

How 2020-2021 Changed the Life Perspectives of Composer Chihchun Chi-sun Lee

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Abstract

Taiwanese American Chichun Chi-sun Lee is a freelance composer who resides in Seoul, South Korea. She was the first Taiwanese composer to be commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and she was also commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, in both 2001 and 2018. Additionally, Lee received the prestigious Guggenheim Fellow in 2015. These great honors prove that she was approaching a milestone of a successful composition career. However, COVID-19, which has affected all universally, breaks her routine to succeed in her carrier as a composer who inevitably requires social gathering for rehearsal, practice, and live performance.

This paper demonstrates how Chichun Chi-sun Lee as a freelancer composer overcame the worldwide lockdown via COVID-19 and created her musical pieces during the last two years. She has turned the crisis into opportunities and took advantage of technologies to communicate much globally without physical restriction. Moreover, pandemic gave her a chance to look at the issues in globalized society under the microscope. She shares what she has produced during the last two years through experiences in her native country Taiwan which has successfully prevented COVID-19 but is still alienated from global society, fraught elections and politicizing in the US, and multi-local traditional folk music and plays she has found through digital media.

Key Words: Chichun Chi-sun Lee, Freelance composer, COVID-19, Pandemic, Taiwanese American, Online performance

1. On the Road to a Global Composer Just Before the COVID-19

2020-2021 stands out as a unique year for those in the performing artistic fields. Most certainly, the COVID-19 Pandemic affected all universally. Those in the performing artistic fields, being dependent on live performances before an audience, as well as traveling for their occupation and career advancement, now found practicing their art as before, with social gathering restrictions, nearly impossible. However, this period also brought heightened global awareness to other issues, including the #MeToo movement, LGBTQIA+ rights, hate crimes on Asians, police violence against African-Americans, as well as significant presidential elections in the USA and Taiwan. Freelance composer Chihchun Chi-sun Lee, a female Taiwanese-American composer living in Seoul, South Korea, was extremely affected by the Pandemic along with all these issues and embraced them in her creative output ([Figure 1]).

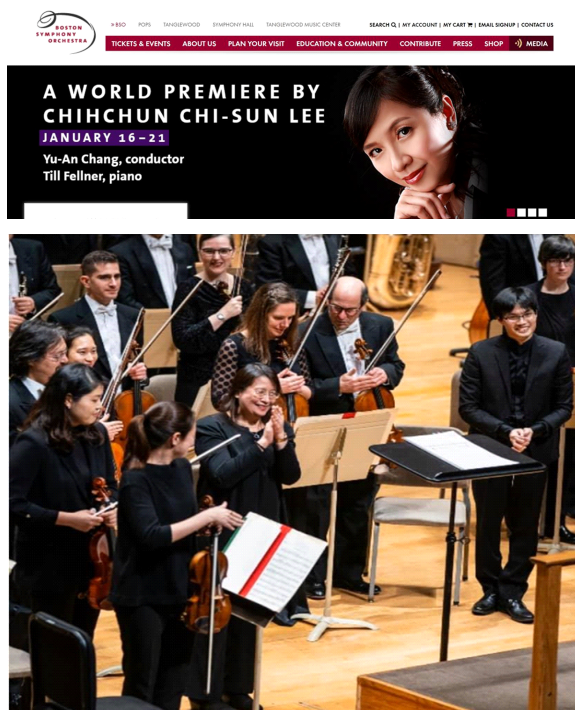
[Figure 1] Life Changing events: personal/domestic, national and International

· COVID (ongoing since the end of 2019)
· #MeToo movement (against sexual abuse and harassment globally) and gender & LGBTQIA+ awareness/equality
· Hate crimes—toward to Asian (globally) and African-Americans (US-George Floyd and on)
· Presidential Elections in both Taiwan and US in 2020

Prior to the worldwide lock down by the spread of COVID-19, Chihchun Chi-sun Lee was approaching a milestone of a successful composition career: Lee was named the first Taiwanese composer and

the fourth Asian composer who has received commission by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Her orchestra piece Formosan Triptych received four world premiere full-house concerts by BSO on January 16, 17, 18 and 21, 2020 at the Symphony Hall in Boston, under the baton of the Taiwanese conductor maestro Yu-An Chang ([Figure 2]).

[Figure 2-1] The world premiere of “Formosa Triptych” by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on January 16–19, 2020¹⁾



Chihchun Chi-sun Lee takes a bow with Chang and the Boston musicians after the premiere of ‘Formosa Triptych.’

