

## A Study on the Design of Stage Costumes Required for Opera Ch'un Hyang Jeon

Seo-Hee Lee

Assistant professor, Department of Clothing Science, Konyang University

### Abstract

*The cultural art would be the most competitive commercial value in the 21st century. This research is about the stage costumes of the opera "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" which is designed and made to fit modern times and the purpose is to set the opera "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" as a groundwork for the future opera of Korea.*

*To extend the stage costumes of the Korea opera:*

*First, We have to inform the world about our traditional costumes and design them to express our culture.*

*Second, Not only the costumes but also the technical aspect such as stage music, setting, and lighting and the artistic aspect should be balanced in development.*

*Third, We need a good training system for future designers of the stage costumes.*

*Key words : Ch'un Hyang Jeon, opera, stage costume.*

### I. Introduction

An opera is a composite art. An opera cannot be played by singers only but the combination of chorus, costumes, settings, lightings, and the other work that is done in the back of the stage. In Europe, the theatrical art has been developed not concentrated on the play itself, but on an opera.

The opera has had great impact on ballet, operetta, play, etc. Not only that but also it has influenced architectures, decorations, and applied science in Europe.<sup>1)</sup>

In 1645, John Evelyn stated that "An opera is the most luxurious and extravagant enter-

tainment men had ever created."<sup>2)</sup>

It is regrettable that so many plays that have been performed in Korea are not our own play but other countries' such as Italians'. It tells us that we need to take care of our own culture to have independent and sovereign power of culture.

The opera, "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" was recomposed from one of the representative ancient novels, "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" of the western music. This opera, "Ch'un Hyang Jeon", is good for informing the world about the typical Korean woman, Ch'un Hyang. It was first played in Nam-Won where Ch'un Hyang was born during the Ch'un Hyang Festival.<sup>3)</sup>

The purpose of the study is to set a ground-

E-mail : Seohee@kytis.konyang.ac.kr

<sup>1</sup> *The pleasure of opera* (Seoul: Young people's literature & art, 1994), 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Dream of opera journey* (Seoul: Solbaram, 1995), 71.

<sup>3</sup> It was performed by Chunbook State of Orera in the 69th Ch'un Hyang Festival.

work for Korean opera by creating and making the stage costumes of the opera "Ch'un Hyang Jeon". I hope the opera, "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" could be one of the representatives of Korean Culture in the new century.

## II. The Stage Costumes and Opera

### 1. The Stage Costume and General Garment

The stage costume is designed and made professionally for plays, operas, musicals, and etc.

General garments are designed and made on purpose of sale and are also produced according to the latest fashion in the society. In other words, the garments are treated as merchandises to make profits. On the other hand, the stage costume are designed and produced on purpose of expressing and understanding the work of art. Moreover, the costumes are made creatively to fit each characteristic of people in the play. So, the costumes take significant role in the play by expressing and conveying the work of art to the audience.<sup>4)</sup>

Since an opera is performed through music, the stage costume should be designed considering respiration so that there is no difficulty in singing. Additionally, accessories, especially for hair, should be designed not to interrupt listening to music.<sup>5)</sup> Not only that but also it should be designed to change from one costume to another easily for next scene and to be comfortable when characters are performing.

The stage costume helps the audience understand the play, and unlike general garments, the stage costume is worn on a stage to express the work of art, so it should

be designed and produced considering the art.

### 2. The History of Korean Opera

In October 1940, it was the first time that the opera was performed in Korea. The "Carmen" was played by Harbin Symphony Orchestra and Fuzihara company of opera of Japan. And, the first Korean opera, "Chun Hui" was performed by Chosun Opera Organization in January, 1948.<sup>6)</sup> The opera "Chun Hui" followed the western style. Finally, in 1950, the original Korean opera was performed-it was called "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" at that time. After that, many other operas were played such as "Kongi & Potgi" of Dae-Hyun Kim, "The prince Ho-Dong" of Il-Nam Chang, and so forth. The Korea National Opera was established in April 1962. And, Ja-Kyung Kim company of opera which is the oldest private company of opera was established in May, 1968.

It is to be regretted that the operas which were played in Korea in the past 30 years were Italians' rather than our own. Even though there are many companies of opera, there haven't been much improvement in opera in Korea. It's because it demands so much support financially.

## III. "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" Analysis and the Design of stage Costumes

### 1. Analysis of "Ch'un Hyang Jeon"

The "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" is one of the most popular and favorite ancient novels in Korea. However, the writer as well as the year which it was written are unknown. It was performed in the form of a traditional Korean narrative songs at the end of King Sook-Jong era and the beginning of the King Young-Jo era. After the Dynasty, the "Ch'un Hyang

<sup>4</sup> Kim, Hyun-Sook, *Design of Stage Costume*, (Seoul:Ko-Ryu Pub, 1995), 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Leo, Van, Witsen, *Costuming for Opera* (Bloomington:Indiana University Press, 1981), 20.

