

KIM JONG IL

**ON DEVELOPING
TRADITIONAL MUSIC
IN KEEPING WITH
MODERN TASTES**

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

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Talk to Senior Officials of the Central
Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea

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Today the Wangjaesan Light Music Band gave an excellent performance of their new interpretations of some traditional musical pieces.

In recent days I have been thinking a lot about how to develop traditional music, and I entrusted the band with the task of arranging the country's folk songs to suit modern tastes. Such an issue should have been raised by the officials concerned, but they failed to do so. The band took about a fortnight to finish the task and it presented the new interpretations today, in precisely the way the Party intended. I am very pleased with the pieces.

The folk songs *Song of Youth*, *Let's Go to Pick Mulberry Leaves* and *Moran Hill* were good arrangements. *Let's Repay the Leader's Benevolence with Loyalty* was nicely arranged to cater to modern tastes. Sinau, performed on the electric violin, is rich in national sentiments while still having a novel flavour.

All the folk songs, which the band played by combining electronic and Western instruments, are pleasant to the ear and have an appealing spontaneity. This proves that electronic and Western instruments can reproduce at a high level our folk songs, in conformity with our people's sentiments and modern tastes. We should subordinate those instruments to the Korean music.

Our people will very much like the folk songs, as interpreted by the band. The elderly will feel like dancing to the melodies, and so will the young. Young people are not so keen to sing old folk songs, but they will enjoy singing

the new arrangements.

We should develop traditional music in the form of light music, in the same way that the Wangjaesan Light Music Band did.

This means that we should arrange traditional pieces of music in a lively and rousing manner by using electronic and Western instruments so that they preserve our national characteristics and cater to modern tastes.

Developing traditional music in conformity with modern tastes is of great importance in educating the people in the Korean-nation-first spirit. The Party long ago put forward the policy of strengthening education in this spirit. The information sector, however, has failed to conduct effective education in this spirit. In order to imbue Party members and other working people with the Korean-nation-first spirit, officials in the information sector ought to have developed various forms and methods for preserving the superior aspects and fine traits of our nation. They should explore ways of strengthening this education, since they are in charge of ideological education.

Arming Party members and other working people with this spirit does not happen of its own accord. The spirit will be implanted in their minds only when they have a clear knowledge of the long history, brilliant culture and fine traditions created by their nation.

Herein lies the reason why the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung values the history and heritage of our nation so highly and attaches such great importance to exalting them. Last year, on a visit to Kaesong, when he was looking around Songgyungwan, he proposed building a light-industry

university to be called Koryo Songgyungwan, as a way of carrying forward its 1 000-year tradition of higher education, and he also elucidated ways and means for renovating the mausoleum of King Wang Kon. The mausoleum of King Tongmyong in Pyongyang, too, acquired its magnificent appearance under his direct guidance and care. Recently he pointed out that Tangun, who had previously been regarded as a mythical being, had been a real human being, and he gave instructions for renovating his mausoleum, so that it could demonstrate to the whole world that ours is a nation with a history spanning 5 000 years. The scientific confirmation that Tangun founded the first state of our nation with Pyongyang as its capital proves that Pyongyang was the birthplace of our nation. In this way Comrade Kim Il Sung straightened out the long history of our nation, which had been distorted and buried owing to the machinations of the imperialists and great-power worshippers. In future, the education sector should rewrite the Korean history textbooks on the basis of these newly confirmed materials.

Traditional music plays an important role in educating our people in the Korean-nation-first spirit. Traditional music reflects the ideological sentiments, lifestyle and customs of the nation and accordingly is inconceivable apart from the development of the nation. The people should know their traditional music well, sing their folk songs and dance their folk dances. This is a way for them to love their nation and take great pride in its excellence. The folk songs that have just been reinterpreted by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band will contribute to giving our youth and other people a better

knowledge of Korea's wonderful traditional music and educating them in the Korean-nation-first spirit.

On several occasions I have stressed the need to produce songs that can contribute to promoting this spirit. I regret to say, however, that among those created so far, only *Pyongyang Is Best* and a few other songs are good enough.

If the Korean-nation-first spirit is to be displayed to the full, it is necessary to develop our nation's traditional music. That does not mean simply restoring old musical pieces intact. If they are restored intact, they will appear outdated, and disagree with contemporary sentiments. When developing traditional music, we should guard strictly against restorationism, and sustain modern tastes.