1) Boston Symphony Orchestra website front page. <https://www.bso.org/>, December 1, 2021.

[Figure 2-2] With maestros Andris Nelsons, Yu-An Chang and Apo Hsu



In addition to her BSO performances, her Quartet for Arirang (String Quartet No. 2) was part of the “SPECIAL EFFECTS” concert by Semiosis Quartet in Boston on January 19, 2020. Following these Boston concerts, Chihchun Chi-sun Lee was invited to be a featured composer and keynote speaker at the Third Composition-in-Asia International Symposium and Festival (January 30-February 2, 2020). At this event she gave a special lecture-presentation of her recent works and activities, a masterclass with young composers, and five of her compositions (Zusammenflusses, Concerto for Marimba and four percussionists, Yuan Xiang, Grebdllog Rhapsody and ZAS!) were performed in the opening and closing concerts. Lee’s Concerto for Marimba and four percussionists was also programmed at the Marimba Festival by McCormick Percussion Group on February 1, 2020 ([Figure 3]).

[Figure 3] Chichun Chi-sun Lee as a keynote speaker at the Marimba Festival by McCormick Percussion Group on February, 2020



Composition in Asia

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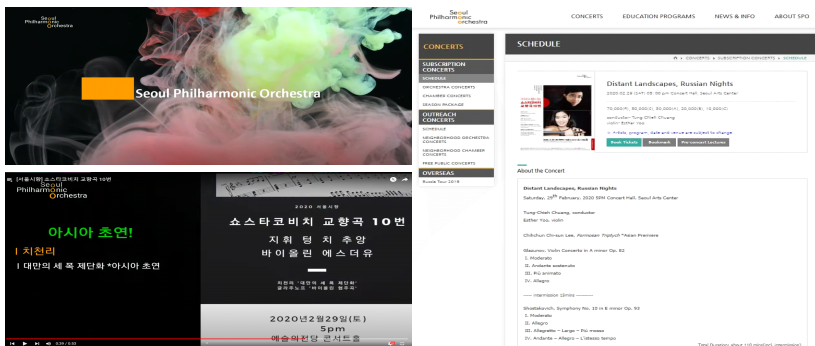
Keynote speakers

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee, freelance composer, Seoul, South Korea
Wendy Wan Ki Lee, Associate Professor of Composition, Chinese University of Hong Kong
Michael Timpson, Associate Professor of Composition, Ewha Womans University

2. Pros and Cons of Pandemic for a Freelancer Composer

Upon returning to Korea, the severe COVID-19 infected cases caused the country's lockdown in the end of February. Soon after, many countries initiated isolation restrictions with travel bans. Imposed by the Pandemic, all humans were affected by this global disaster regardless. There were many cons to being a composer in the time of this Pandemic. Since performers could not often meet to rehearse, nor hold public events with an audience, many concerts, the lifeblood of the musician, were either canceled or postponed. Chihchun Chi-sun Lee was one of the earliest victims of this outcome. Her own Asia premiere with the Seoul Philharmonic, a major career landmark for any composer, was the first concert canceled for the orchestra ([Figure 4]).

[Figure 4-1] Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra Concert Announcement on Youtube and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra homepage²⁾



[Figure 4-2] Program note for her prearranged performance³⁾

프로그램 노트

쇼스타코비치 교향곡 10번

서울시립교향악단
2020.01.30. 09:50 271 위음



치친리(1970년생), 대만의 세 폭 재단화(2019) *아시아 초연
Chihchun Chi-sun Lee, Formosan Triptych *Asian Premiere

'세 폭 재단화(Formosan Triptych)'는 대만의 세 가지 중요한 음악 유산으로 구성되어 있다. 대만 토착 부족인 오스트로네시아 종족들의 음악, 중국 전통의 북요(蘇北) 즉 민요, 그리고 하카어(중국 동남부 방언)로 된 노래가 그것이다. 대만에는 대략 30% 민족이 있으며, 그들은 각자 다른 언어와 문화와 음악을 갖고 있다. 이 가운데 데스켄트 대위법(후선율보다 높은 음과 함께 대위법으로 연주하는 주법)이라는 미분음성(한 음을 반음으로 나는 음보다 더 미세하게 나는 음계를 사용한 조성)처럼 고대부터 내려오던 고유의 다성 음악들이 1952년 유네스코에 의해 인정받은 바 있다.

