



# GAYAGEUM

'Cheong-Heung-Dung-Dang',  
the sound of gayageum is instilled into heart.





- I Gayageum at a Glance
- II Detail Information View
- III Experience Gayageum





# I.

## Gayageum at a Glance

Materials of gayageum

Process of making gayageum



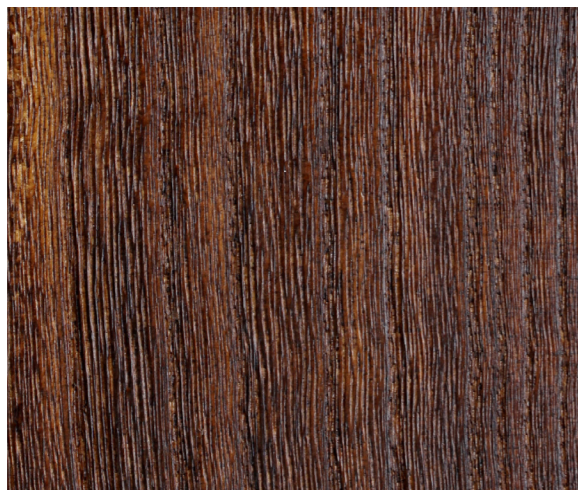


# Materials of gayageum

The wood of the **'Paulownia tree'** exudes a fine resonance, as its quality is soft and yet resistant to moisture. Further, its weight of the wood itself is light with a glossy surface, and is very resistant to distortion, rotting, combustion, and even bugs.

Depending on the thickness of the **'silk thread'**, the tune and the range of pitch can be adjusted via the texture and the vibration of the strings.

When it comes to the wood selection used for **'anjok'** the firmer the wood, the better.



Paulownia wood +



Woods for anjok +



Silk thread +






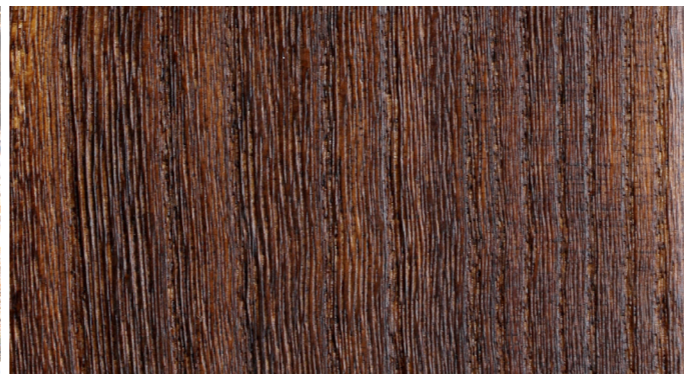


# Materials of gayageum



## Paulowniawood

The wood of the Paulownia tree  exudes a fine resonance, as its quality is soft and yet resistant to moisture. Further, its weight of the wood itself is light with a glossy surface, and is very resistant to distortion, rotting, combustion, and even bugs. Accordingly, Paulownia wood has been the traditional choice for making musical instruments such as the gayageum. For wood selection, native paulownia that is at least 20 years old is regarded as being of the best quality. Usually, pieces of the wood are cut and trimmed so as







# Materials of gayageum



## Paulowniawood

to be exposed to snow, rain, and frost. As a result, the fibers of the wood are naturally fermented, and are then processed after being dried for another 2~3 years.







# Materials of gayageum



## Woods for anjok

When it comes to the wood selection used for anjok (a wild, goose foot-shaped, small pillar that supports the strings of a gayageum), the firmer the wood, the better. For constructing an anjok, usually wood is chosen from a variety of trees such as walnut, zelcova, pyrus pyrifolia, cherry blossom, Schmidt's birch, jujube, or maple. The texture of these trees is







# Materials of gayageum



## Woods for anjok

so tough that the wood used is needed to be soaked in water before processing. Depending on different musical instruments, the size and the shape of an anjok varies, and should be positioned to support the gayageum strings and maintain balance, while correctly connecting to the sound-box.








# Materials of gayageum



## Silk thread

For traditional string instruments, , silk thread has been mostly used for strings. Depending on the thickness of the thread, the tune and the range of pitch can be adjusted via the texture and the vibration of the strings. A gayageum needs 12 strings, with the thickest string consisting of about 150 twisted silk threads that produce a low pitch. According to tradition, the twisted strings follow a certain process. First, the strings are coiled around a pine tree bat and then soaked in water for 24 hours. Then, they are boiled







# Materials of gayageum



## Silk thread

with steam in hot water for about 30 minutes, and coagulated with resin from the pine wood bat.







# Process of making gayageum



(11) Decorating chawdan (a supporting plate which is located on the most right head part of gayageum)  
Then, use the bones as decoration around the chawdan, where the right hand is supposed to be placed when playing the gayageum.

manufacturing procedure + manufacturing tool +





# Process of making gayageum



## 1. Harvesting the paulownia tree and choosing other appropriate trees

When it comes to the paulownia tree, it is preferred that its diameter is more than 30 cm (11.8 inches) wide, and that the growth rings are dense. Usually trees, which bear much fruit and have many holes inside, are regarded as the proper ones for making gayageum; while severely cracked/forked ones are excluded and fail to be chosen for making gayageum.



## 2. Drying paulownia tree

Paulownia wood is usually dried outside for more than 3 years, while being naturally exposed to snow and rain. During the drying process, observe the resins coming from the wood. In order to keep its shape consistent, turn the wood bottom-side up carefully to allow the air to circulate and dry the wood





# Process of making gayageum



### 3. Selecting appropriate wood

In checking the strength and texture of the wood, choose wood which is resistant to moisture and temperature change so that it can produce good tones as a musical instrument.



### 4. Drawing plan

On the wood which would be made for a soundbox, draw 130 cm (51.1 inches) in height, and 25 cm (9.8 inches) in width.





# Process of making gayageum



## 5. Cutting

To set the size of a soundbox, mark the wood with a chisel for the chawdan (a supporting plate which is located on the most right head part of a gayageum), and the yangidu (a part which is located in the edge end of gayageum, has holes to match the number of gayageum's strings, and looks like a ram's horn).



## 6. Digging a hole in wood for making a soundbox

Dig a hole in the wood, keeping the thickness the same. Here, it is important to dig evenly. For this, repeat the process of cutting and trimming.





# Process of making gayageum



## 7. Cutting the bottom plate

In the case of Jeongak gayageum (classic music), there is no need to make a front and back side of the wooden plate. However, in order to make the surface smooth, cut the bottom plate evenly.



## 8. Trimming the whole shape of the wooden plate

Trim the whole shape of the plate, smoothing the rough and uneven surface.





# Process of making gayageum



## 9. Ironing

With the heated iron, blacken the surface of the wood. Ironing makes the texture of wood better, prevents disease and insects, and protects it from decay and moisture. Also, ironing helps make the sound of a gayageum pure and clear as it removes remaining resin left on the surface.



## 10. Polishing the wooden plate

After finishing the ironing, trim the blackened surface of the soundbox with a tough brush or sandpaper. This is the final step of making the soundbox.





# Process of making gayageum



## 11. Decorating the chawdan (a supporting plate which is located on the most right head part of gayageum)

Boil the cows' bones, which have been soaked in advance for a few days, in lye (caustic soda) several times. Cut the bones into thin pieces approximately within 1 mm. Then, use the bones as decoration around the chawdan, where the right hand is supposed to be placed when playing the gayageum.



## 12. Positioning the hyunchim (a kind of a support with furrows for 12 strings to be coiled through)

Hyunchim plays a role to support 12 strings of a gayageum. Ebony, which is a dense black wood, is usually used for making it, being made around 15 mm in height, and placed on the chawdan.





# Process of making gayageum



**13. Attaching yangidu (a part which is located at the edge end of gayageum, has holes matching the gayageum's strings, and looks like a ram's horn)**

The Yangidu, which is shaped like a ram's horn, decorates the edge end part of a Jeongak gayageum. The purpose of using the yangidu is to hang the budle (a thick cord that adjusts the elasticity and intensity of the strings of a gayageum) around it.



**14. Twisting silk threads**

Boil raw silk threads reeled off from cocoons, and twist them. The value of the strings on a gayageum depends on the quality of the raw silk.





# Process of making gayageum



## 15. Twisting strings

There are mainly two steps for twisting strings, and are so called 'twisting 3 strings' and 'twisting 1 string'. The range of pitch of a gayageum depends on the thickness of the strings; the thicker the string is, the lower the sound it makes. Therefore, to make a string for lower-pitched sound, twist 3 strings respectively first, and then join the 3 strings into one to make a thicker string.



## 16. Boiling strings

This process is the last step of making strings. Put the strings into the Sot (a Korean traditional caldron made of cast iron, and is a kind of steam cooker). Boil the strings in water, and dry them naturally. After boiling, the strings will become much tougher.





# Process of making gayageum



## 17. Making the anjok (a wild, goose foot-shaped, small pillar supporting strings of a gayageum)

The Anjok, in which gayageum strings are supposed to be placed on, plays a role in adjusting the pitch of sound. Depending on the thickness of each string, adjust the size of the furrows made on the head of the anjok. Careful attention is needed.



## 18. Matching each dolgwae (small bumps around which strings are coiled, attached on the back side of gayageum) with each string

Prepare 12 strings of different thickness, which correlate into 12 different pitches of sound. First, coil them around the dolgwae and then pull them out through the holes.





# Process of making gayageum



## 19. Connecting the hakseul (crane leg-shaped, a connecting part positioned between the budle and gayageum strings) to strings

The Hakseul is the part of the end of the budle (a thick cord that adjusts the elasticity and the intensity of all the strings of a gayageum). Tie silk threads around the loop, and connect the gayageum strings to the budle with them.



## 20. Tying a bundle of budle

The budle is a thick string which is made of twisted machine cotton threads and dyed in a dark color. Tie a bundle of the budle in a number '8' shape, and fix it on the end of the gayageum.





# Process of making gayageum



## **21. Placing strings on the anjok (a wild, goose foot-shaped, small pillar supporting strings of a gayageum)**

On the head of the anjok, make furrows in which the different size of each furrow correlates with the thickness of the strings, and then affix the strings firmly.



## **22. Tuning**

Tighten the dolgwae to adjust the tension of strings, and slightly rearrange the position of the anjok to tune the instrument to the proper desired sound.





# Process of making gayageum



Many different kinds of manufacturing tools are used for making a gayageum. Making a gayageum passes through each important process with each manufacturing tool. The hand-stained tools make the gayageum sound more deep, adding more meanings in the years.