Developing traditional music in such a way that it suits modern tastes will be helpful to preventing the young people from imitating foreign lifestyles. In the past some of them would dance to foreign songs that went against the sentiments and tastes of our people; but now, with the popularization of traditional musical pieces that are given a light music interpretation, they will dance to Korean tunes. The reinterpretations by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band preserve the Korean rhythms, and suit Korean dance movements very well. We should develop traditional music in keeping with modern tastes and produce corresponding folk dance pieces. We should promote the development of folk dances. Since we now have fine pieces of traditional music that cater to modern tastes, we are able to produce excellent folk dance pieces. As I often say, fine melodies are a prerequisite for fine dance pieces. The art sector should channel efforts into developing folk dances as well

as traditional music.

If we develop traditional music in a light music style to cater to modern tastes, it will have a good influence on the people in south Korea. These days electronic and Western instruments are played in south Korea in American-style renditions. If they happen to enjoy our performances of folk songs on electronic and Western instruments, which cater to modern tastes, the people in the south will commend the north for these unique, Koryo-style renditions using non-traditional instruments, which are quite different from the American-style renditions prevalent in the south. We must sustain the Juche character in making use of electronic and Western instruments, otherwise a foreign style will infiltrate our art, as has happened in the south. In developing the art of music, we should never copy anything foreign, but establish Juche, giving free rein to our unique characteristics.

In developing our traditional music in keeping with modern tastes, the arrangement should be prominent.

Arrangement is an important means of expressing the ideological content and emotional timbre of an original piece in bolder relief. Preserving the unique emotional timbre of the traditional music and adding a fresh sense of beauty to it, is dependent on the arrangement. The works performed today were sung in the past, but have been arranged using fresh techniques; they are full of national sentiments and yet cater to modern tastes.

The arrangement of traditional music should evoke national sentiments and arouse fresh feelings by sustaining the original's unique tone and distinctive timbre and rhythm, and introducing new means of musical description.

Instrumentation is indispensable in representing traditional musical pieces. These musical pieces should be arranged in such a way that electronic and Western instruments can play them to meet the requirements of the present era, which is vibrant with revolution. Electronic instruments have all the elements necessary for sustaining the features of the traditional music. They can perfectly reproduce the unique timbre of the traditional instruments as well as the various traditional rhythms. An ensemble of a few electronic instruments can generate a sound as large as that produced by a full orchestra of traditional instruments, since each of them has a powerful sound.

Traditional musical pieces should be rendered in diverse forms. It would be desirable to reproduce the same work in a number of ways. A song rendered as a solo by the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble should not necessarily be rendered as a solo by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band, too. A few days ago the Wangjaesan Light Music Band rendered the folk song *Spinning Wheel Ballad* in three forms—solo, duet and chorus with instrumental accompaniment. They were all good, as each had its own characteristics and sounded distinctive to the ear. Diverse renderings of traditional musical pieces will make it more convenient to broadcast them on the radio.

Art troupes should have their individual characteristics. I have spoken highly of the musical works created by the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble and Wangjaesan Light Music Band, but other art troupes should not attempt to follow suit. Today the Wangjaesan Light Music Band was poor in the way it presented its captions, because it tried to imitate the way the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble does

it. If all art troupes follow a way similar to one another, their productions will appear monotonous and unappealing. Every art troupe, be it the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble, the Wangjaesan Light Music Band or any another, should follow the road of sustaining its own characteristics.

In future the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble should specialize in modern music and the Wangjaesan Light Music Band in traditional music. The latter, whose prime target is traditional light music, can be called a traditional light music band. In the case of vocal music it would be advisable for the Phibada Opera Troupe to specialize in the modern form and the National Folk Art Troupe in the traditional form. Chorus with *kayagum* accompaniment should be performed mainly by the latter. The *kayagum* and other traditional instruments must not be discarded altogether on the plea that electronic and Western instruments are being encouraged in playing traditional music. Chorus with *kayagum* accompaniment should be preserved and further developed. The National Folk Art Troupe should redouble its efforts to develop traditional music that conforms with modern tastes.

The dissemination of traditional music is also important in its development.

