

# Teaching Korean Rhythms in Music Class Through Improvisation, Composition, and Student Performance



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## ABSTRACT

This poster provides some practical tips for teaching Korean rhythms in upper elementary or secondary general music classrooms, and suggests ways in which pre- and in-service music educators can develop the competencies to authentically integrate this music into children's musical experiences. First, we provide the fundamental principles of Korean rhythms that represent the culture from which the music originated. Then we introduce the pedagogical process of Korean music which includes the use of *gu-em* and improvisatory practice. Finally, we offer the resource of composition and the school-wide performance using Korean rhythms which would be suitable to a contemporary educational context. This poster presentation helps music teacher educators to gain an understanding of the characteristics of Korean rhythmic patterns, acquire the skills necessary to teach them in their classrooms; as a consequence, they can confidently integrate Korean rhythms in general music classes..

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this poster is to (a) introduce the characteristics of Korean rhythmic patterns and (b) provide effective ways to teach Korean rhythms based on the theoretical and pedagogical approaches derived from 5,000 years of Korean musical tradition.

## BACKGROUND

- One of the most important purposes of teaching world musics in a general music classroom is to introduce unfamiliar music to students.
- Many scholars and organizations have initiated programs and conferences supporting multicultural music education: the Tanglewood Symposium (1967), the National Association for Schools of Music (1972), and the National Standards for Arts Education (1994), and the Housewright Declaration (Madsen, 2000).
- In teaching music from unfamiliar cultures to students in the classroom, instructors should need access to not only high-quality multicultural materials, but also an appropriate strategy of *how* to teach those distinctive characteristics (McCarthy, 1997).



## CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN RHYTHMS

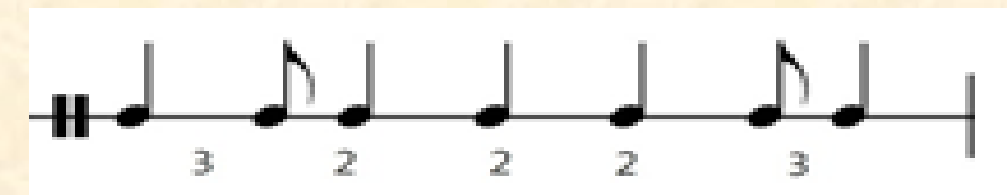
**1. Overview of Rhythmic Cycles (*jangdan* - similar to *ostinato*):** Rhythmic cycles > Melody in traditional Korean music (Harwood, 1976, p. 528 & So, 2002, p. 103).



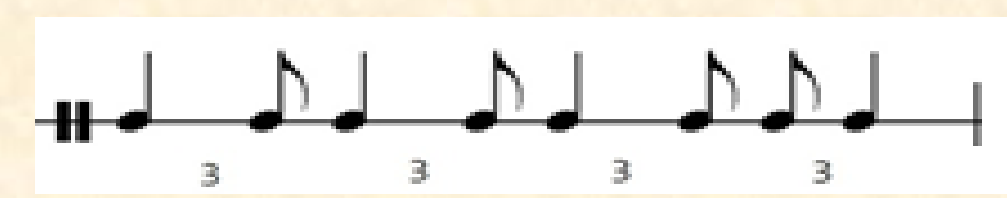
**2. The Role of *Jangdan*:** Two cases in which *jangdan* has been used in the Korean music tradition.

**3. The Structure of *Jangdan*: Symmetrical vs. Asymmetrical**

(a) The 12-beat rhythmic cycle



(b) The 12-beat asymmetrical rhythmic cycle



The extended cycle (beyond the 12-beat cycle)