## II. Detail Information View

Jeongak gayageum

Sanjo gayageum

Improved gayageum





# Different kinds of gayageum



Jeongak gayageum +

Sanjo gayageum +

Improved gayageum +

The gayageum was originally invented, rooted from the indigenous Korean traditional thoughts and the spirit involved in minyo (traditional folk song) and traditional musics. This is the reason why gayageum has evolved into the traditional instrument which abides by the indigenous Korean style musical grammar and form of expression. The Jeongak gayageum was first invented when Ureuk in Gaya period played with his 12 songs, and, later, in late Joseon dynasty, Sanjo gayageum was first invented with the development of folk musics and the first appearance of instrumental solo Sanjo music. Meanwhile, as for improved gayageum, as it has been developed to keep up with the modernization of Gugak (traditional Korean music), it features the loud volume and the wide range of tunes for playing on stage.





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# Different kinds of gayageum

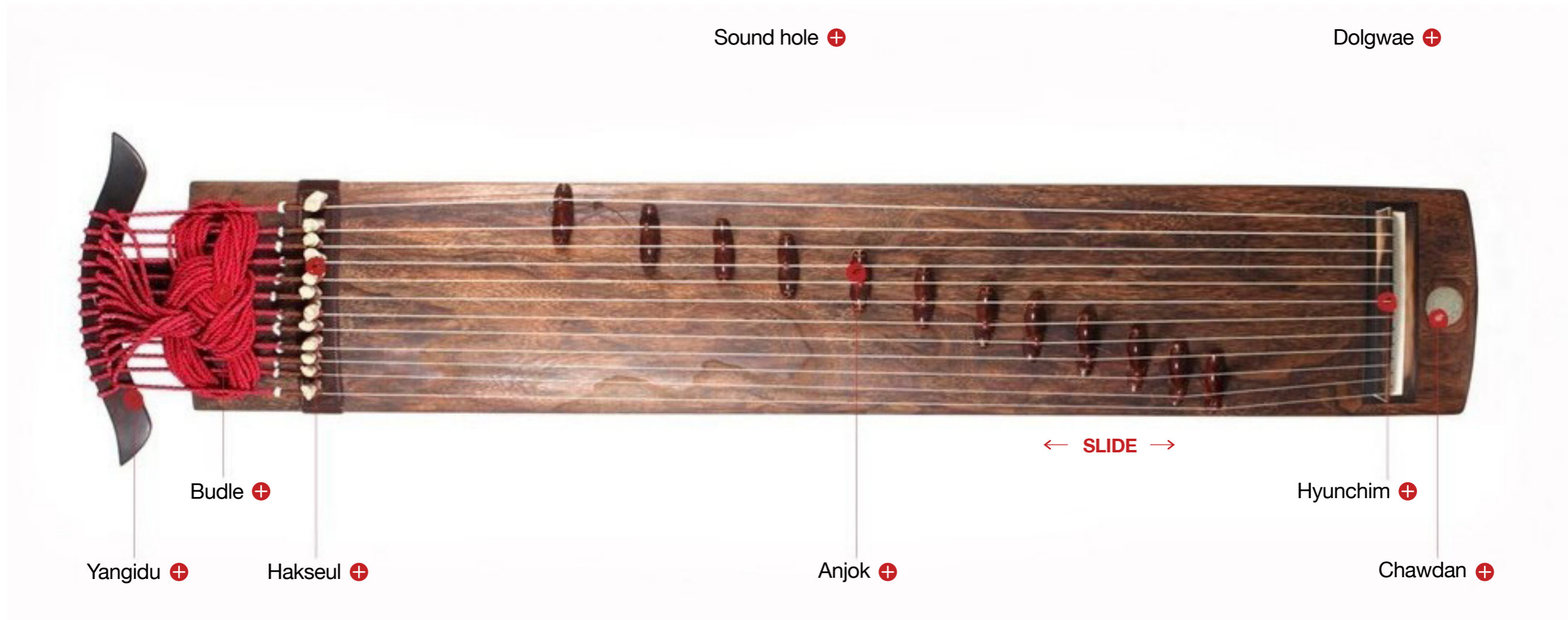


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# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Whole structure

The Jeongak gayageum is called a 'punglyu (taste for the arts) gayageum' or 'bobgeum.' The Jungak gayageum is regarded as the original gayageum, and its soundbox is made by digging on the backside of the wooden plate of the paulownia wood. The edge of the gayageum is decorated with yangidu, which is shaped like a ram's horn ('yang' means a ram in Korean).





# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Chawdan

It is a supporting plate which is located on the most right head part of the gayageum. When playing the gayageum, the musician places the chawdan on the right side of himself/herself, and puts his/her right hand on it.







# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Hyunchim

It is a kind of roundish bracket, around 1.5 cm (0.59 inches) long that protrudes from the chawdan surface. As it has furrows for 12 strings to be coiled through, it helps connect strings to the dolgwae, located behind the plate. ✕





# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Anjok

It is a wild, goose foot-shaped, small pillar that supports the strings of the gayageum. It plays a role to directly convey the vibration of the strings to the soundbox. These small pillars are positioned from the side of the hunchim to the side of the budle and, when moved slightly up and down, help to adjust the pitch of sound. The name 'anjok' originally comes from an imaginary vision; 'an' means a wild goose and 'jok' means foot in Korean. According to Akhagwebeom (a book of examples that explains musical grammar), the largest anjok is 7 cm (2.7 inches) long, and the smallest one is 6.5 cm (2.5 inches) long. The shorter the height of the anjok is, the higher the pitch is. ⊗





# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Budle

It is a thick cord which plays a role of fixing strings of the gayageum. By pulling the budle, it adjusts the elasticity and intensity of all the gayageum strings.







# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Hakseul

It is a connecting part that is positioned between the bundle and the gayageum strings. It looks like a crane's knee; to this end, 'hak' means crane and 'seul' means knee in Korean.







# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Yangidu

It is a part which is located along the edge of the gayageum. It has holes matching the gayageum's strings, and the budle (a thick cord which plays a role of fixing strings of gayageum) is threaded through these holes. The name 'yangidu' was firstly found in the book Akhagwebeom (a book of examples that explains musical grammar), and which was named after the appearance of a ram's horn; 'yang' means a ram and 'du' means a head in Korean.







# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



**Sound hole** There are holes underside of the gayageum, each of which is positioned into three equal parts. The holes symbolize the harmony of yin (the moon) and yang (the sun).







# Appearance of Jeongak gayageum



## Dolgwae

Dolgwae plays a role of adjusting the tension of gayageum strings; by spinning the dolgwae, it makes the strings loose or tight. Thus, dolgwae adjusts the delicate tone change.







# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung



**Q. What is the meaning of 'Jeongak'?**  
Jeongak reflects its literal meaning - 'Jeong' means 'right and sound' in Korean.

[Profile](#) +

[Interview](#) +

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# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung



## Choe, Chung-ung

- 1941 Born in Hwaseong, Gyeonggi Province
- 1961 Graduated from 'the Training Center for Performers of Korean Traditional Music'
- 1987 Graduated from the department of music education, in the graduation school of education, Dankook University.
- 1979 Published the music sheet 'Gayageum, Jeongak' (written by Kim, Gi-su, and Choe, Chung-ung)
- 2006 Played the performance 'Jeongak-Jeongsim (正樂正心)' for the 50th anniversary of Gugak
- 1983, 2006 Received the grand award of KBS Gugak
- 2001 Received the Korea Culture Merit Medal
- 2009 Received the prize 'Og-Gwan' of the Order of Culture Merit

Present The National Gugak Center veteran, master of Korean traditional music / President of the Punglyu Institution, Yangju-si / Candidate as ' the Holder of Royal Ancestral Ritual in the Jongmyo Shrine, the Important Intangible Cultural Heritage Number 1'







# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung



**Q. What is the meaning of 'Jeongak'?**

Jeongak reflects its literal meaning - 'Jeong' means 'right and sound' in Korean. To play this music, the performer should keep his or her mind and body right. Considering our ancestors used to regard Jeongak as reflective of well-governed national music ( 治世之音 ), the basic principle of Jeongak was to govern the country well.

**Q. What kinds of music are played with Jeongak gayageum?**

There are many kinds of musics played with a Jeongak. For instance, ensemble pieces or duet songs in Gugak (traditional Korean music) can be played with a Jeongak gayageum. For more examples, Pyongjowhasang, Jeon-gok,







# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung

Yeominrak, Junggangjigok, Chonnyonmanse, Chita, Songguyejigok, Suyeonjangjigok, as well as about 41 different accompaniment songs can be played with a Jeongak gayageum. The melody of a Jeongak gayageum is simple itself, but the rules are quite strict. Therefore, the name 'Jeonak' is interchangeable with 'Beopgeum ( 法琴 )' where 'Beop' means a law in Korean.

## **Q. How do you compare a Jeongak gayageum to a Sanjo gayageum?**

Compared to a Sanjo gayageum, a Jeongak gayageum has a wider and longer body, and the distance between the strings is also wider. Therefore, it is hard to play fast tempo music with a Jeongak gayageum, although this can be accomplished with a Sanjo gayageum. The history of the Sanjo gayageum goes back one hundred years, while that of the Jeongak gayageum goes back to the 6th century. After its invention, the form of the Jeongak gayageum has changed in many ways, although the number of strings has remained the same.

## **Q. What does the Jeongak gayageum mean to you?**

I started to learn the gayageum in 1955, so it has been 60 years now. When I play the gayageum, most of all, I feel relaxed and my mind becomes peaceful. I guess the feeling would be similar to when playing Minsok (folk song) music, but, especially with the Jeongak, I feel like my mind and body are being consoled by the music. Therefore, in driving away any haste and evil, I prefer to concentrate on playing the Jeongak gayageum as if I were emotionally disciplining myself.





# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung

## Q. What are some points to note when playing the Jeongak gayageum?

When you start learning the gayageum, you should start with Jeongak music before Sanjo music. This is because of the philosophy Jeongak gayageum reflects. To perform Jeongak music, one should have a refined mind first. Hence, when starting to learn the Jeongak, a performer should learn correct playing styles and acquire the way to make use of empty space during playing. Learning the Jeongak gayageum is said to be the basic first step towards learning the gayageum, so that it develops the right attitude within the performers. After learning the Jeongak gayageum, you learn to play the Sanjo gayageum for fast tempo songs. There is a little difference in playing styles and rules between Sanjo and Jeongak. In Sanjo music, it is permissible to make some mistakes between playing styles like using 'plucking style' which was supposed to be 'flicking' or vice versa, but it is never permitted in Jeongak music. When you play the Jeongak gayageum, you need to 'flick' where you need to 'flick' and you need to use your thumb when it asks. You are never to depart from the standard pattern.