Due to the ineffective work in this field, many people have a poor knowledge of it, especially the young generation. As for the recently-discovered folk songs, students must have no idea about them. Even some artistes have little knowledge of folk songs. Spinning Wheel Ballad, a folk song rearranged by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band, is said to have been unknown among the artistes who did the rearranging. In the past, there were many singers who sang

folk songs, but with the emergence of the new generation in the ranks of artistes, the number is gradually declining. I have heard that young people, because they know so few folk songs, simply sing the songs of Ung Phal or village head Pyon from the revolutionary opera *The Sea of Blood*, after singing *Blessings to You*, at weddings. Some people feel no shame in being ignorant of folk songs; instead, they regard themselves as being well-educated if they have a good knowledge of modern songs. If people know few of our folk songs, decadent bourgeois culture may make inroads into their minds. Koreans must know Korean folk songs, which are rich in national flavour.

Our folk songs are rich in their national sentiments and profound in their content. The folk songs reinterpreted by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band not only are rich in their national sentiments but also have good lyrics. *Let's Go to Pick Mulberry Leaves* tells of a girl's strong attachment to her sweetheart, while *Song of Youth* teaches that young people should not idle away their youth, but learn. There are many folk songs with lyrics as good as these. Folk songs that are reinterpreted properly and disseminated will soon become widely popular.

Folk songs should be broadcast widely on the TV and radio. Nowadays, the music of the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble is being broadcast. This is good. The TV and radio should give prominence to the musical pieces created by the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble in proper proportion with the folk songs reinterpreted by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band. Broadcasting the traditional light musical pieces that have been reinterpreted by the Wangjaesan Light Music

Band on the TV and radio will cause a sensation.

Performances should be organized of the traditional musical pieces reinterpreted by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band. The first performance should be shown to creative workers and artistes in Pyongyang to celebrate New Year's Day. This will demonstrate to them the Party's intention of developing traditional music.

Performances can also be staged abroad. This will create a great sensation. Overseas Koreans will be delighted by the performances. When the folk songs that were sung in the old days are played, the first generation of overseas compatriots will dance. The band performing abroad will also have a positive influence on the south Korean people. So, when the band is going to stage a performance abroad, it should include in its repertoire many traditional light musical pieces and corresponding folk dance pieces.

The work of unearthing our traditional musical legacy should be properly organized.

Traditional music develops through inheritance from a critical point of view and through the development of its legacy, which includes folk songs. The more of it we unearth, the richer will be the foundation on which to develop our traditional music. There is still much to be unearthed, despite our past efforts. Recently I gave instructions on unearthing traditional musical pieces across the country, with the result that many old songs were collected in a short span of time. This large store of old songs, which were popular among our people in the old days, will make a great contribution to developing our traditional music. If the best folk songs among them are rearranged in conformity with modern tastes

and popularized, they will be sung widely by the people and our traditional music will be enriched. We must continue to unearth pieces of traditional music.

Traditional music and other musical works should be well preserved. Both the old folk songs that were popular in the past and the numerous musical works created in our era constitute priceless cultural wealth that should be handed down to posterity. The revolutionary songs composed during the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, the musical works created after the liberation of the country and, in particular, the revolutionary operas and other works of musical art created during the days of the revolution in art and literature, reflect the sentiments of the present era and the noble and beautiful ideological and spiritual features of our contemporaries; they embody Comrade Kim Il Sung's thought on art and literature, and describe the exploits the Party has performed in the course of leading this sector. It is only when these cultural treasures are well preserved and handed down to posterity that the generations to come will have a clear understanding of the period in the history of our art and literature when their brilliance was brought about by the leadership of Comrade Kim Il Sung and the Party. If historical materials are not properly looked after, it will cause a hiatus in history. It was because preservation work was not done properly during the Fatherland Liberation War that many materials of historical significance were lost. It is heart-rending to think that they were destroyed by enemy bombing while they were being evacuated by ox-cart. We should never forget this bitter lesson, and should preserve historical materials in various ways. The work of preserving

musical works should not be done by one organ alone, but by various organs, so that, even if the materials kept by one organ are destroyed, those elsewhere will remain safe and secure. A proper system for preserving musical works should be established.

Works of music that have historical significance should be preserved on CD. Those that are preserved on cassette tape do not last long. Old tape is liable to contract and the sound quality is poor. Cine-film, if it is kept for a long time, becomes discoloured and contracts, and produces a distorted sound. All musical works that are of historical significance, including those recorded on cassette tape, should be recorded onto CD. The songs that have been unearthed recently and kept on record should be recorded onto CD. The traditional light musical pieces performed by the Wangjaesan Light Music Band today should be recorded onto CD as well.

The Information Department of the Party Central Committee and the musical art sector should organize the work of developing traditional music in keeping with modern tastes, in the way I have clarified today.