제1악장은 대만 토착 민족인 파시족으로부터 영감을 받았다. 다만 이 음악은 본래 브람스의 유명한 수화계 음악에서 비롯된 것으로 8성 미분음으로 이루어져 있다. 제2악장은 대만의 북요로 민요부터 걸출을 얻은 것으로 베이판(北盤, 중국 허난성 안양에 있는 구) 경곡과 리알-코아-아(시와 산문)이 섞인 서사(가요), 그리고 민요를 담고 있다. 이 음악들은 대량현(2현짜리 피플)과 활금(2현짜리 류트) 같은 전통 악기가 반주한다. 제3악장은 대만의 하카 음악과 산노래 그리고, 대만 남부 민요 하카에서 유래된 8성 음악(피커션과 관악기, 피플로 구성)으로부터 영감을 받았다.

이 곡은 보스턴 심포니 오케스트라로부터 위촉받아 작곡되었고(2020년 1월 16일 보스턴 심포니 세계초연), 미국인 작곡가 윌리엄 슈만의 관현악곡 '뉴잉글랜드 3부작(New England Triptych)'에서 제목을 따왔다.

- 2) Youtube: <https://youtu.be/SPvDXZovIVs> (0'38"), Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra homepage: <https://www.seoulphil.or.kr/perform/concert/detail.do?idx=1545> (this website address is now unavailable via cancellation)
- 3) <https://post.naver.com/viewer/postView.nhn?volumeNo=27386084&memberNo=42106792>, December 1, 2021.

This was just one of many haltations to a career that had been steadily rising, as she had, just one month prior, her first premieres with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Moreover, the cancellation was just the start of a domino effect, where she would see the next two years of scheduled premieres (such as in Brazil, Russia, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, Poland) and residencies (Singapore, Russia, Poland, Canada) either canceled or indefinitely postponed ([Figure 5]).

[Figure 5] Cons of pandemic: 12 more cancellations and postponements in 2020-2021

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · VII Encontro Internacional de Cordas, Symphonic Society of Limeira, Brazil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Served as a special guest composition faculty at Russian Composer's Reading Academy, from June 30-July 3, Saint Petersburg Composers Union; July 4-5, Moscow Composer Union, collaborate with Union of Composers of Russia, ANO Centre for New Music Initiative and Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia, plus 2 performances with Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Serve as composition faculty at the 2020 Singapore Saxophone Symposium Composition Workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2 performance in Germany (2021)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · World premiere of "Taiwanese Night Street Market" in Taiwan (2021)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2020 Happoman Music (travel ban for British trombonist Berry Webb) · 2021 DCMF, Korea
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2020 & 2021 Composer-in-residence at NeoArte Synthesizer of Arts Festival, Gdansk, Poland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2021 World Saxophone Congress in Japan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2020 Served as a composition faculty at Toronto International Cross-Cultural Ensemble Workshop and Reading, Toronto, Canada

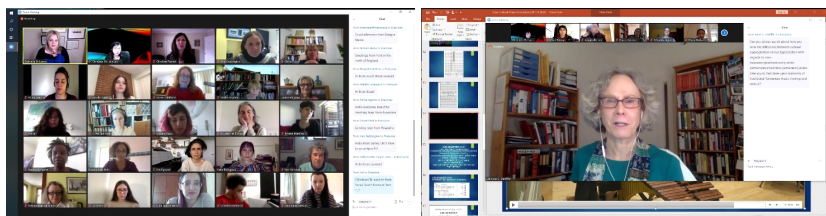
Unlike those with steady teaching positions, the freelance performing artists now found themselves without anything to maintain their career. Nevertheless, this resulted in a new stimulation to those with determination, to find new ways to express their creative outputs.

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee, not wanting to let time and opportunities idly pass, sought out new opportunities and was also the beneficiary of many of the new possibilities discovered during the time of pandemic and quarantine. Just as those in the business, service, and teaching fields found out, the technologies of the early twenty-first century had been previously underused and unappreciated. In the world where social media, like YouTube, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Google Meet, Line, Kakao, WeChat, WhatsApp, Zoom, Webex Meet, Skype, etc. were readily available at high transfer rates, it was now possible to convert the live performance medium into a digitally streamed one, allowing for both real-time and pre-recorded concerts to be more greatly appreciated and desired by the public (whom were also looking for variation to their lives in isolation) globally. Online resources also now allowed for the larger acceptance of virtual meetings in place of those which were normally expected to be in-person. These included participation in broadcast interviews, guest lectures, visiting faculty positions, dissertations, conferences, as well as rehearsals, regardless of the locations ([Figure 6]).