# Jeongak gayageum introduced by the Jeongak gayageum master, Choe, Chung-ung



The performance played by Jeongak gayageum master Choe, Chung-ung

Genre of music - Yeongsanhoesang Title - 'Hahyun Dodeuri'







# Basic posture of playing the Jeongak gayageum

Meanwhile, the left hand is gently dropped like softly pushing downwards, and placed on a spot about 10 cm (3.9 inches) distant from the anjok. Only the second (index) and third (middle) fingers are placed on the string, while the other fingers are made to naturally follow the second and third fingers. Here, pay attention to not lift up or drop the wrist too much.







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



**Right hand** + The playing style with right hand strongly affects the tone color, change of dynamics, direction of melody, whole music tempo, range of pitch, and specific playing styles.



**Left hand** + The left hand plays a role of performing Nonghyun (a playing style of making diverse notes before or after a note) which is to make use of the lingering note made by the right hand - it includes Yosung, Toesung, Choosung, or Pyunsung.





# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



This playing style is basically used for playing the Jeongak gayageum. This is a technique of strongly pulling a string with the weight on the tip of the index finger.

Playing style with  
the index finger

Playing style  
with a thumb

Playing style with  
the middle finger

Ssaraeng

Flicking

Seulkidung

Tteul

Sequential  
Flicking







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



When playing with a thumb, mainly, pushing or plucking way is used. Basically, pushing style is the most used, but when playing a short note, plucking style is also used.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

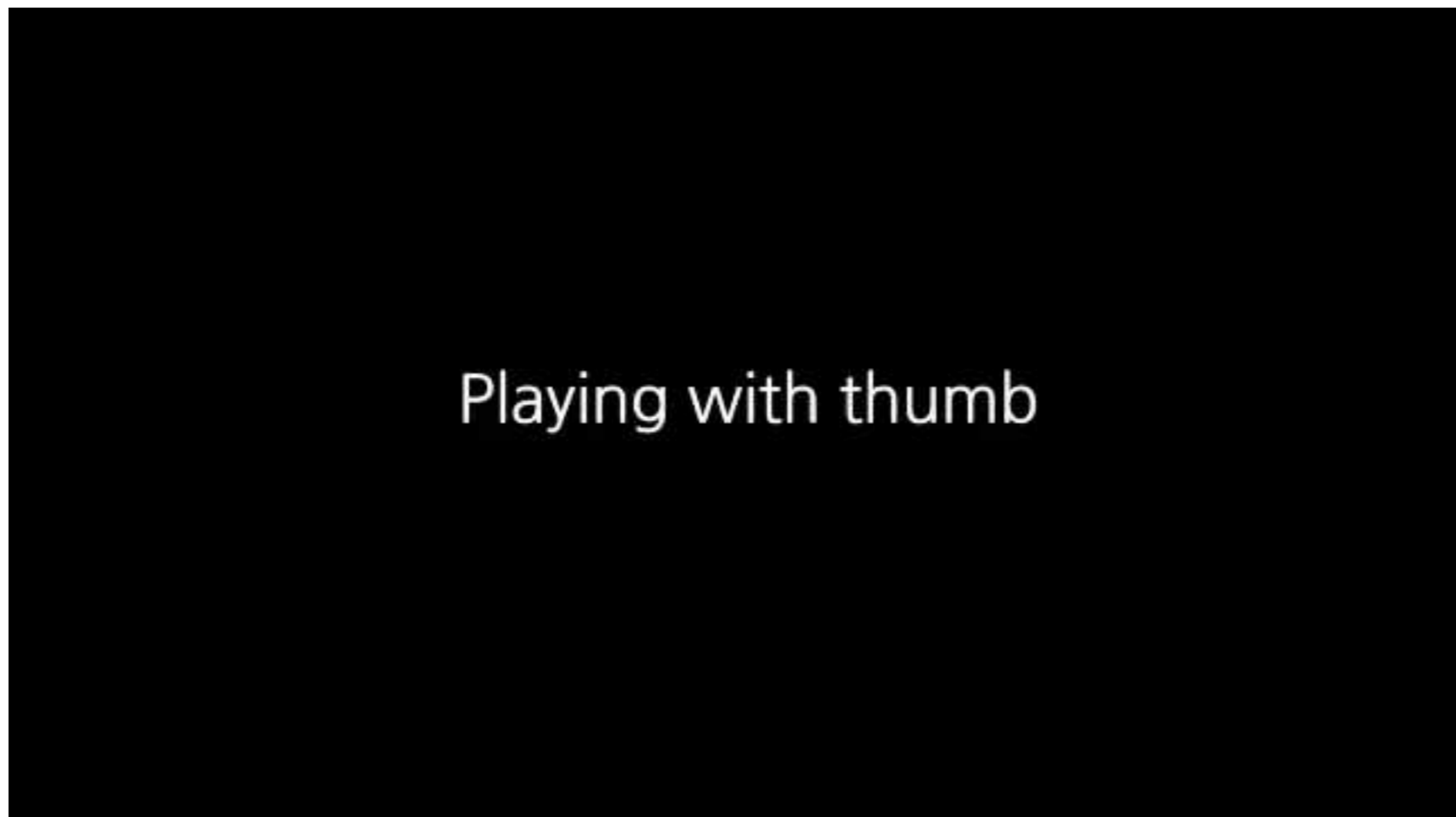
Ssaraeng

Flicking

Seulkidung

Tteul

Sequential Flicking







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



Cup the right hand, which is the basic posture, the same as when playing with the index finger, and pull a string with the weight on the tip of the middle finger.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

Ssaraeng

Flicking

Seulkidung

Tteul

Sequential Flicking







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



This is a technique of using the middle finger and the thumb to rapidly connect two notes in order; the middle finger pulls a string first, and the thumb swiftly pulls another string of which the musical note is one octave higher or lower than the previous one.

Playing style with  
the index finger

Playing style  
with a thumb

Playing style with  
the middle finger

**Ssaraeng**

Flicking

Seulkidung

Tteul

Sequential  
Flicking





# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



With the thumb and the index finger slightly bent, flick strings with the index finger nail. That is, this is a technique of flicking strings with a moderate weight on the tip of the finger, looking like striking a bead.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

Ssaraeng

**Flicking**

Seulkidung

Tteul

Sequential Flicking







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



Use the index finger, the middle finger and the thumb, with the middle finger and the thumb pushing the same string. Here, the index finger holds the upper right string that the middle finger is touching.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

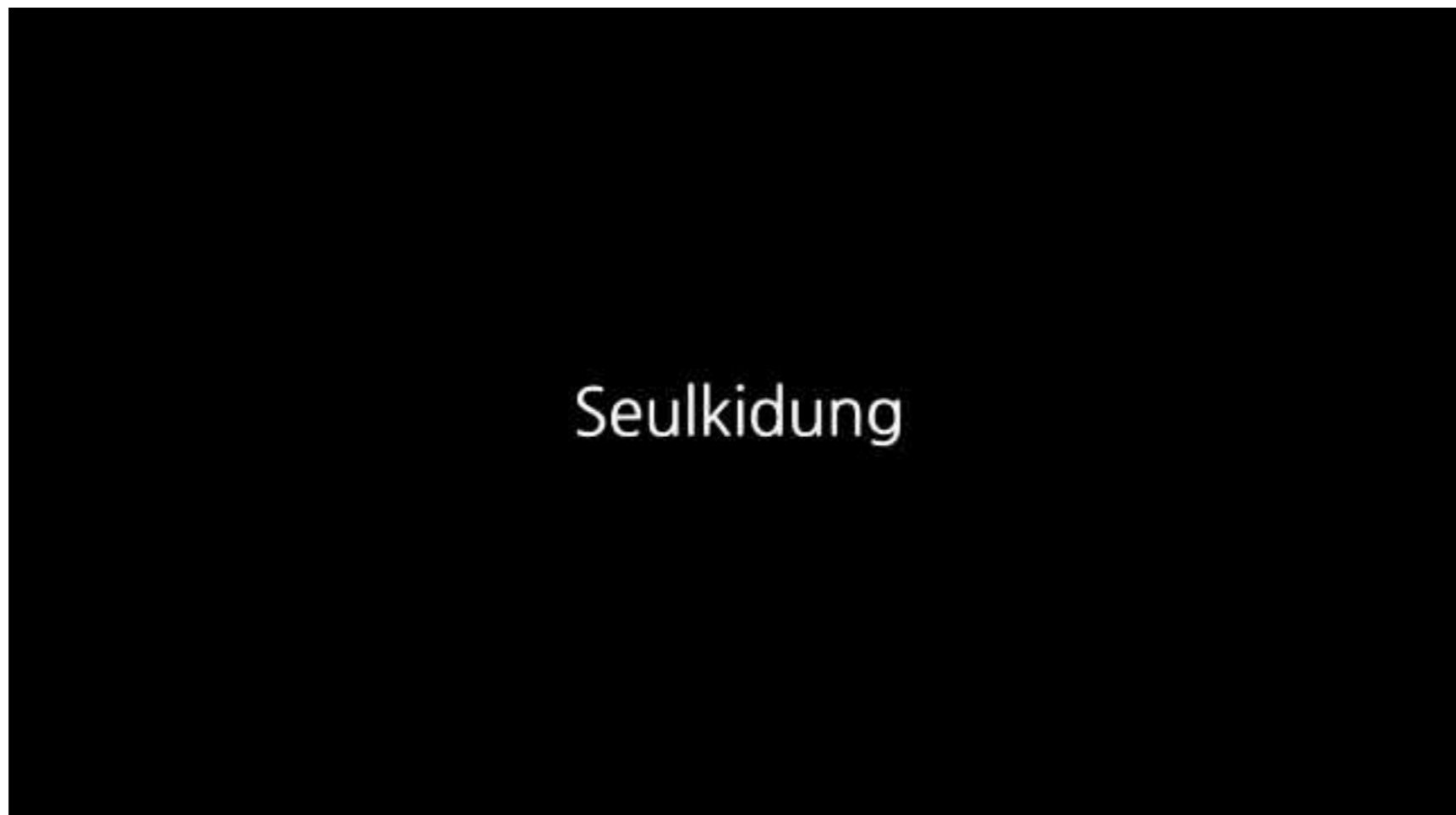
Ssaraeng

Flicking

**Seulkidung**

Tteul

Sequential Flicking





# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



The thumb nail lifts the string upwards from under the string. The purpose of this is to make the previous sound made by the thumb higher.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

Ssaraeng

Flicking

Seulkidung

**Tteul**

Sequential Flicking







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum

The little finger, ring finger, middle finger, and index finger should slightly bend the string and then rapidly flick the strings in these sequences.

