

Seung-Won Oh Bio (2023)

A native of South Korea, Seung-Won Oh is an acclaimed composer who was described as "a name to remember"(2003) in the Dutch newspaper *Volkskrant* writing about her first professional commission work for a percussion sextet, *DaDeRimGill*. Her music has been performed throughout Europe, North America and Asia, and transcends traditional boundaries. As critic Mirjam Zegers writes, "Oh connects East and West, vibrant motion and stillness, pure sound and ritual theatre, stratified structures and transparency."

Her work juxtaposes soloists or groups of instruments against an ensemble, creating a space for dramatic development. The conflict between the individual's will and the collective's demands is a frequent theme. In recent years a rapidly growing interest in theater, space, movement and interaction with the audience has been generating projects that require close collaboration with the performers. Her most recent successful large scale work, the requiem *YeonDo* (2020) [연도: purgatory prayer], showcases the continuous trajectory of her interests. *YeonDo* creates a deeply spiritual and theatrical music experience of a symbolic death ritual. (Unlike the traditional set-up of the requiem mass, the soloist, choir, percussion quartet, and orchestra are initially independent in various locations of a music space until they unite into a conglomerate at the final tutti.) Oh's signature percussion writing plays an essential role in *YeonDo*. The percussion quartet adds another layer of plot that symbolizes a funeral procession that is performed from all four sides of the hall surrounding the audience. (Compositionally integrating into music, the willing participating audiences toll bells transcending their musical experience to another level.)

Also in her recent small ensemble music, the spatial / acoustic relationship between the player(s) and audience in a specific space has steadily become one of the quintessential elements in her compositions requiring specific stage set up.

The recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation at the Bellagio Center, the Goddard

Lieberson Fellowship through the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Barlow Endowment for music composition, Oh is celebrated both in her home country and abroad: at the 3rd Seoul International Competition for Composers she received both first prize and the audience prize. In 2007, she won third prize for the Lutoslawski Award in Poland, and was the winner of the 2010 Toonzetters award given to the best Dutch contemporary composition of the year. In 2023 with *YeonDo*, she won the Kees van Baarenprijs awarded to a significant orchestral work or music-theatrical work.

Oh's background is as varied as her accolades. She began her studies at Korea's Ewha Woman's University, where she earned her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. She went on to earn her Ph.D in the United States, at Brandeis University, before her studies led to Louis Andrissen's tutelage at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. It was during her time in the Netherlands that she began to explore the rich musical traditions of her own heritage which enabled her to quickly establish her musical identity and the reputation as a composer.

Seung-Won Oh has taught at Brandeis University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Florida at Gainesville, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, DePaul University in Chicago and Royal Conservatory of the Hague.