, 2006  By Corey Kilgannon  Fervent About God and World Cup Soccer</td>
<td>61  October 25, 2006  By Dana Bowen  Korean Simplicity Morphs Into Lavishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36  June 28, 2006  By Stephen Holden  For One Teenage Boy, a Motel Is No Way Station, It's Home</td>
<td>62  November 3, 2006  By Jennifer Dunning  Sin-Cha Hong Laughing Stone Dance Theater Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38  July 6, 2006  By John Branch  South Korea Becomes New Face of L.P.G.A.</td>
<td>64  November 5, 2006  By Charles Taylor  Holiday Movies/DVDs; Oldboy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39  July 10, 2006  By Allan Kozinn  With Bel Canto's Possibilities, the Voice's Full Potential</td>
<td>65  November 8, 2006  By Roslyn Sulcas  Dreamlike Patterns, Delicate And Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40  July 12, 2006  By Holland Cotter  When Real Time Turns Out to Be the Most Surreal of All</td>
<td>66  November 19, 2006  By Patricia Cohen  The Week Ahead Nov.19–25 Julia Cho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41  July 15, 2006  By Vivien Schweitzer  Precision and Spirit in a Fiery Pairing</td>
<td>67  November 21, 2006  By Charles Isherwood  An Immigrant Family's Three Survivors, Traveling Together, Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42  July 19, 2006  By Elaine Louie  Korea's Taste of Summer Is a Long, Cool Slurp</td>
<td>68  November 26, 2006  By Catherine Price  Immersion in Buddhist Austerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43  July 24, 2006  By Vivien Schweitzer  Nurtured Young Performers Telling Mozart's Bad-boy Tale</td>
<td>69  November 27, 2006  By Bernard Holland  Trying to Appeal to Youth With One of Their Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44  July 24, 2006  By Steven McElroy  All Seats Are Cheap Seats</td>
<td>70  November 30, 2006  By Bernard Holland  An Affectionate Homecoming for Masur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45  August 4, 2006  By None  Art: On-Air Project, Arta Kim</td>
<td>71  December 8, 2006  By John Rockwell  Watch the Antics on Either Stage, Then Go to the Videotapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46  August 10, 2006  By John Rockwell  A New York Debut at 81, Exploring Korea's Traditions</td>
<td>72  December 17, 2006  By David Colman  Keeping At Least One Slate Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47  August 11, 2006  By Aidan Foster-Carter  Here There Be Monsters</td>
<td>73  December 17, 2006  By Jane Gordon  Sean Kim and Katey Kim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49  August 24, 2006  By Steve Smith  Moonlight Verdi, Loud Enough For Blankets In Back Row</td>
<td>75  December 22, 2006  By Martin Fackler  On His Ancestors' Wings, a Korean Soars to the U.N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50  August 27, 2006  By Virginia Heffernan  Web Guitar Wizard Revealed at Last</td>
<td>76  December 26, 2006  By Allan Kozinn  Young Players Fulfill a Christmas Tradition at Carnegie Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77  December 27, 2006  By Peter Meehan  A Korean-Chinese Hybrid With an Oniony Bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78  December 28, 2006  By Sheridan Prasso  Hot for the Holidays: The Lure of a Korean Sauna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2006 THE KOREAN WAVE AS
2006 is the year when the New York Times started to highlight Korean Popstars along with Korean Classical musicians. Prior to 2006, the New York Times articles mainly focused on Classical musicians of Korea.

The New York Times has focused on the rising popularity of Korean food, reviewing numerous Korean cuisines, from traditional styles of seasonal dishes to modern foods that can be tasted in New York.

Since January of 2006, the New York Times has published numerous in-depth articles focusing on the influence and diversity of Korean culture and “Hallyu” or “Korean Wave” in Asia.