Playing style with the index finger

Playing style with a thumb

Playing style with the middle finger

Ssaraeng

Flicking

Seulkidung

Tteul

**Sequential Flicking**

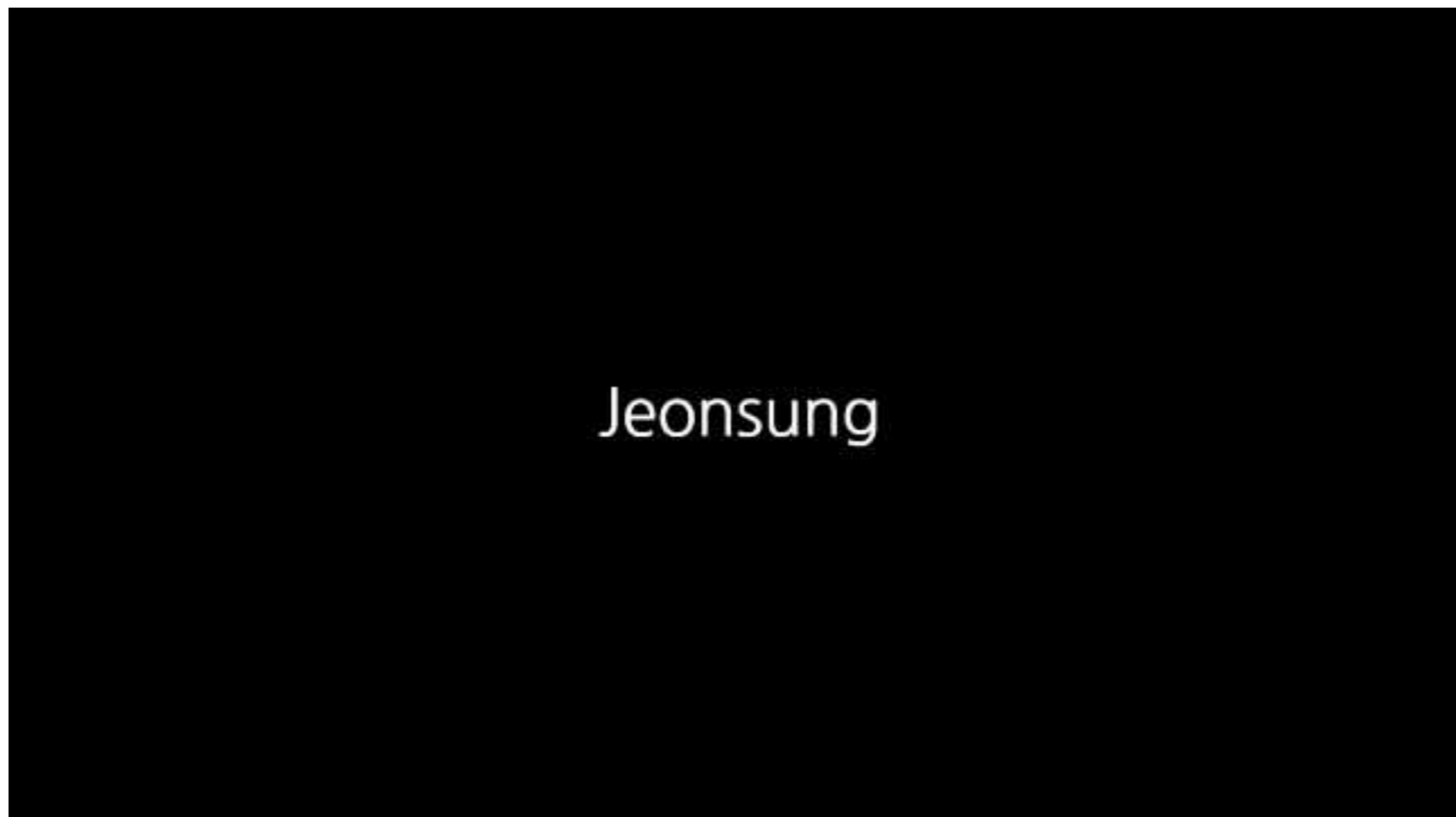




# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



The right hand plucks a string to make a sound, and, at the same time, the index finger and the middle finger of the left hand push the string.



Jeonsung

Toesung

Choosung

Apsseong

Chegwae

Nonghyun







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



The left hand's index finger and middle finger should slightly bend the string that you wish to make a sound. Gently pull the string toward the performer's body, with the purpose of creating a lingering sound made by the right hand a little lower.

Jeonsung

Toesung

Choosung

Apsseong

Chegwae

Nonghyun

Toesung





# How to play the Jeongak gayageum



Gently push the string with the little finger, with the purpose of creating a lingering sound made by right hand a little higher.

Jeonsung

Toesung

**Choosung**

Apsseong

Chegwae

Nonghyun

Choosung







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum

This is also called 'Tteuldong'. The left hand's index finger and middle finger should slightly bend the string, and then push the string. This is also used to create a lingering sound made by the right hand.

Jeonsung

Toesung

Choosung

**Apsseong**

Chegwae

Nonghyun

Apsseong





# How to play the Jeongak gayageum

This way replaces the anjok (a wild goose foot-shaped, small pillar that supports the strings of a gayageum) in order to change the note 'Tae (太)' (the 6th string of Jeongak gayageum) to the note 'Hwang (黃)'. Chegwae is usually used in Gyemyeonjo (a kind of music tuning mode which is widely used in traditional Korean music).

Jeonsung

Toesung

Choosung

Apsseong

**Chegwae**

Nonghyun

Chegwae







# How to play the Jeongak gayageum

This way involves shaking a string up and down, which can add variety to the lingering sound or make a change in the tone color or pitch. However, when it is used, ensure not to create a big change in pitch by shaking the string too strongly.

Jeonsung

Toesung

Choosung

Apsseong

Chegwae

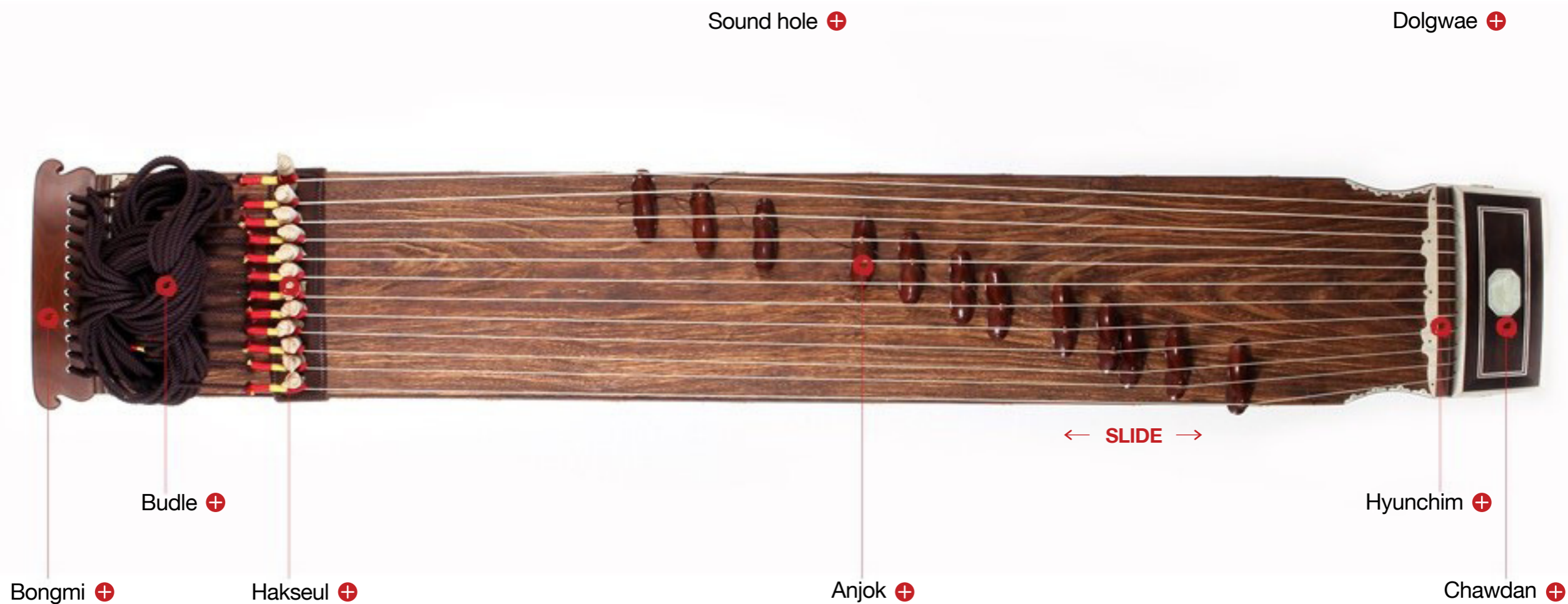
Nonghyun

Nonghyun





# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Whole structure

Sanjo gayageum is different from Jeongak gayageum in several ways. The soundbox size is smaller, and the whole shape of it is like a box. The instrument strings are threaded through the bongmi (a phoenix's tail-shaped part positioned along the edge of the gayageum) instead of the yagidu. The gaps between the strings are also narrower.





# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Chawdan

It is a supporting plate which is located on the most right head part of the gayageum. When playing the gayageum, the musician places the chawdan on the right side of himself / herself, and puts his/her right hand on it.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Hyunchim

It is a kind of roundish bracket, around 1.5 cm (0.59 inches) long that extends from the chawdan surface. As it has furrows for 12 strings to be coiled through, and helps connect the strings to the dolgwae behind the plate.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Anjok

It is a wild goose foot-shaped, small pillar that supports the strings of the gayageum. It plays a role to directly convey the vibration of the strings to the soundbox. These small pillars are positioned from the side of the hyunchim to the side of the budle and, when moved slightly up and down, help to adjust the pitch of sound. The name 'anjok' originally comes from an imaginary vision; 'an' means a wild goose and 'jok' means foot in Korean.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Budle

It is a thick cord which plays a role of fixing strings of the gayageum. By pulling the budle, it adjusts the elasticity and intensity of all the gayageum strings.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Hakseul

It is a connecting part that is positioned between the bundle and the gayageum strings. It looks like a crane's knee; to this end, 'hak' means crane and 'seul' means knee in Korean.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Bongmi

It is a part which is located along the edge of the gayageum. 'Bongmi' was named after the phoenix's tail-shaped appearance; 'bong' means crane, and 'mi' means tail in Korean.