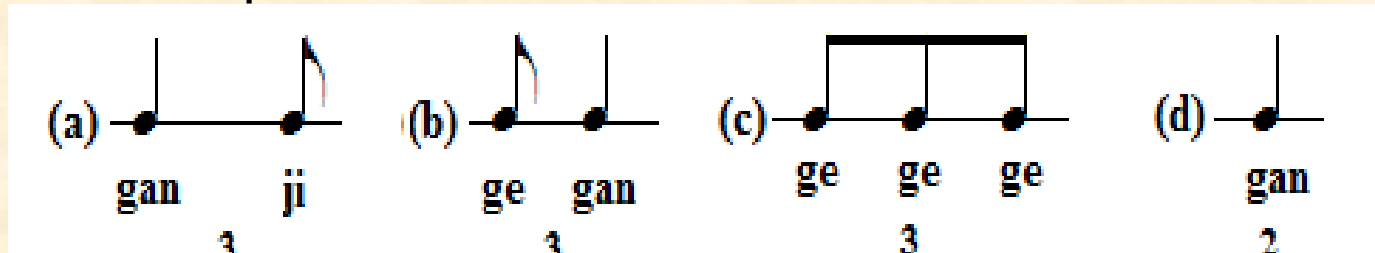


**4. *Jangdan* in Improvisatory Practice**

- 1) Every *jangdan* begins with the basic pattern of slow tempo and soft dynamics.
- 2) The more a cycle is repeated, the more elaboration and spontaneity take place by subdividing beats and adding the micro beats of ornamentation; variation on the basic pattern is unlimited (Choi, 2000, p.47).
- 3) Along with this procedure, the tempo is gradually accelerated until performers and audiences reach their musical and emotional peak.

**5. Aural and Oral Practice**

- *Jangdan* can be taught using *gu-em* (Korean verbal syllables), literally meaning "mouth tone."
- *Gu-em* is an effective tool to aid learners in memorizing music (So, 2002, p. 63).
- *Gu-em* provides a sense of rhythmic length and dynamics to practitioners. with the nuance and strength of each phoneme.

