

Gangnam tourist center offers hands-on hallyu experience

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Gangnam Tourist Information Center is not your average information center with a bored employee behind a desk with free pamphlets. The multi-dimensional center, created by the Gangnam-gu local government, is not only staffed by highly-qualified employees, but also facilities such as a medical tourism and hallyu experience zone.

Since its opening in June, an average of 200 people have visited the center each day. Due to its convenient location in the vicinity of Apgujeong subway station near Hyundai Department Store, it is easy for anyone to access the available facilities.

"We were thinking of a location that was accessible, and at the same time showcased the trendy and fashionable side of Seoul that was emphasized through Psy's 'Gangnam Style.' A location near Gangnam subway station would be the obvious choice, but actually, Sinsa-dong's Garosu-gil is one of the top must-see places among tourists in Seoul. The Sinsa-dong area is often known as being a very trendy and fashionable place," general manager of Gangnam Tourist Information Center Suna Lee said.

The first floor of the center includes an information desk staffed by employees capa-

ble of speaking English, Japanese and Chinese. Tourists who want to book a one-day city tour or even an excursion to the DMZ can receive help from the desk. Visitors can enjoy free internet and refreshments at the cafe located inside the center.

The medical tourism zone includes four desks with specialists in the areas of plastic surgery, dermatology, Oriental medicine and medical exams. Visitors can enjoy free consultations for a variety of treatments, including minor botox injections and herbal treatments for ailments.

Located on the second floor and filled with photographs and exclusive items from popular hallyu stars, the Hallyu Experience Zone is filled with high-tech displays and fun activities.

In partnership with the Mnet program "M Countdown," the Hallyu Experience Zone features a screen playing performances of the hottest K-pop stars.

The Touch Star Zone has tablet PCs to access unreleased performances and videos of K-pop stars using Near Field Communication technology. Bring one of the center's NFC-equipped tablet PCs near a K-pop idol star displayed on the wall and a video clip



K-pop star-related merchandise is on display at the Hallyu Experience Zone. (Gangnam Tourist Information Center)

will appear on the screen.

"Using the tablets was a cool experience. I always thought of Korea as a very tech-savvy place, so it's no wonder they have these kinds of displays," said Patricia Lin, a foreign exchange student from Hong Kong.

The Hallyu Star Zone provides outfits for

guests to dress up like their favorite K-pop star with a powder room where basic make-up products are available. After donning their favorite K-pop star's get-up, there are several music video backdrops complete with props where visitors can pose and take pictures.

Visiting Korea with a tour group, American native Sarah Blanks said, "What girl doesn't like to dress up? I had so much fun trying different outfits and using the make-up products."

Even for those who are not K-pop fans, the flashy backgrounds and free make-up make for a good photo opportunity.

"Many visitors who come to our center aren't necessarily K-pop fans. Many only know about Psy's 'Gangnam Style,' but a lot of them have fun in the Hallyu Star Zone nonetheless," Lee said, adding, "Many visitors especially from Europe or the United States come as a group, dress in Psy's costume from the 'Gangnam Style' music video and take pictures and videos doing the horse dance."

There is also a small souvenir shop and a rest area that is an exact replica of actor Jang Dong-gun's living room in SBS television series "A Gentleman's Dignity." The rest area is changed every few months to feature different settings.

Gangnam Tourist Information Center is open every day from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

By Cha Yo-rim

ARTIST TALK LOUNGE

Her Sound of Music, "A one-woman orchestra"

An Experimental Musician and Sound Artist, **Bora Yoon**

Bora Yoon(33), Korean-American composer, vocalist and sound artist, drew attention as a cellphone-playing musician, when The Wall Street Journal profiled her on the front page in May 2007. She also creates music playing electric violin/viola, guitar, music box, ancient Tibetan singing bowls, walkie-talkies, metronomes, loops, short-wave radios, found sounds, kitchenware, water and sings with her heavenly voice. "A one-woman orchestra" as hailed by Paul D. Miller, experimental hip-hop musician, A.K.A DJ Spooky, you will never know what she would bring on stage with her wide range spectrum of sonic ambrosia: analog and digital, vintage and modern, Eastern and Western. After the long hibernation from recording since ((PHONATION)) in 2008, she is planning to release "Sunken Cathedral" in multi-phases, including films, music videos, remixes and a staged show in March next year.

Born in Chicago, Bora Yoon started playing piano at five and switched to violin and choral singing. She studied music and creative writing at Ithaca College in New York. She has performed at Lincoln Center, the Nam June Paik Museum(Seoul), the Brooklyn Academy of Music(BAM), the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Festival of World Cultures(Poland), and the Edinburgh International Festival and has received awards from the American Music Center, the Asian American Arts Alliance, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and is a 2014 TED(Technology / Entertainment / Design) Fellow. In NYC, she performs frequently at the Sunday evening services at Church of Ascension. www.borayoon.com.

Q: How did you discover that cellphone could be a musical instrument?