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



**Sound hole** There are holes underside of the gayageum, each of which is positioned into three equal parts. The holes symbolize the harmony of yin (the moon) and yang (the sun).







# Appearance of Sanjo gayageum



## Dolgwae

Dolgwae plays a role of adjusting the tension of gayageum strings; by spinning the dolgwae, it makes the strings loose or tight. Thus, dolgwae adjusts the delicate tone change.







# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja



[Profile](#) +

[Interview](#) +

[Listen to music](#) +



# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja



## Ji, Seong-ja

- 1945 Born in Seoul, Studied under the gayageum master Geum-yeon Seong, Yeong-hee Ji, Yeong-suk Han, Cho-wal Park, Seung-hee Choi, Myung-hwan Kim
- 1963 Received the top prize in the Asia Folk and Art Contest
- 1990 Received the grand award (performance part), in KBS Gugak

Present A director of the committee 'Tokyo-Korea YMCA International Cultural Division', a representative of the 'Geum-yeon Seong Garak Preservation Institute', a holder of Intangible Cultural Heritage the number 40 'Gayageum, Sanjo', in Jeollabuk-do Province







# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja



## Q. What kinds of music are played by the Sanjo (folk music) gayageum?

First of all, the Sanjo gayageum differs from the Jeongak (classic music) gayageum in its size. Sanjo music can be played as a solo piece, and then there is minyo (traditional folk song) that can be played as an instrumental accompaniment for folk songs. Furthermore, there is sinawe which plays an important role in traditional Korean music. Therefore, although we can create music with the Sanjo gayageum, the Sanjo, minyo, and sinawe are mostly used in traditional ways.

## Q. What are the main characteristics of the Sanjo gayageum?





# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja

When you play the Sanjo gayageum, the center of gravity of the right hand is important, but nonghyun (a kind of playing style with strings vibrating up and down) that is used by the left hand is more important. As you watch how to play the nonghyun, now I am sure you realize the role of left hand is very important. Since the sound is expressed with long-drawn sound made by the left hand, the left hand is very important. Therefore, the longer the sound is, the better you can decorate it.

## **Q. How meaningful is the gayageum to you?**

When I experienced the gayageum for the first time, I was in my mother's womb (gayageum master Seong, Geumyeon). I am certain that I could hear a variety of sounds from the world outside. Later, when I was a little kid, I couldn't play the instrument since my hands were so small. However, I learned Korean ballet instead, and then when I was around 10 years old, I started to learn the gayageum by just mimicking the way my mother was playing in front of me. Being absorbed with playing the gayageum, the years have passed. To me, the Sanjo gayageum is life itself. Therefore, I think Sanjo is the sound which best expresses one's life. The sound is good to listen to when you are young, yet you can still enjoy the good sound as you get older with a certain relaxed point of view towards the world. That is why I prefer the Sanjo gayageum. I like the feeling that I can express myself by playing the gayageum, as it helps tell my stories in a deep, heart-felt manner whenever I need to.

## **Q. How about a word to people who want to learn the Sanjo gayageum?**

The basic posture to play the gayageum is to put it on the legs gently like how you might put a baby, so that you may







# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja

feel the gayageum as if it is a baby smiling up towards you as a mother. When playing, we usually say 'plucking the gayageum string'. I think playing the gayageum is akin to cooperating with family members in that the harmony is important in gayageum. There are many different kinds of playing styles besides the 'plucking style.' Plucking and flicking - this is the balance of yin and yang. Tightening and releasing - this is also yin and yang. I guess you may already know the concept of yin and yang. The more playing styles - such as holding and releasing, pulling and gently pushing, changing turns, and so on - are also used. The left hand keeps following the movement of the right hand.



# Sanjo gayageum introduced by the Sanjo gayageum master, Ji, Seong-ja



Byeongchang-gok (singing 'Chang', playing the gayageum at the same time), played by the sanjo gayageum master Ji, Seong-ja:  
'Cheonja (thousand-character)-dui-pul-i', Chunhyang-ga







# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



**Left hand** + The left hand performs 'Nonghyun' (a playing style of vibrating a string up and down) which plays a role to connect a musical note with another, and fills the gap of changing notes, thereby giving splendid variety to the tone color, or decorating tones.

**Right hand** + Different from Jeongak gayageum, the 'plucking' style is mostly used for Sanjo gayageum. Besides this, 'flicking with the finger nails', 'turning hand upside down with the thumb and the index finger pulling strings' and 'simultaneously plucking with the thumb and the middle finger' are used with the right hand.





# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



For plucking, the thumb, index finger, and middle finger of the right hand are used. Insert the flank side of the finger tips under the strings, and then strongly pull the strings upwards in a plucking motion.

**Plucking**

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down



Plucking







# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



Slightly bend the thumb and the index finger, and then extend the fingers so that the index finger nail flicks the string. This style is usually used right after plucking a string with the index finger.

Plucking

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down

Flicking





# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



It is also called 'Ssang-Twigim'. In order to make sounds in a sequential order, flick the strings in a likewise sequence. For the first note, flick with the middle finger, and for the second note, flick with the index finger.

Plucking

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down

Sequential Flicking  
called 'Ssang-Twigim'







# How to play the Sanjo gayageum

**Pulling and Plucking** This technique creates two notes in rapid succession. There are two main ways of doing so; (i) pull the lower string with the index finger while the thumb plucks the upper string, or (ii) pull the lower string with the middle finger while the thumb plucks the upper string. In both cases, the lower string is to be pulled toward the performer's body while the upper string is to be plucked.

Plucking

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down

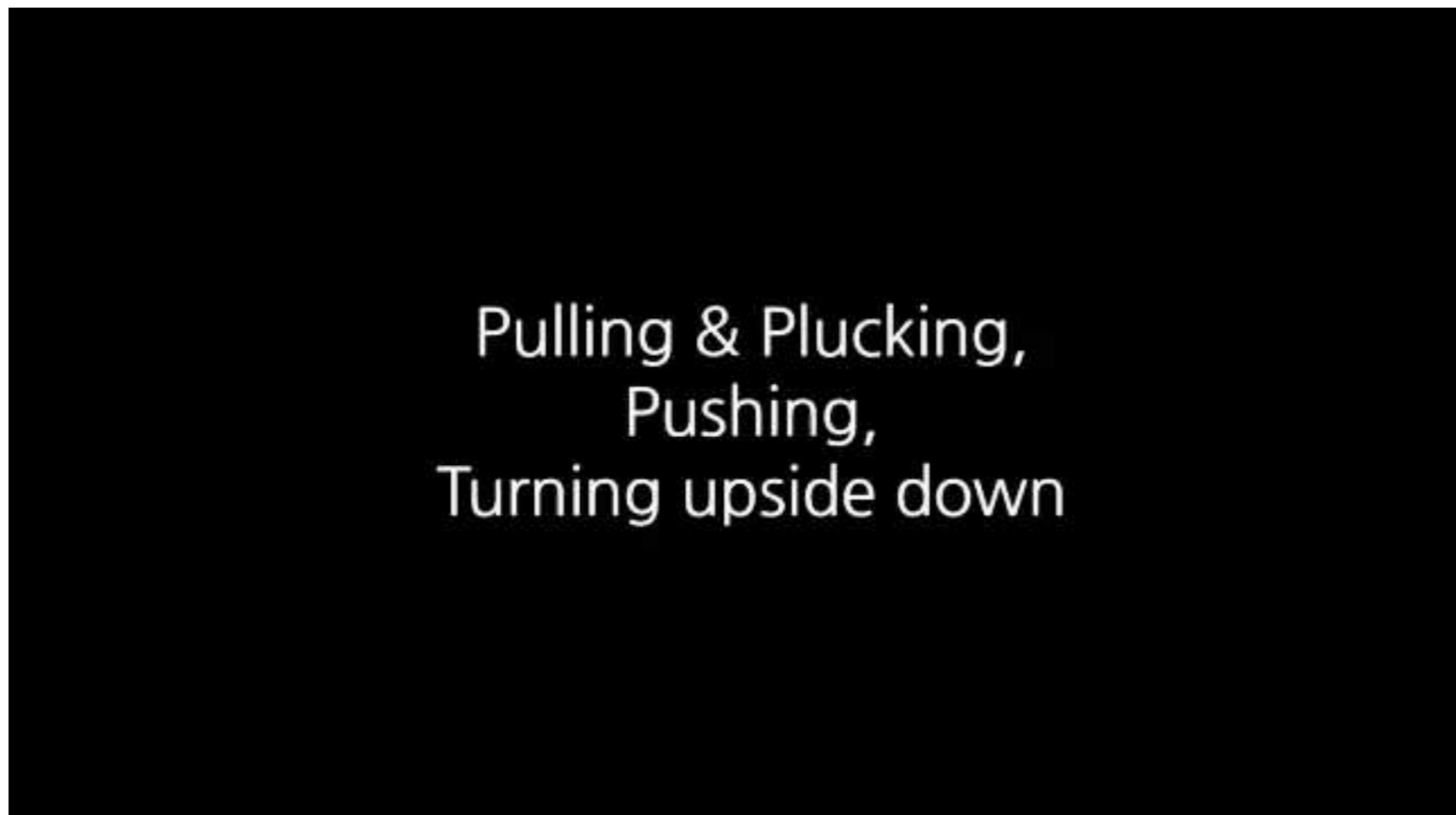
Pulling & Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside down



# How to play the Sanjo gayageum

**Pushing** This technique is used when pushing strings from an upper to a lower position. Just like the playing style with the index finger in Jeongak gayageum, push with only the index finger or push with the index finger and the middle finger in sequence.