<sup>6</sup> Briteniker dictionary (1993), 281.

Joan" was acted out not only in the form of a traditional Korean narrative songs but also as a novel, movie, opera, and so forth. And still now, it can be easily found in a theater. There have been a steady research on the "Ch'un Hyang Jeon". It started from a short article in 1920 and the full-scale of the research started in 1980 which is still going on today.<sup>7)</sup>

The very first opera "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" was performed in May 1950. And, the music was written by Jae-Myung Hyun(1902~1961). It was also the first time that the play was based on the 19th century Grand opera style<sup>8)</sup> of Italy. The opera consists of five

chapters, and when it was played for the first time, it was called "Great Opera Ch'un Hyang Jeon". The script was written in the form of conversation by Suh-Gu Lee. The first opera was directed by Chi-Jin Yu, and Jae-Myung Hyun who were the musical conductors. The role of Ch'un Hyang was played by Kwan-Ok Lee; Wol-Mae by Hae-Ran Kim; Mongnyong Yi by In-Bum Lee. This opera was performed for the second time in Dae-Gu in 1951, and it was played again many times until the late 1970s.

## 2. The Design of Stage Costumes for Ch'un Hyang Jeon

<Table 1> The organization of the Opera

Act	Time	Place	Characters	Music
Act I <meeting>	Chosun Sook Jong	Nam-Won Kwanghal-Lu	Mongnyong Yi, Chunhyang Sung, Pang-Ja, Hyang-Dan, people, Farmer's folk band	Lady dance music
Act II <Love>	"	Chunhyang's house	Mongnyong Yi, Chunhyang Sung, Wol-Mae, Pang-Ja, Hyang-Dan, a official	Love song
Act III <Tribulation>	"	Dong-Hun	Hakdo Byun, Ki-Saengs, soldiers, officials, Wol-Mae, Chunhyang	The song of farmers
Act IV	"	Way to Nam-Won	Mongnyong Yi, Soldiers, farmers, Bangsa	The song of foreman, The song of lamentation
	"	In prison	Prison officer, Chunhyang, Mongnyong Yi, Wol-Mae, Hyang-Dan	
Act V <Reunion>	"	Dong-Chun	Prison officer, Chunhyang, Mongnyong Yi, Wol-Mae, Hyang-Dan, Pang-Ja, Hakdo Byun, people, farmers, soldiers	

\*Ki-saeng means prostitute on Korea

<sup>7)</sup> *Korean Literature & Art Encyclopedia* (The academy of Korea studies, 1991), 602-603.

<sup>8)</sup> In the beginning of 17century, it was made for Italy's opera, Seria in France.

The Ch'un Hyang Jeon which was the first opera played in Korea was performed more than 50 times by different actors and actresses after 1950.<sup>9)</sup> It not only enlightened the Korean opera but also reflected the history of that period. Therefore, it contributed to the growth of Korean opera enormously. The play consists of five acts and six scenes. The acts of the Ch'un Hyang Jeon are composed as the followings. (Table1)

After the characters have been analyzed, the stage costumes were designed accordingly. All costumes were made according to the following.

### 3. Making the Stage Costumes of Ch'un Hyang Jeon

The "Ch'un Hyang Jeon" which was directed by Chullabookdo Province Opera was performed in Chunju(Chunbook university

<Table 2> The outline for the stage costumes of Ch'un Hyang Jeon

Main characters		Stage costume	Accessory	How many
Chunhyng Sung		Yellow <i>jugori</i> , red skirt, long hood coat	Petticoat, knickers, socks, Korea rubber shoes	2
	Act II, Scene 2	Green Korean coat		2
	In prison	White <i>jugori</i> and skirt		2
	Reunion	<i>Whal</i> clothes	<i>Chokduri</i> , big braid	1
Mongnyong Yi	A bachelor's wear	White pants and <i>jugori</i> , skyblue overcoat, dark blue <i>chunbok</i>	<i>Bokdu</i> , a fan, red <i>chunbok</i> belt, socks, <i>taesahwa</i>	2
	Begger's wear	Patched overcoat	Ripped Korean hat	1
	Reunion	Green <i>danyungpo</i>	<i>Samo</i> , <i>kwandae</i> , <i>mokwha</i> , cover	1
Wol-Mae	Civilian clothes	Jade green <i>jugori</i> , reddish brown skirt	Socks, co-shoes, belt, petticoat, pipe	2
Magistrate Byun	Soldier's uniform	White pants and jacket, <i>dongdari</i> , black <i>chunbok</i>	Felt hat, yellow pocket, <i>chunbok</i> belt, <i>mokhwa</i>	2
Pang-Ja		<i>Jugori</i> , pants, dark yellow vest	Hair band, fortune pocket, straw sandal	2
Hyng-Dan		Pale yellow <i>jugori</i> , green skirt, petticoat	Braid, apron, straw sandal	2
Chief Woon-Bong		White pants and <i>jugori</i> , <i>dopo</i>	Big Korean hat, jade green <i>dopo</i> belt	3

<sup>9</sup> Sung-Sam Lee, *op. cit.*, 458-463.