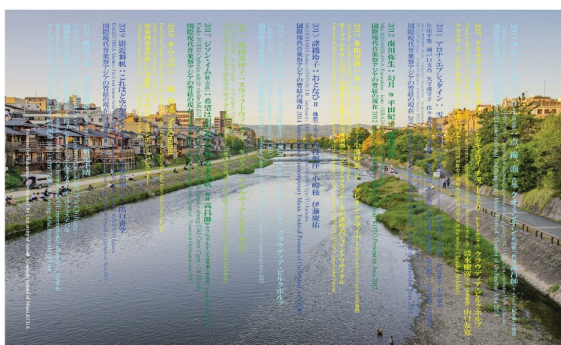
[Figure 6-1] online rehearsals



[Figure 6-2] zoom meetings and guest lectures



[Figure 6-3] online music festivals



The Pandemic also exposes the challenges and greater understanding to the struggles of freelance performing artists, leading to new and more flexible funding opportunities, emergency funding, COVID-related grants for artists and musicians, artist focused funds, and easier and cost-effective application processes via online ([Figure 7]).

[Figure 7] Sample list of special grants and funding during pandemic

<ul style="list-style-type: none">· USA<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Artist Relief (To support artists during the COVID-19 crisis, a coalition of national arts grantmakers came together to create an emergency initiative to offer financial and informational resources to artists across the United States.)2) National Endowment for the Arts: COVID-19 Resources for Artists and Arts Organizations3) New Music Solidarity Fund at New Music USA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Korea<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) COVID-19 Rescue Package for Arts with financial support for the performing artists, both from national and city governments2) Emergency Livelihood Stabilization Loan for Artists3) Creative Reserve Fund Support Project4) Support for the venue rental fee of performing arts companies hit by COVID-19.5) The Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture: Emergency Support for Art Education, Research, Online Content Production, Cultural Planning of Artists, just to name a few.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Germany<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Double pandemic aid for arts with an extra €1 billion funding2) Pandemic funding programs from both federal and city governments3) Emergency grants for German freelance cultural workers and artists
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Taiwan:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) International Collaboration COVID Project/Research Grant from the Taiwan National Culture and Arts Foundation

In Chihchun Chi-sun Lee's case, while her career typically required travel on a nearly monthly basis, she now had more time to spend on

her research, including applying for grants and funding. During this period, she was able to compose nineteen new pieces, and complete two CD releases. One aspect of the Pandemic that was less affected and granted more research time was to those writing research articles, for which five different scholars published articles on Dr. Lee's music ([Figure 8]).

[Figure 8] Pros of pandemic

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Due to difficulties of traveling, more online concerts, steaming, symposiums, conferences, festivals, lectures, presentations, meetings and rehearsals are made available with convenience via video conferencing tools: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 44 performances in 2020-2021 (28 were live performances) in USA, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, Korea, China, Russia, Sweden, Mexico, programmed in 16 international festivals 2. 6 Radio/online broadcasts with online interviews in USA 3. Served as a special guest composer at the Harvard Univ. graduate seminar (zoom) 4. Invited composition faculty for post-undergrad at NAFA, Singapore 5. Served as an external committee for doctor dissertation/defense at Cardiff Univ. UK 6. Guest lecture at New Music Symposium by Korean Consulate General/Korean Cultural Society of Boston (zoom) 7. Serve as composition faculty at the 2021 Singapore Saxophone Symposium Composition Workshop (online zoom lessons and readings with H2 from US, Singapore, Korea) 8. Online rehearsals (vs. musicians in Taiwan, USA, Germany, China, etc.) 9. 100 Women Creators international zoom meeting, hosted by DONNE, WOMEN IN MUSIC in London. So much fun to talk to female musicians, conductors, composers, etc. around the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Emergency funds and specific COVID-related grants are made available in many countries (i.e. Recipient of International Collaboration COVID Project/Research Grant from Taiwan National Culture and Arts Foundation in 2021) (there are special COVID-related financial supports/grants/funding available in USA & Korea as well.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More general grants/funding were made a bit easier to support (surviving) artists (i.e. seven grants were commissioned related, one travel grant and one recording grant, plus collaborated grant with painter, etc.)