**Turning upside down** When playing from an upper string to a lower string, pluck the upper string with the



Plucking

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down





# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



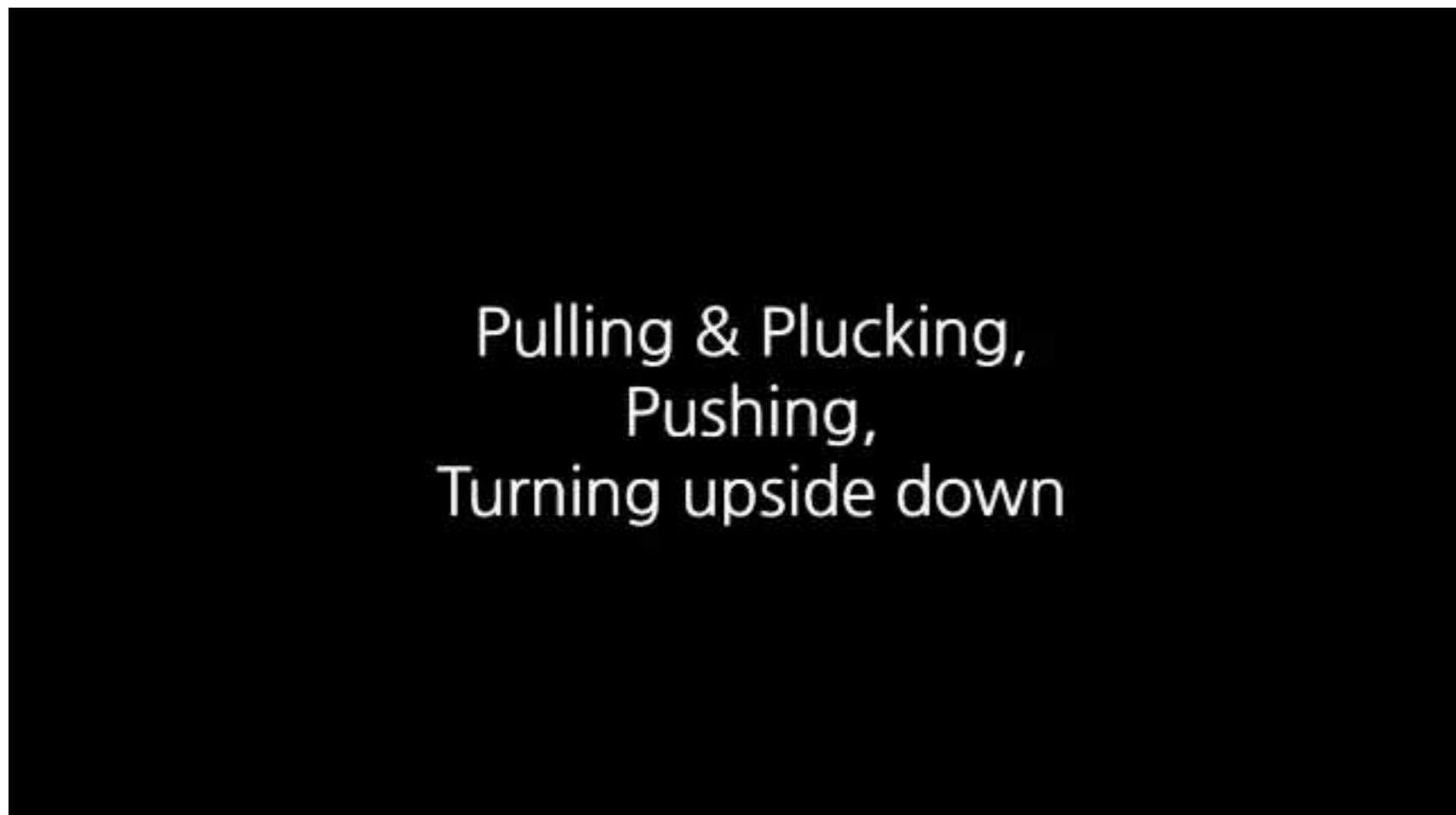
thumb and pluck the lower string with the index finger, so that the motion looks like the hand is being turned upside down.

Plucking

Flicking

Sequential  
Flicking

Pulling  
& Plucking,  
Pushing,  
Turning upside  
down





# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



This is a representative playing style of the left hand. This is to rapidly return to the original sound right after making a half higher musical note by pushing the right upper string of the previous one.

**Rapidly  
returning**

Nonghyun

Rapidly returning







# How to play the Sanjo gayageum



The nonghyun in Sanjo gayageum can be used in many ways for giving variety to the melody, thereby reflecting the performer's spirit and individuality.

Rapidly  
returning

Nonghyun

Nonghyun





# Improved gayageum



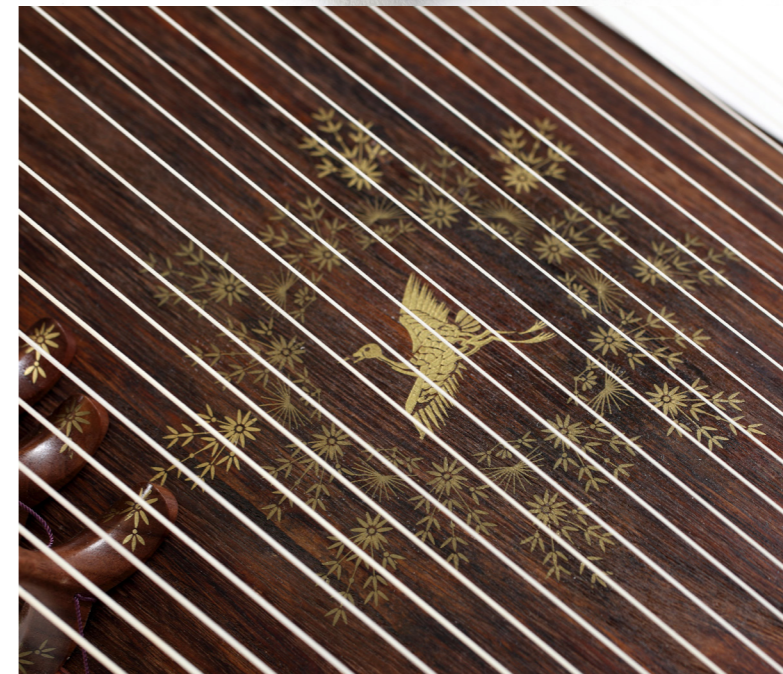
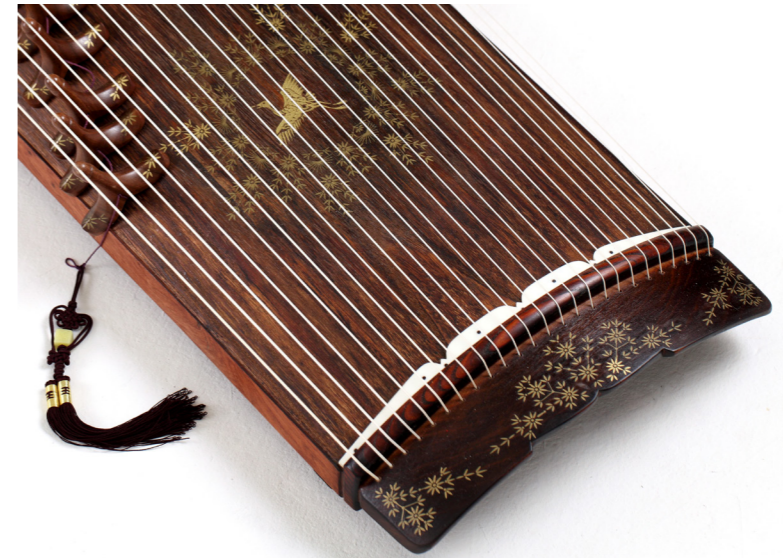
By adding more strings, the range of pitch and tone increases, and thus may play a heptatonic scale (7 scales) and chord tone more naturally. As for variances in the gayageum, there are versions with 15 strings, 17 strings, 18 strings, 21 strings, 22 strings, and 25 strings. In addition, there are also iron-made gayageums, and which may be low-pitched, medium-pitched, or high-pitched. Among all versions, when it comes to creating and playing music, the 25-string gayageum is used the most as it has the widest range of pitch and tone.





# Improved gayageum

An 'iron-made gayageum' was first made in early 1960, of which the strings were made from metal materials. It is now usually used as an accompaniment to Korean ballet. To note, many changes have occurred over the years. In particular, the 'changgeum' was made by gayageum performer Ik-chang Cheon; the 17-string gayageum was made between 1986~1990 by musical instrument master Sung-gi Park, upon the request of gayageum performer Byeong-ja Hwang; the 18-string gayageum was made around 1989 by musical instrument master Heung-gon Go, upon the request of composer Il-hoon Park, with the purpose of maintaining tone, color and a wider range of pitch. In addition, low-pitched, medium-pitched, and high-pitched gayageums were also made around 1987 by musical instrument master Heung-gon Go, upon the request of composer Bom-hoon Park. Lastly, the 22-string gayageum was made during the establishment of the National Orchestra of Korea in 1995, and was subsequently introduced to the orchestra. This version of the gayageum consists of strings made from polyester composite materials, while the size of the soundbox is more than double than that of a traditional gayageum.







# Improved gayageum







# Improved gayageum

## 15-string gayageum

This version was first manufactured by gayageum master Geum-yeon Seong during the 1960s, with 3 more strings added to the original 12 strings. One of the additional strings is located between the first string and the second string, while another additional string is located between the third string and the fourth string, and finally another additional string is added next to the 12th string. Therefore, with these three added strings, the performer can play a wider range of gayageum music according to use and style, with no need to tune accordingly. This 15-string gayageum can maintain tone, color and volume with little variance in tuning from the original 12-string gayageum.

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## 21-string gayageum

This was first made by composer Seong-cheon Lee in 1985. Considering maximum and minimum tensions possible with the silk threads used on the gayageum, 9 more strings have been added on the upper side or the lower side of the original 12 strings. As for tuning, it is mostly tuned to a pentatonic scale (5 scale), although it is sometimes tuned to a heptatonic scale (7 scale), according to the genre of music to be played. With a wide range of pitch and the ability to play a heptatonic scale, the 21-string gayageum is usually used for playing creative music.

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## 25-string gayageum

This gayageum version was first manufactured in 1994, and can be tuned to a heptatonic scale. Since 1998, it has been the most widely used gayageum by performers of major traditional Korean music orchestras, or even by individual performers around the nation.