&lt;Table 2&gt; Continued

Main characters		Stage costume	Accessory	How many
Village people	Women(6) Old people(3)	Cotton skirt and <i>jugori</i>	Petticoat, co-shoes, hood, apron	9
Lady in village		Crystal skirt and jacket	Braid, co-shoes, hood, apron	9
Dance team (female)	Skirt, <i>jugori</i> , 4 light greens, 4 pinks, 3 pale yellows	Braid, petticoat, underpants, hat, belt, <i>hansam</i>		11
Maid			Hat, blue <i>chunbok</i> belt, petticoat, co-shoes	2
Farmer's band			Straw sandal, hair band, band hat, <i>hangjung</i>	4
Village people (male)	6 unmarried men, 4 married man, 2 old people		Staw sandal, vest for old people	16
Soldiers			Soldier's hat, <i>hangjun</i> , staw sandal	8
6 Bangs (secretaries)	Yi Bang(jade green) Ho Bang (green), Yea Bang(brown) Hyung Bang(pink), Byung Bang(orange) Kong Bang(white)	Pants, <i>jugori</i> , overcoat	Small hat	6
Policemen		Pants, <i>jugori</i> , leather vest	Hair band, bamboo hat, yellow belt, <i>hangjun</i> , straw sandal	19
Commander		Overcoat, black <i>chunbok</i>	Hat, belt	1
Inspector		Uniform	Hat, belt	1
Deputy		White overcoat	Small hat	1
Total				109

\* All clothes are in style of the Korean traditional clothes.

Cultural Center) which is the hometown of Ch'un Hyang and Namwon(Chu'n Hyang Cultural Art Center) from 29th of April to 5th of May in 1999. And, the stage costumes for the opera started to be designed and produced in April 1999. The followings were made for the performance.

### Act I Kwanghal-lu

In Dano Festival, while young nobleman Mongnyong Yi is taking a walk with his servant, Pang-Ja, in Kwanghal-lu pavilion, he saw Ch'un Hyang, the daughter of Wol-Mae, and falls in love. (Fig. 1)



<Fig. 1> The sightseeing in Kwanghal-lu (first meeting).

### Act II. Ch'un Hyang's House (Love)

It has been a year since Mongnyong and Ch'un Hyang have met. They have to break up because Mongnyong has to go away with his family. So, they exchange a love token and say good-byes. (Fig. 2)



<Fig. 2> Ch'un Hyang's House (Love).

### Act II. A new magistrate

A few years later, a new magistrate came to the village. Instead of taking care of the village, he likes to drink and call up women to enjoy. He calls up Ch'un Hyang to serve him. But, she refuse to serve him. Finally, she is prisoned. (Fig. 3), (Fig. 4)



<Fig. 3> Enjoying with Gisaeing.



<Fig. 4> Demanding for serving.

### Act IV Scene 1 On the way to Nam-Won (sorrow)

Mongnyong becomes a secret inspector-general and goes back to Nam-Won to inspect the village. On the way to Nam-Won, he met Pang-Ja who was going to Seoul to inform what is happening in the village. (Fig. 5)

### Act IV Scene 2 In Prison (reunion)

Mongnyong pretends that he became a beggar and meets Ch'un Hyang in the prison. Despite of his appearance, Ch'un Hyang greets



<Fig. 5> On the way to Nam-Won.



<Fig. 6> In Prison (reunion).

him with love. (Fig. 6)

#### Act V. Everlasting Love

Hakdo Byun, the magistrate, decides to kill Ch'un Hyang in his birthday party. Suddenly, a beggar, Mongnyong, comes along and reads a poem that says about Byun ironically. Then, he disappears. Despite of that, Byun tries to



<Fig. 7> Everlasting Love.

kill her. At that moment, the secret inspector-general appears and arrests Byun and other officials. And, Ch'un Hyang and Mongnyong live happily ever after. (Fig. 7)

## IV. Conclusion

There are differences between the western opera that has a long history and the our own opera that has a short history. However, our opera is meaningful because it expresses our own culture and unique characteristics. It is very important that we take care of our own opera so that there could be a great improvement in the Korean opera.

This article is written about the stage costumes of "Ch'un Hysng Jeon" that is composed by Jae-Myung Hyun. First, a historical background and the characteristics were analyzed and changed to fit in a modern time.

The stage costumes for the main characters-Ch'un Hyang and Mongnyong were designed to fit modern times. And, the modern designs and pastel colors were used for the costumes for ladies in the village. All village people wore simple dresses. But, the costume for a official gisaeng used *chun-mo* to express the beauty.

To extend the stage costumes of the traditional opera:

First, we need to inform the world about our traditional costumes and design them to express our culture.

Second, Not only the costumes but also the technical aspect such as stage music, setting, and lighting and the artistic aspect should be balanced in development.

Third, We need a training system for future designers of the stage costumes.

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