- Less travel equals more time to compose, pursue other professional activities:
 1. completed nineteen pieces (six orchestra/string orchestra pieces, two pieces for mixed ensemble (Chinese traditional instruments with western instruments); one piece for Chinese ensemble; two pieces for saxophone and piano; six solo pieces (plus three more adaptations), and two mixed choir pieces)
 2. Two CD releases in US & Taiwan ①Grebldlog Rhapsody (New Ariel Records, USA), ② Cross-Cultural Music Encounters II - Music of Chihchun Chi-sun Lee”東西響笑 2 - 李志純近代東西交匯室內樂作品語錄二”(Zusammenflusses (Confluence), Sound Color Density, ZAS!, Wind Enigma, Layers of Waves, Rhyme of Strings, Rendezvous I) (7/2021, Taiwan)
 3. Five publications related to Lee’s music in USA, Taiwan and China
 4. Planning for future projects (2022)
 - a. Composer-in-residence at Trinity Univ., Texas, USA
 - b. Composer-in-residence with a monographic concert at NeoArte Synthesizer of Arts Festival, Gdansk, Poland
 - c. Two scores publish in Korea & Taiwan
 - d. Two CD releases in the Netherland and China
Forteen commission pieces (three pieces for string orchestra, one piece for mixed choir, ten pieces for mixed/chamber ensemble/solo) from Taiwan, Korea, Romania, Canada, USA, Iceland and Poland
 - e. Feature in PBS TV series (US)

3. Pandemic, a New Inspiration for Creating Music

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee’s focus as a composer was affected in 2020-2021 by several attributes. While certainly the Pandemic itself could not be avoided as a topic in her output, her expression included many of the Pandemic’s direct results. Ms. Lee’s native nationality, Taiwanese, has always been at the forefront of her compositional style, but the Pandemic brought this into greater spotlight. Furthermore, political frustrations and craziness in the US elections as well as the significance of the recent Taiwanese elections were also influential on her. Such issues, like sexual harrassment (#MeToo), gender, orientation, racial, and voting rights and equality were brought under

the microscope. The Pandemic also helped us realize what a globalized society we now had depended on at all levels of commerce and popular culture ([Figure 9]).

[Figure 9] Main focus of Chichun Chi-sun Lee's perspectives in 2020–2021

- Publicizing my native country Taiwan internationally
- US and worldwide political frustration and reflection
- Human Rights and equality (#MeToo Movement, gender & LGBTQIA+)
- COVID/Pandemic
- Globalization
- Pop culture references

1) Taiwan, Her Native Nationality

Although Taiwanese culture has been a primary influencing element on her style, as she desires to bring greater acknowledgement to her country's culture, history and diversity, COVID-19 itself exposes more widespread understanding of Taiwan's political struggles due to the interference of the PRC. Unlike most of the world, Taiwan's dealing with the Pandemic has been one of the most effective out of all countries, along with one of the best ranked healthcare systems, it is still rejected for membership by the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and other major global cooperatives. At the same time, Taiwan's name and/or sovereignty recognition has been blocked or altered through "economic bullying" from the PRC to international businesses (i.e. refusing to grant flights to airlines who do not list Taiwan as part of the PRC on their booking websites) and organizations large and small (such as the Olympics and even

International Society of Contemporary Music, where they are forced to use the name “Chinese Taipei”).

While, primarily due to the Cold War, much of the world only knows Taiwan’s post-World War II history, the history of the vast majority of the island’s inhabitants and ethnicities go back centuries, even to ancient times. Prior to the arrival of European and Sinitic Asian inhabitants, Taiwan was populated by Aboriginal Tribes. These tribes of non-Han origin, are, in fact, hypothesized to be the progenitors of Austronesian languages and ethnicities throughout the Pacific (Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia), Insular Southeast Asia and Madagascar. Their culture is steeped in a variety of vocal styles, including unique (pre-European) polyphony ranging from diatonic to microtonal harmonic texture. In addition to the aboriginal populations, Taiwan has been populated by two distinctive Han ethnicities, the migrant Hakka and the majority Hoklo culture, each of which have unique musical styles different from that of mainland China ([Figure 10]).

[Figure 10] List of Lee’s pieces that related to Taiwan, programmed and/or composed in 2020–2021

· Pieces composed prior to 2020

- ① *Formosan Triptych* (for orchestra, commissioned and world premiere by the Boston Symphony Orchestra)
- ② *Provintia* (for solo violin, Taiwanese historical monument, commissioned by Chai Found Music Workshop, funded by the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)
- ③ *HongLou West Gate Story* (for mixed ensemble, historical monument in Taipei city, commissioned by gCO Chinese Ensemble, funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City Government)

- ④ *Dots Lines Convergence* (concerto for zheng and chamber ensemble, funded by Harvard Fromm Foundation)
- ⑤ *Mackay* (for zheng solo, Taiwanese historical monument, commissioned by Chai Found Music Workshop, funded by the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)
- ⑥ *Yuan Xiang* 原鄉 (for alto saxophone and piano, commissioned by the 1st Asia Saxophone Congress International Competition)
- ⑦ *Grebdlog Rhapsody* (for solo piano)