### III. Experience gayageum

Musical Scales and Notes

Play the Instrument

Appreciate Music

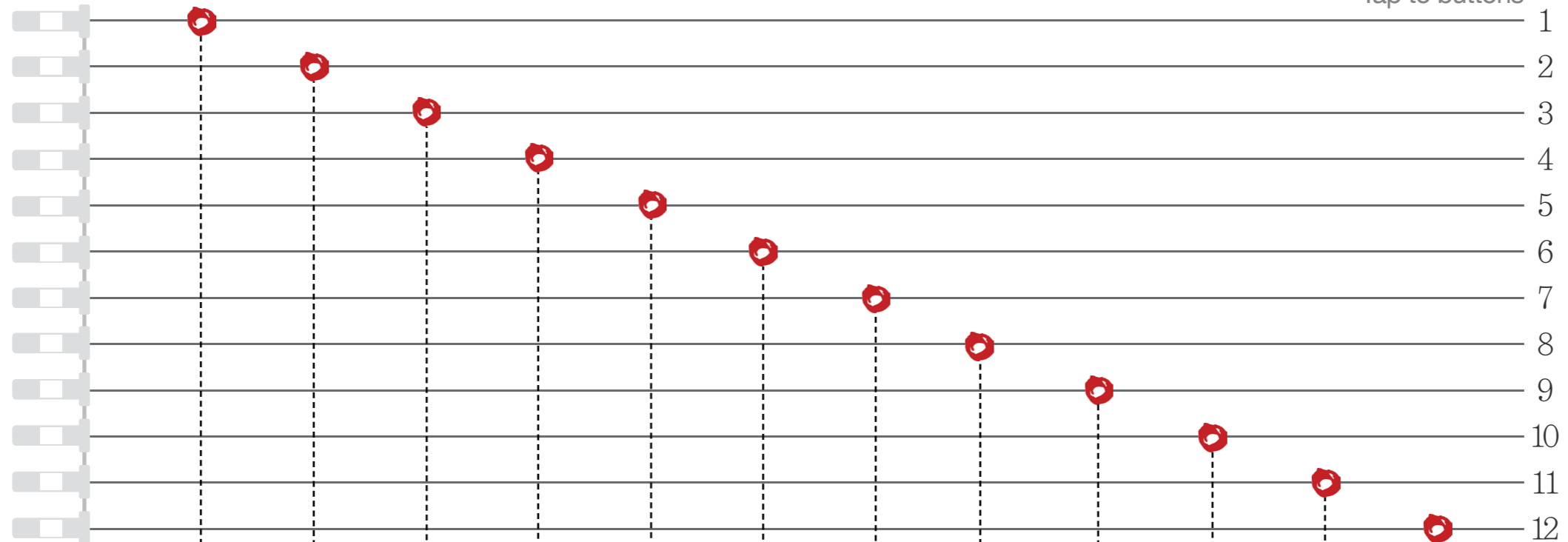
Field Experience



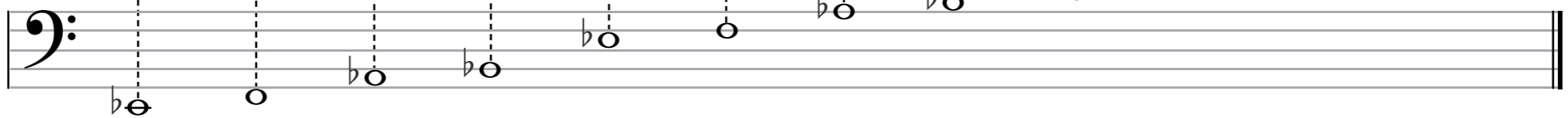


# Musical Scales and Notes

Tap to buttons



Pyungjo  
Gyemyeonjo +



A kind of major key  
in Western music

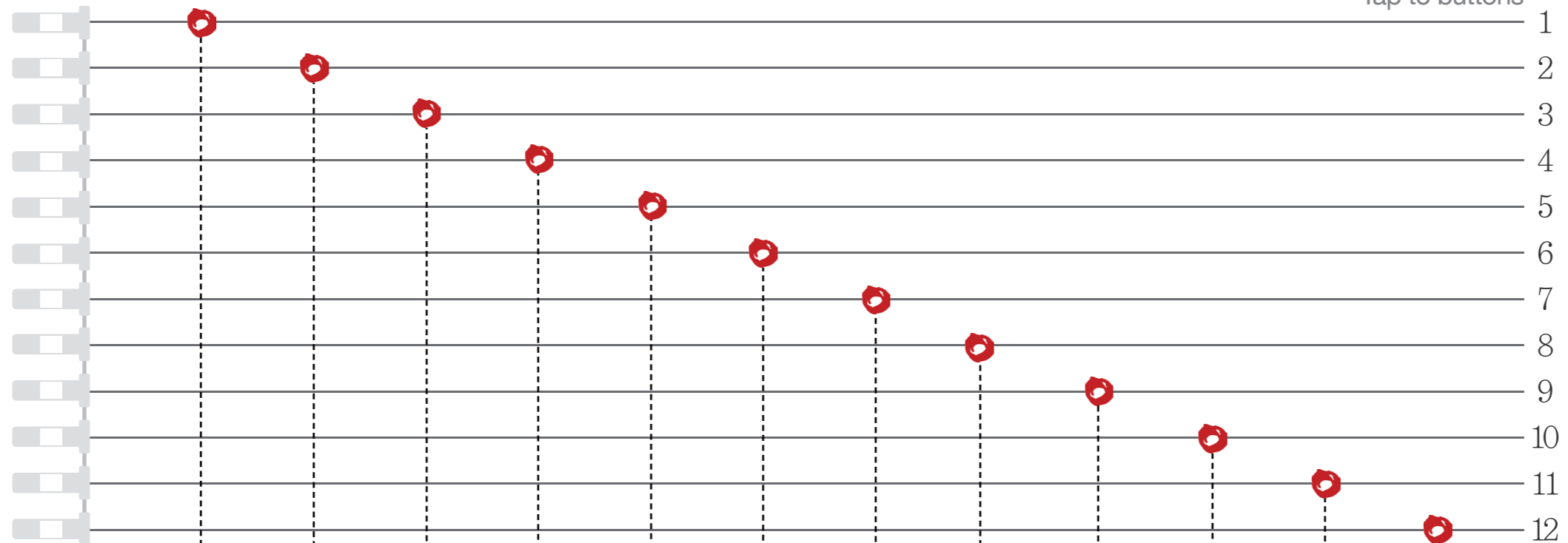
Heung Deung Dung Doong Dang Dong Jing Jing Ji Dang Dong Ding

Jeongak gayageum Sanjo gayageum



# Musical Scales and Notes

Tap to buttons



Pyungjo +

Gyemyeonjo

A kind of major key  
in Western music

Heung Deung Dung Doong Dang Dang Jing Jing Ji Dang Dong Ding

Jeongak gayageum Sanjo gayageum





# Musical Scales and Notes

Tap to buttons

The diagram shows a 12-string gayageum with strings numbered 1 to 12 from top to bottom. Red circles on the strings indicate the positions of notes. Below the strings, a musical staff in treble clef with a sharp sign (#) shows the notes for Jeongak gayageum (white circles) and Sanjo gayageum (red circles). Vertical dashed lines connect the notes on the strings to the notes on the staff.

String	Jeongak Note	Sanjo Note
1	None	Cheong
2	None	Heung
3	None	Doong
4	None	Dang
5	None	Jing
6	None	Ddang
7	None	Ji
8	None	Hang
9	None	Hang
10	None	Ching
11	None	Jjong
12	None	Jjang

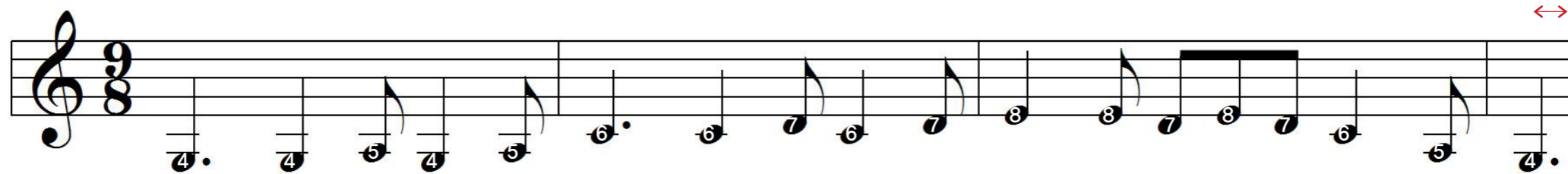
The oral sound of Sanjo gayageum

Cheong Heung Doong Dang Jing Ddang Ji Hang Hang Ching Jjong Jjang

Jeongak gayageum **Sanjo gayageum**



# Play the Instrument



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12

▶ LISTEN TO MUSIC

Arirang

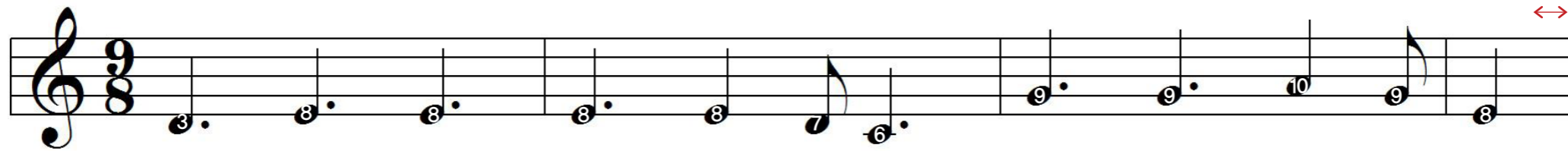
Doraji

Ggotbunnaeya





# Play the Instrument



1 LISTEN TO MUSIC

Arirang

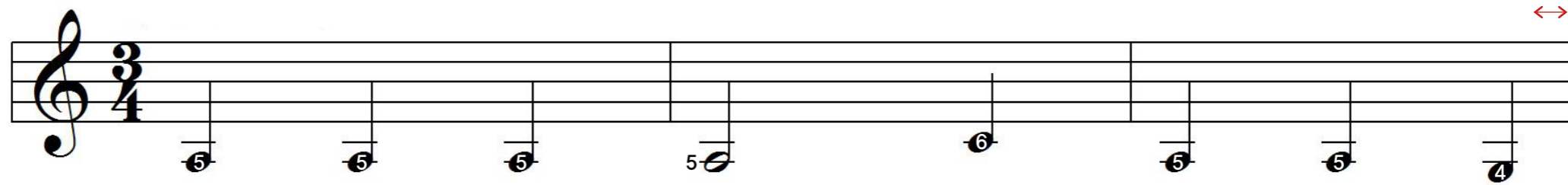
Doraji

Ggotbunnaeya





# Play the Instrument



Arirang

Doraji

**Ggotbunnaeya**





# Appreciate Music

**Jeongak gayageum**

Ta-lyeong  
in 'Junggwangjigok'

**Sanjo gayageum**

Gutgury  
in 'Seonggeumyeonlyu'

**Improved gayageum**

Doraji  
Gwangju Gayageum Orchestra

Oujo Garak Dodeuri  
in 'Cheonnyeonmansae'





# Field Experience

## Viewing of exhibition

- + National Gugak Center
- + National Gugak Museum
- + Incheon International Airport
- + Gisan Gugak Hall

## Make an instrument

- + Korean Traditional Crafts & Architecture School
- + Nangye Gugak Experience Hall
- + Village Gayatkko