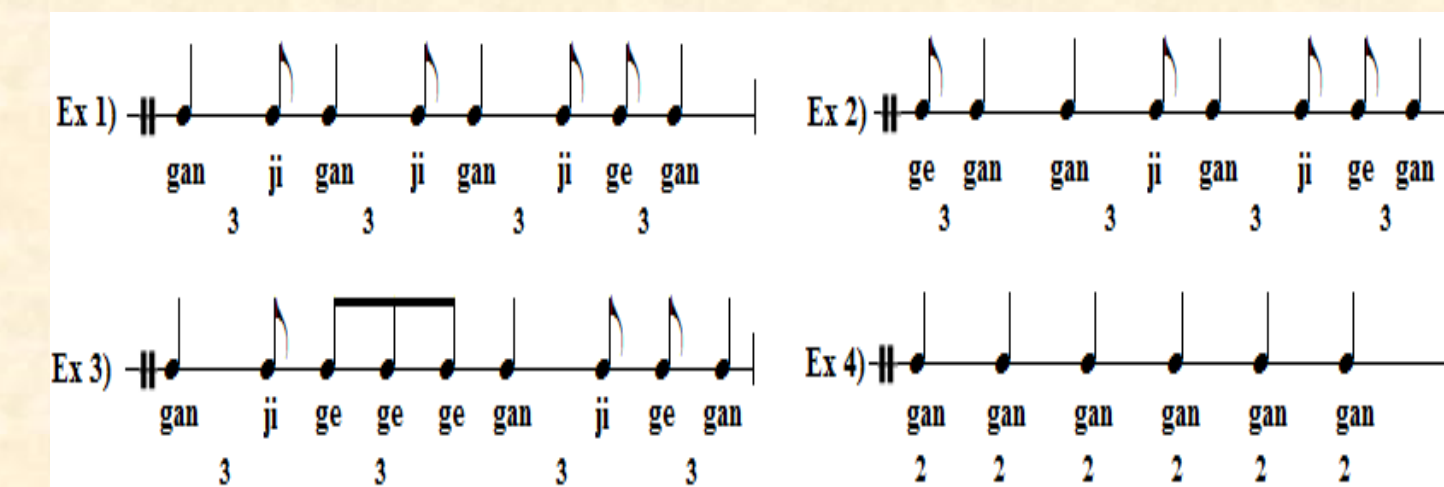


## CLASSROOM PRACTICE

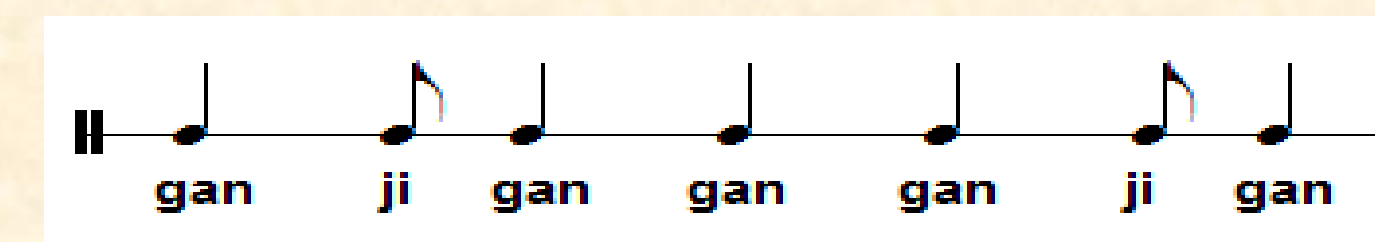
The 12-beat rhythmic cycle

**Step 1: The symmetrical 12-beat rhythmic cycle (*jangdan*)**

- (1) Teachers enunciate symmetrical 12-beat rhythmic cycles (duple or triple beats) using Korean verbal syllables (*gu-em*) and ask the students imitate the rhythmic cycles until the students become familiar with the Korean verbal syllables.
- (2) Once students internalize the cycles using verbal syllables, they can practice replicating them on instruments, maintaining the correct rhythms and placing accents in the appropriate places.

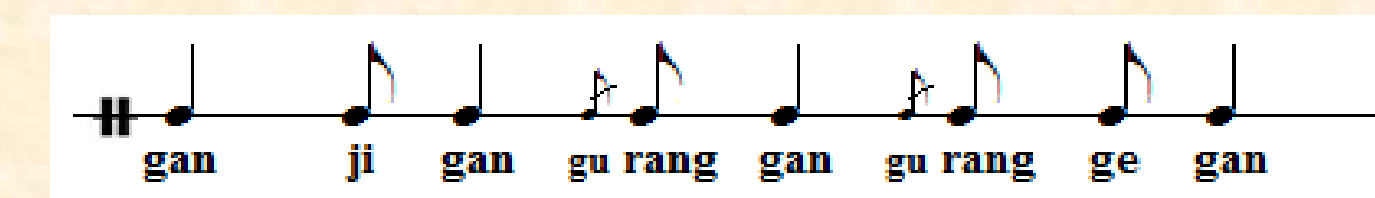


**Step 2: The asymmetrical 12-beat rhythmic cycle**

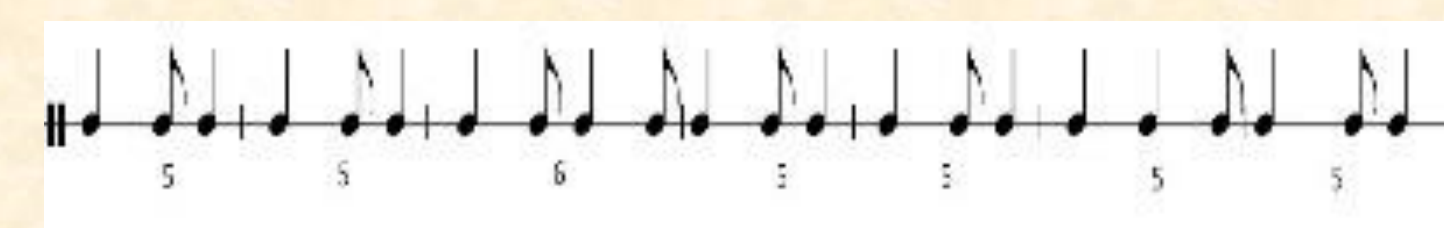


**Step 3: Improvisatory practice (12-beat rhythmic cycle)**

- (1) Students play a symmetrical 12-beat rhythmic cycle several times until they are familiar with the basic pattern.
- (2) Afterwards, students add micro beats of ornamentation to the basic patterns.
- (3) Then, students allocate different rhythm sets of duple and triple beats within 12 beats. During this process, tempo is increasingly accelerated from slow to fast. The more the rhythm peaks in the fast tempo, the more the beat tends to be subdivided with the loudest dynamics.

