The Soul of Korean Arirang
Music from Korea in the Middle School Band
Designed by: Vince Fejeran

Summary:
This lesson is designed to enhance the music of John Ployhar’s well-known “Korean Folksong Medley” for Concert Band, and should be used as an introduction to Korean folk music before the band arrangement is handed out to students. Within the song “Korean Folksong Medley” there are three Korean Folk songs: “Beteul Norae,” “Odoldogi,” and “Arirang.” In this unit the middle school band students will explore the folk song “Arirang”. Through cultural enrichment, attentive and engaging listening, creating, improvising and performing, students will gain a better understanding of Korean folksong in relation to its history and culture.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8 Middle School Band
Country: Korea
Region: North and South Korea
Culture Group: Korean
Genre: Folksong, instrumental band arrangement
Instruments: Ggwaeng-gwari (Small Gong), Jing (Large Gong), Janggu (Hour glass shaped drum), Buk (Wood frame drum), Tanso (Vertical flute), Taegeum (Long horizontal Flute), guitar
Language: Korean
Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies, Geography
National Standards: (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9)

Prerequisites: Students should have had at least one year of basic instrumental music training. They need a basic understanding of rhythmic notation and understanding of major scale construction. It would also be helpful to prepare a geography or social studies lesson on Korea in advance of this curricular unit in order to introduce students to important facts and information about Korea. This would also be an appropriate time to discuss the cultural elements and traditions of Korea.

Objectives
Students will
- Listen to, analyze and describe Korean folksong selection
- Identify and construct a pentatonic scale
- Transpose a pentatonic melody for their own instrument
- Improvise using the pentatonic scale
- Identify and perform the folk song “Arirang” in the context of an existing Concert Band composition.

**Materials:**
3. Band instruments
5. Video on Korean Music [http://s.si.edu/videos-korea](http://s.si.edu/videos-korea)

**Lesson Segments:**
1. **The Famous Korean Folksong** (National Standards #6, #9)
2. **How Can I Play “Arirang” On My Instrument?** (National Standards #1, #2)
3. **Improvising With Just Five Notes** (National Standards #3)
4. **So That’s Where That Song Comes From!** (National Standards #5, #7)

1. **The Famous Korean Folksong**
   a. Play two different recordings of “Arirang.” Listen to each recording two or three times.
      i. Introduce each song with a guiding question such as:
         1. What instruments or voices do you hear? (Possible answers: drums, someone singing, something metal)
         2. What meter do you think the song is? (3/4, 4/4, 6/8 meter)
         3. Is it fast or slow? (Possible answers: Slower than the music I listen to this morning, faster than our warm-up scales)
         4. What are some of the differences between these versions? (Possible answers: One sound more traditional Korean, one has a guitar and sounds more like American Folk music)
   b. After listening, build back round schema:
      i. Find Korea on the map
      ii. Compare popularity of “Arirang” to folksongs in students’ everyday lives
      iii. Discuss the variations of context, inflection, and rhythm resulting in many versions of “Arirang“

**Extension** (Optional):
   a. Ask students to identify culturally relevant folksongs from their lives, which may have different variations.
b. Listen to a recording of “Variations on a Korean Folk Song” John Barnes Chance

c. “Arirang has many translations, research and discuss the different meanings and how that might change the way this song is heard

**Assessment:** Students will participate in active and engaging listening and discussion.

---

2. **How can I play “Arirang” on my instrument?**

   **a. Rhythmic Development**
   
   i. Students will listen to the recording of “Arirang” closest to the version used in the band arrangement they will be playing and performing
   
   ii. Students will identify the A section (meas. 1-8) and B section (meas. 9-16) of the song
   
   iii. Students will sing the A melody with the recording (without words)
   
   iv. Students will sing the A melody independently
   
   v. Students will sing the B melody with the recording (without words)
   
   vi. Students will sing the B melody independently
   
   vii. Students will sing A and B melody

   **b. Building a Pentatonic Scale**
   
   i. Students will play the concert Bb scale in unison, as conducted
   
   ii. Explain that the a pentatonic scale leaves out the 4th and 7th degrees of the major scale; play the concert Bb scale in unison as conducted, omitting the 4th and 7th notes
   
   iii. Allow students time to play scale on their own to build fluency

   **c. Playing the Melody**
   
   i. Find the first note of the melody; students may need help in determining it is the fifth note of their concert Bb scale
   
   ii. Sing the A melody in unison
iii. Give students time to independently figure out the melody on their instruments after they have the correct starting note
iv. Play melody together (for students having difficulty figuring out the melody, they can be assigned a part to play a sustained open 5th using ‘F’ and ‘Bb’ to accompany the melody; continuation of learning the melody would be assigned as “at-home” practice and reviewed in the next lesson)

**Extension:**
- a. Repeat process to learn the B section
- b. Divide students into sections and play as a round staggering by one measure.

**Assessment:** Students will be able to play the A melody with rhythmic and melodic accuracy independently.

---

3. **Improvising with Just Five Notes**
   a. **Echo**
      i. Teacher will lead 3 beat echo patterns beginning with the first note of the pentatonic scale, gradually increasing melodic and rhythmic complexity
      ii. Students will lead 3 beat echo patterns
   b. **Establish Background**
      i. The first and fifth notes (“open fifths”) will be used to create a rhythmic accompaniment
      ii. Teacher will demonstrate improvising a melody over the accompaniment
      iii. Student will be selected to improvise a two-measure call and response with the teacher
           (As students become more comfortable, then longer phrases should be encouraged)
      iv. Student will improvise a four-measure improvisation over rhythmic accompaniment

**Extension (Optional):**
- a. Students can create new accompaniment patterns
- b. Improvisation can be expanded to include the B melody with new rhythmic accompaniment
- c. Form may be expanded to: AB improvisation AB improvisation
- d. Seek out jazz samples that demonstrate improvisation
   (ex. “A Dee Dong Blues”, Oscar Pettiford)

**Assessment:** All students will be able to improvise for 4 measures using the correct notes of the Bb pentatonic scale within the proper meter.
4. So That’s Where the Song Comes From!
   a. Students will sight read “Korean Folk Song Medley” by James Ployhar
   b. Students will rehearse using traditional concert band rehearsal
      format and techniques
   c. Students will be asked to identify the three Korean folk songs.
   d. Students will identify which sections are playing the “Arirang” melody

**Assessment:** All students will be able to:
   a. Identify three Korean folk song melodies
   b. Identify which section is playing the melody of “Arirang”
   c. Perform the “Korean Folk Song Medley” in a formal concert.