## Experience instrument

- + Korean Traditional Performing Arts Culture School
- + National Theater of Korea
- + Ureuk Museum







# Field Experience

700, Seocho 3-dong,  
Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea



## Permanent stage on Saturdays, in the National Gugak Center

This stage is open for performances on Saturdays and all year from January to December. This is a permanent stage made by the National Gugak Center, where you can appreciate representative Korean traditional dance, songs, and musical instrument performances in one place. In addition, you can see artistic talents listed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The stage performances are usually 80 minutes long, with entrance given to those who are school-age children or older. For more detailed information, including possible discounts or packages, please call 02-580-3300. [www.gugak.go.kr](http://www.gugak.go.kr)







# Field Experience

700, Seocho 3-dong,  
Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea



## The National Gugak Museum, Musical Instrument Gallery

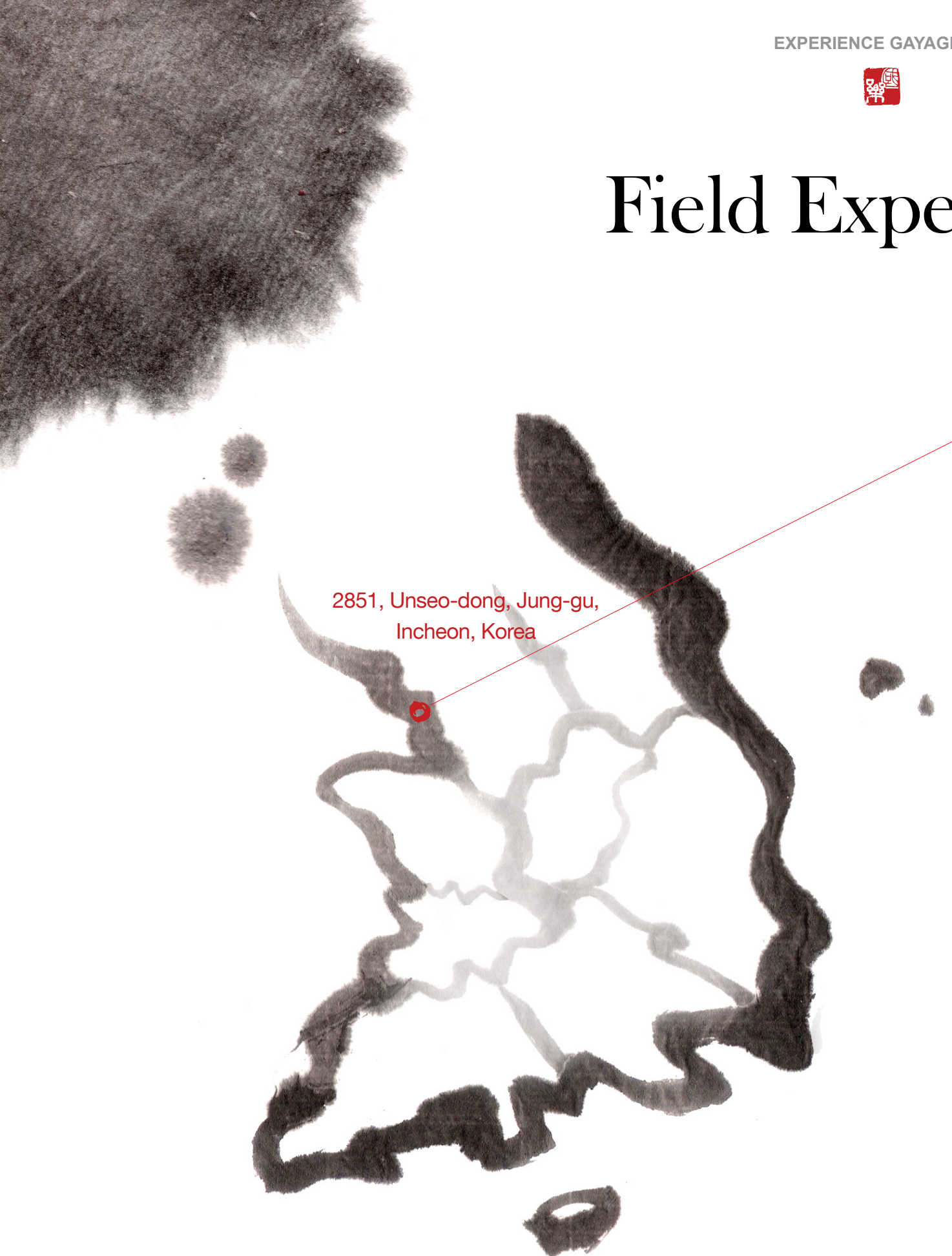
The National Gugak Museum, which is located inside the National Gugak Center in Seocho-Gu, Seoul, has a room called the 'Origin of Korean Music.' Here, you can see diverse relics, clay figures, and old instruments excavated in ancient times dating back to the Silla period. Also, on one side of the room, there is a small space which shows scenes of a gayageum manufacturing workroom. In addition, another room called the 'Music of the Common' displays instruments, and yet another room called the 'Music of Sejong the Great' exhibits the whole manufacturing process of pyungyung (a kind of traditional percussion made of stones). For more detailed information, please visit the homepage of the National Gugak Center at [www.gugak.go.kr](http://www.gugak.go.kr).







# Field Experience



2851, Unseo-dong, Jung-gu,  
Incheon, Korea



## **Gugak permanent stage, in the Incheon International Airport**

The Incheon International Airport offers Gugak performances all year round. If you visit the Korean Traditional Culture Center (located in the passenger terminal, duty-free Area 3F, the east or west side - 2 spots & concourse 3F, the middle-west side - 1 spot), you can enjoy Gugak performance of Korean traditional music and folk music. In addition, on the Korean Culture Street (located in the passenger terminal 4F), you can also appreciate creative music. For more detailed information, including performance schedules, call 032-743-0357 (the Korean Traditional Culture Center), or 032-741-3423 (the Korean Culture Street). <http://www.airport.kr>







# Field Experience

1399, Sawol-ri,  
Danseong-myeon,  
Sancheong-gun,  
Gyeongsangnam-do,  
Korea



## Gisan Gugak Hall

This is a memorial hall for gugak theorist Heon-bong Park from Sancheong. Here, you can walk around the restored house of his birth, and possibly experience playing traditional Korean instruments by yourself. This hall host a Gisan display room, an exhibition room, an education room, and an outside stage. In the Gisan display room and exhibition room, there are about 50 different kinds of traditional instruments to peruse. As the hall is affiliated with the village Namsayedam which is a local attraction spot, the hall is open for free. It is located in Sawol-ri, Danseong-myeon, Sancheong-gun, in the south Gyeongsang province.







# Field Experience

944-22, Daechi 2-dong,  
Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea



## **Short-term course for the general public, by the Korean Traditional Crafts & Architecture School**

Located near the Samsung Subway Station in Seoul, the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation gives students opportunities to learn how to make Korean musical instruments in person from experienced musical instrument masters. With regards to course enrolment, participants are limited to about 15 people. An updated recruiting schedule is displayed on this homepage ([www.kous.or.kr](http://www.kous.or.kr)), or you may call or visit in person for more information. For more detailed information, call 02-3011-1702/1788.







# Field Experience

521-1, Godang-ri,  
Simcheon-myeon,  
Yeongdong-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do,  
Korea



## Nangye Gugak Experience Hall

Located in Yeongdong-gun, Chungbuk province, this hall has reproduced workrooms for string and percussion instruments, where you can also experience playing diverse instruments. Furthermore, if you visit the 'Nangye Gugak Instrument Manufacturing Village' or 'Nangye Gugak Museum' which is located near the hall, you can also see various traditional Korean music instruments, as well as the whole manufacturing process. For more information, please visit [www.nangyekukak.com](http://www.nangyekukak.com).







# Field Experience

185-1, Kwaebin 3-ri, Goryeong-eup,  
Goryeong-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do,  
Korea



## Gayageum manufacturing experience, in the village Gayatkko

This experience program is run by the village Gayatkko (which is located in Kwaebin-ri, Goryeong-eup, Goryeong-gun, Gyeongbuk province). Goryeong, which used to be the capital of the Great Gaya, is especially worth visiting to feel a trace of the great musician Ureuk's life. This village is located right next to the Ureuk Museum, and can be easily found along Route 33, Seongju-gun. More detailed information is available by accessing <http://gayatgo.net>.







# Field Experience

944-22, Daechi 2-dong,  
Gangnam-gu, Seoul, Korea



## Korean Traditional Performing Arts Culture School

The Korean Traditional Performing Arts Foundation runs a culture school and offers courses for the general public in order to help spread knowledge of traditional Korean arts, as well as raise public awareness of the importance of traditional culture. Within this school, students can learn a variety of Korean traditional music instruments through a systematic program that progresses from introductory courses for beginners, to intermediate-level courses, to master-level courses for advanced learners. If you are interested in such courses, please visit the homepage ([www.ktpaf.org](http://www.ktpaf.org)) or call 02-580-3141.







# Field Experience

San 14-67, Jangchung-dong 2-ga,  
Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea



## **Traditional Arts Academy, by the National Theater of Korea**

Located in Jangchungdallo, Jung-gu, in Seoul, the National Theater of Korea runs diverse gugak courses for the general public who have a passion and interest in traditional arts and music. Opportunities exist for learning gugak via professional lectures. According to each student's level, they may participate in level-appropriate programs from beginner to advanced courses. As the program is updated every year, prospective students need to check for new information on the program schedule, application method, and tuition fee at the following homepage ([www.ntok.go.kr](http://www.ntok.go.kr)).







# Field Experience

162, Kwaebin 3-ri, Goryeong-eup, Goryeong-gun, Gyeong-sangbuk-do, Korea



## Gayageum experience program provided by Ureuk Museum

By visiting Ureuk Museum, you can participate in a gayageum experience program. This museum is an annex of Daegaya Museum (which is located in Goryeong-eup, Goryeong-gun, Gyeongbuk province) where many related informational exhibits about the great musician Ureuk are displayed. Here, you may experience the whole process of making a gayageum. For more detailed information, access [www.daegaya.net](http://www.daegaya.net) or call at 054-950-6112.







한국문화예술위원회  
Arts Council Korea



한국전통문화의 중심  
국악방송



국립국악원

Gayageum Master **Choe, Chung-ung** | **Ji, Seong-ja**  
Musical Instrument Maker **Choe, Tae-gui**

Producer **SOLUWIN**  
Writer **Kim, San-hyo**

Photographer **I.N Studio**  
Videomaker **All That Contents**