· Pieces composed in 2020-2021

- ⑧ Balladry Series I “*Asian Rhymes*” (MoonString Orchestra commission, funded by the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation);
- ⑨ “*Tāi oân koa*”【台灣歌】(Song of Taiwan) (for mixed choir, commissioned by Asian Composers’ League-Taiwan, funded by the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)
- ⑩ “*Jīn seng lō*”【人生路】(Life Journey) (for mixed choir, commissioned by Asian Composers’ League-Taiwan, funded by the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)
- ⑪ *Taiwanese Night Market Scenery* for liuqin & piano (commissioned and funded by Prof. Yi-Chien Chen and the Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)
- ⑫ *Theatrical Pò-tē-hi*【偶夢戲韻】for (Youth) Symphony Orchestra and Taiwanese Traditional Puppet Theatre (funded by Taiwan National Culture & Arts Foundation)

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee’s compositions during this period deeply reflects this cultural diversity. Her last orchestral performance, saved by just missing the Pandemic shutdowns, was the commission and premiere of her Formosan Triptych by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Each movement of this work references the three distinct cultures of Taiwan, the indigenous Austronesian tribes (movement one), traditional Hoklo folklore (movement two), and traditional Sinitic Hakka Songs (Figure 11).

[Figure 11] score of *Formosan Triptych*

Concert Score

Formosan Triptych
for Orchestra Mvt III

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee

♩ = 112

Flute 1
Flute 2
Oboe 1
Oboe 2
English Horn
Clarinet in Bb 1
Clarinet in Bb 2
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Cello/Double Bass
Horn in F 1
Horn in F 2
Horn in F 3
Horn in F 4
Trumpet in C 1
Trumpet in C 2
Trumpet in C 3
Trombone 1
Trombone 2
Euphonium
Tuba
Timpani
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Percussion 3
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello
Cello/Double Bass

112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee 李志純

FORMOSAN TRIPTYCH

【福爾摩沙三聯畫】

for Orchestra

(triple winds)

2019

—Concert Score—

Commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra – Andris Nelsons, Music Director

Her two pieces for four-part mixed choir, “Tâi oân koa”【台灣歌】(Song of Taiwan) and “Jîn seng lō”【人生路】(Life Journey), celebrate her heritage by setting poems in Taiwanese (a distinct language from Chinese Mandarin), written by Taiwanese Presbyterian pastor Chiung Hao Wu. “Tâi oân koa”【台灣歌】expounds the aspirations and hopes of Taiwanese towards Taiwan, while “Jîn seng lō”【人生路】(Life Journey) describes our feelings, thoughts, emotions and expectations for life in a profound way ([Figure 12]).

2) Politics in the United States

Lee's output during this period also reflected the political frustrations worldwide and in the USA during the Pandemic. The work *Divergence & Convergence* (with the title implying Washington "D.C."), reflects the 2020 election process, in which the solo trombone, through various extended techniques and extreme expressions in range and timbre reflect the crazy atmosphere of the situation. *Divergence & Convergence* had its world premiere by Swiss trombonist virtuoso Dirk Amrein at Manifest - Musik In Freiheit, Germany, as part of the political protest by the European artists ([Figure 13]).

[Figure 13] score and the live performance of *Divergence & Convergence* (2020)

Chihchun Chi-sun Lee

Divergence & Convergence

(DC)

for trombone solo
(2020)

Divergence & Convergence (2020)

0'02"-1'27"; 4'38" or 5'13"-



At the end of 2020, Lee was invited to be part of the “Georgia Runoff Commissioning Project” (the Georgia Runoff, was a determining election to decide the fate of the U.S. Legislature, in a state, where, historically, African-American votes had been suppressed). For this project, composers were commissioned from people and musicians around the world to write short pieces in support of a fair election, as well as in support of the two Democratic candidates (whose party had not won a statewide election since the 1990s). Chihchun Chi-sun Lee completed three commissions in this project: ① *Anticipation & Participation* for harp (also for solo piano); ② *The Meaningful Battle* for trumpet; ③ *Right Fairness Equality vs. Suppression* for tuba (or trombone). The piece, *Right Fairness Equality vs. Suppression*, echoes the words and beliefs of significant Georgia Voting Rights champion, Ms. Stacy Abrams, “for every eligible voter to be able to cast their ballot and for that ballot to get counted” during her TV interview on Jimmy Kimmel Live from December 9, 2020 ([Figure 14]).