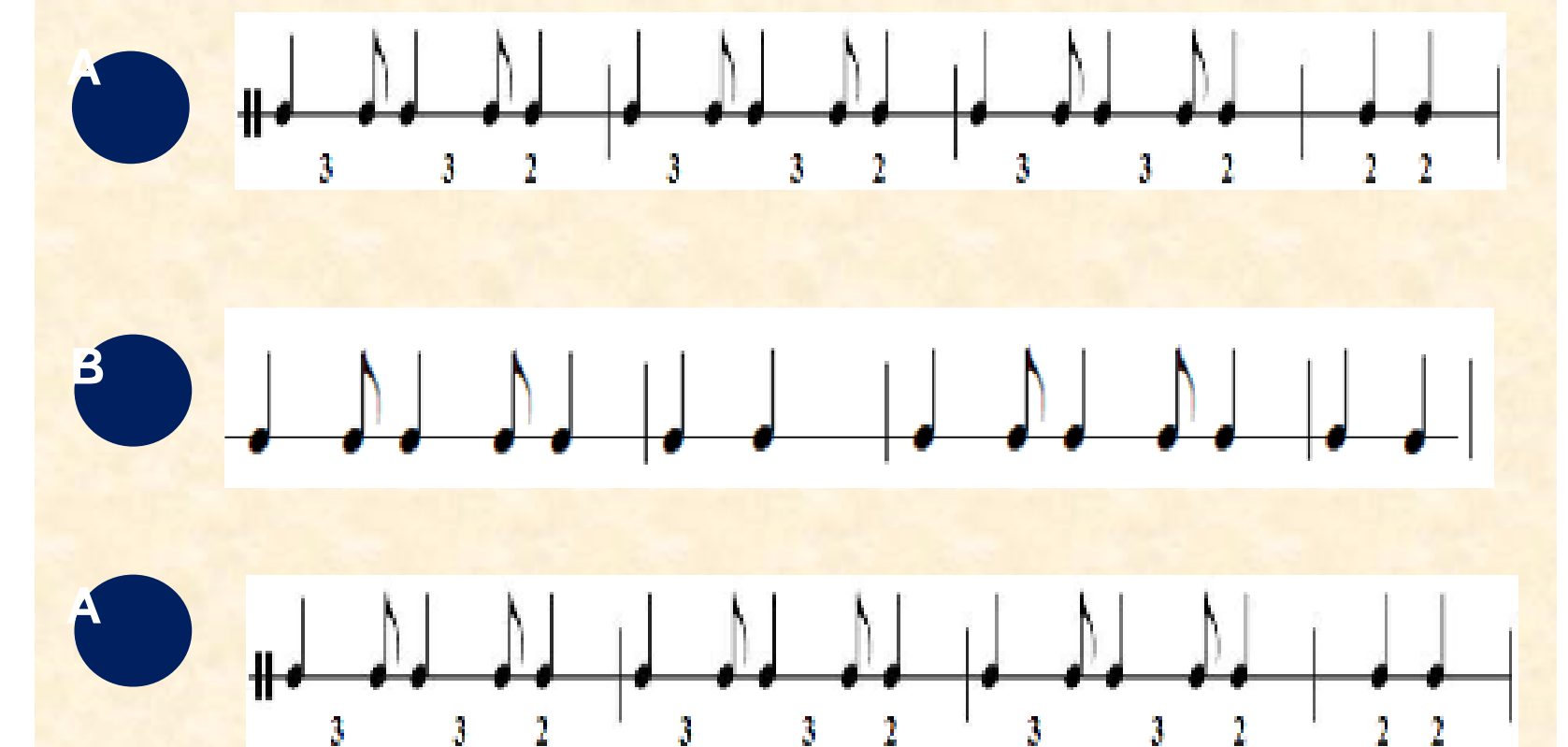


The extended rhythmic cycle (beyond the 12-beat cycle)



Composition and Performance

- 1) The teacher divides the class into groups of four students, and then asks each group to choose two different types of rhythmic cycles.
- 2) Each group performs its own rhythmic cycles for the class with the use of instruments (either traditional Korean instruments or classroom instruments).



## INSTRUMENTS



## REFLECTIONS

More world music materials satisfying both the original musical tradition and practicability should be developed and disseminated to the music classroom, not only from Korean music but also from various music cultures. By doing this, music teacher educators will gain an understanding of each characteristic of music from different cultures and acquire the skills necessary to teach them in their classroom: as a consequence, they can confidently incorporate world music in general music classes.