[Figure 14] score of *Right Fairness Equality vs. Suppression*

Commissioned by Jason S. Ladd and Georgia Runoff Commissioning Project

Rights, Fairness, Equality vs Suppression
for Trombone solo (2nd version)

Chilchun Chi-sun Lee

♩ = 76

mp *sfpp* *f*

fff *p* *mf*

f *mp* *< mf* *p* *< f* *sp* *fp* *ff*

11 speak into mouthpiece through trombone amplification (imitates old radio broadcast with static)
for eve-ry el-i-gi-ble vot-er to be a-ble to cast their bal-ot and for that bal-ot to get count-ed

16 *f* *subito p*

Video demos:
1) flutter tongue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AM8cL80zFA>
2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Th0eiH3ViM>
3) reference: speech from Stacey Abrams:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enKwFHbxqfI>

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Another work that not only represented political unrest, but also inferences of human rights and equality is Lee's *Modus Tollens* ["2020"] for alto saxophone and piano. In this piece, Lee addresses the growing awareness of crises by the #MeToo movement, Police violence against African-Americans (as well as the African-American Hate Crimes) and the Pandemic during this period. The title of this work means "contradict the conclusion", as a unique dialogue with a touch of American musical culture referenced in the work. Moreover, it reveals the pros and cons of the United States' circumstances, which will leave its trace in history. *Modus Tollens* ["2020"] was commissioned by American saxophonist Matthew Tracy (alluded by the title's opening

letters M.T.), funded by Southwest Oklahoma State University. This work was ironically meant for premiere at the 2021 World Saxophone Congress in Japan, which is now postponed to 2023 due to the Pandemic (Figure 15).

[Figure 15] *Modus Tollens* ["2020"] program notes and score

Modus Tollens starts with an introduction to show the reaction and frustration toward what happened in the US and globally in 2020.

The #MeToo movement addresses awareness of sexual harassment and violence against workers, initially were aiming to protect women; but the new treaty has now covered all the workers. In *Modus Tollens*, the minority is represented by soft and fast running passages that imply the ongoing sexual harassment and violence that exist in our daily lives, but is not able to be addressed and spoken out by the victims. The early cluster chords indicate the frustrations; later growing to gain awareness and international support to protect and encourage victims to speak out and bring justice.

The middle section with ostinatos implies the long struggles of COVID-19 Pandemic, a life-changing event that indeed has affected everyone on earth. The Saxophone's microtonality and multiphonics express the unpredictable and uncontrollable virus spread worldwide. The devastated situation has been going for the entire of 2020 and into 2021. By the end of 2020, the US reported 341,199 died and almost 20 million are infected with COVID-19, while there were over 83.9 million infected cases and deaths exceeding 1.8 million worldwide.

Hate Crime in the US especially has gone beyond control since 2020. The openly police misconduct that led to the death of African-Americans, as well as white supremacists' attacks have greatly increased. The unusual jazz section refers to John Coltrane's *HARMONIQUE* in 1959, the first piece that clearly used multiphonics as part of the composition in jazz, to address the value and significance of African-Americans in the society of American music. In conclusion, 2020 has not been a calm year for anyone, especially to the people of the US. With sincere hope, this piece *Modus Tollens* ["2020"] can serve as a token, not only to review 2020 as the historical event, but also as a learning experience to gain respect between each other, no matter our gender, ethnicity or color.

Modus Tollens [2020], transposed Score, pp. 3

A. Sax. 7 *f*

Pian. *ff*

A. Sax. 8 *f*

Pian. *ff*

A. Sax. 9 *f*

Pian. *ff*

Modus Tollens [2020], transposed Score, pp. 4

A. Sax. 12 *fz fz*

Pian. *fz fz*

A. Sax. 13 *f*

Pian. *f*

A. Sax. 14 *f*

Pian. *f*

A. Sax. 15 *f*

Pian. *f*

Unavoidably, the COVID-19 Pandemic is at the forefront of influence for all artists in this period. Her work *Isolation & Hysteria* for solo accordion (also for solo piano) is a representation of the challenges faced by the sudden changes in society (Figure 16).

[Figure 16] *Isolation & Hysteria* program note and score

The piece “Isolation & Hysteria” reflects the ongoing pandemic that has happened since the end of 2019. People are restricted to stay home and have very limited gatherings for almost two years. The isolation has brought very serious and severe hysteria to all living beings as there has been a conversion of psychological stress into physical symptoms (somatization), selective amnesia, shallow volatile emotions, and overdramatic or attention-seeking behavior.

Score

11 Isolation & Hysteria
for Accordion Chihchun Chi-sun Lee

12 Isolation & Hysteria

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

02021

3) Technology and Globalization: Traditional Folk Songs, Children's Songs, and Plays

Since the end of the twentieth century, globalization has become an important factor worldwide; however, the Pandemic has serendipitously connected us even more. With the isolation restrictions, quarantines, and lockdowns everywhere during the Pandemic, technology has served in high demand, especially video conferencing services; thus, people are freely able to communicate anytime and anywhere, regardless of location. Virtual contact has helped people to expand their connections globally, as one is no longer required to be physically present at a specific venue. In the midst of this flow using digital technology, Chihchun Chi-sun Lee composed a series of string orchestra pieces Balladry Series I-V,

inspired by traditional folksongs and children's songs from the five continents, using the mindset of returning to innocence and fundamentals. The five pieces in Balladry Series, ① I — Asian Rhymes【亞韻】; ② II — Voice Of Oceania【大洋之聲】; ③ III — European Canto【歐吟】; ④ IV— African Rapidity【非馳】; and ⑤ V — American Heritages【美醇】, were commissioned and premiered by the MoonString Orchestra in 2020-2021, with funding provided by the Taiwan National Culture and Arts Foundation.

Another by-product of the pandemic's effects was how the internet brought together the world via streamed entertainment. The Netflix series, Squid Game, is such an example, in which a Korean language TV series became popular around the world. In the latest work by Chihchun Lee for the Chinese ensemble, Bagatelles I, her final movement, "Statues", uses inspiration of the game, often known as "Red Light, Green Light", that appears in Squid Game. The formal design of the movement references several languages, as spoken and/or sung by the performers (in the way the game is played in different cultures), with other musical elements characterizing the competitors.

4. Conclusion

One can assume that challenges during a Pandemic might overtake and overpower the desire of accomplishments in any field. Nevertheless, others might find new ways to pursue opportunities via a different approach. Chihchun Chi-sun Lee is an example of a freelance composer, through determination, hard work, and alternating

her regular routines, has continued the progress of her career. Ultimately, 2020-2021 can be considered fruitful years and changing perspectives in the professional life of composer Chihchun Chi-sun Lee.

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개 요

How 2020-2021 Changed the Life Perspectives of
Composer Chihchun Chi-sun Lee

Michael Sidney Timpson · Chichchun Chi-sun Lee

대만계 미국인 작곡가 치천 지선 리는 서울에 거주하는 프리랜서 작곡가이다. 치천 지선 리는 보스턴 심포니 오케스트라의 위촉을 받은 최초의 대만 작곡가이자, 2001년과 2018년 하버드 대학교 프롬 음악 재단의 위촉을 받고, 2015년에는 구겐하임 펠로우를 받은 세계적인 작곡가이다. 세계를 횡단하며 활동하던 작곡가 치천 지선 리는 코로나 19가 가져온 전지구적 영향으로 연주자들과 함께하는 리허설, 관객을 대상으로 하는 무대가 불가능해지면서 작곡가로서의 일상에 큰 변화를 겪었다. 계속해서 여러 음악 단체들과 협연을 기획하며 연주 활동을 이어가야 하는 프리랜서 작곡가에게는 치명적인 영향이 아닐 수 없다.

이 글은 코로나 19가 전 지구를 휩쓴 지난 2년 치천 지선 리가 프리랜서 작곡가로서 겪을 수밖에 없었던 활동의 변화와 그럼에도 악착같이 작곡을 이어나간 그녀의 창작활동을 소개한다. 치천 지선 리는 코로나 19가 가져온 위기를 기회로 바꾸어 디지털 기술을 활용해 물리적 제한 없이 더욱 다양한 지역의 사람들과 소통했다. 코로나 19는 전지구적 단위에서 현재 벌어지고 있는 여러 사회 현안들을 보다 자세하게 들여다볼 기회를 제공했다. 성공적인 코로나 방역을 자랑하지만 여전히 세계정치에서 소외된 그녀의 모국 대만, 미국의 치열한 정치와 선거, 다양한 지역의 전통 민요와 동요 등은 팬데믹 시기 치천 지선 리가 새로 발견하고 경험한 작곡의 원천이다.

주제어: 치천 지선 리, 작곡가, 코로나 19, 팬데믹, 온라인 공연, 대만, 미국

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