A: There is a setting for the Keypad which was called "Xylophone" which turned the numbers into a musical solfeggio system. Dialing people's numbers made me then realize that there was an inherent melody to the rhythm of how the 7-10 digits are dialed, which is musically diatonic.

Q: What kind of cellphones did you use for music?

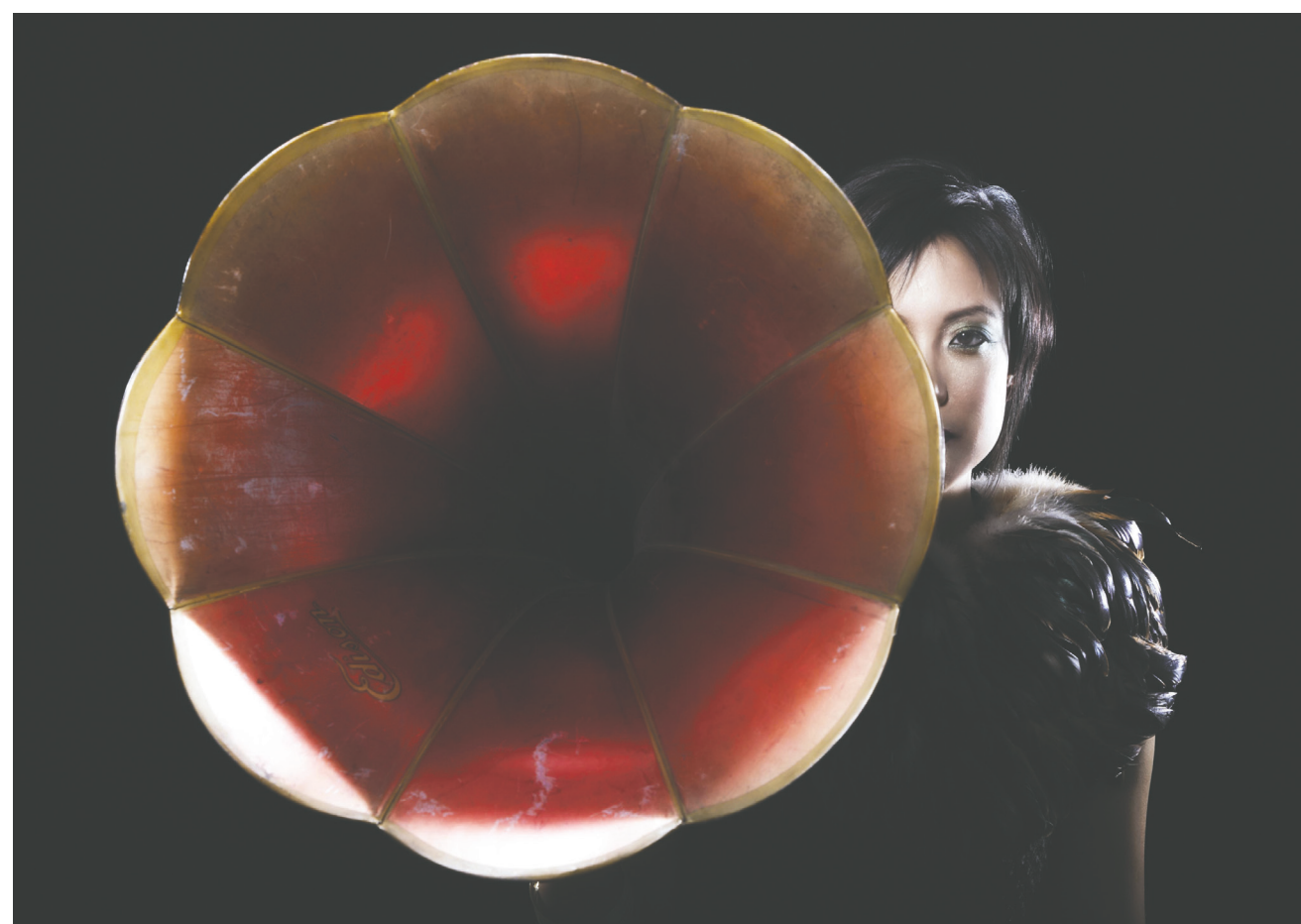
A: Samsung e105, Samsung u740, Samsung slide phones, and Samsung Upstage, hacked and altered with a sampling and looping application created by the Swedish design duo, UNSWORN.

Q: You studied piano and violin like many Korean-American children do. How does your classical music background affect your work now?

A: My classical training is a strong foundation for the way I perceive music, sound, and noise. I have perfect pitch so this became the portal and avenue through which I started analyzing and classifying everyday noises, hums, and drones, into pitches and timbre, pairing them with classical instruments.

Q: How did your music develop as an experimental musician?

A: My evolution as an experimental musi-



Bora Yoon Photo by Leslie Van Stelten

cian and sound artist further expanded when I became interested in film scoring, and saw how sound design could play a powerful, interesting, and dynamically subtle role in establishing space, place, and also triggering aspects of memory, nostalgia, and associations. My live performances are essentially a live Foley(sound effects) and musical concert, combining film scoring

order to allow for the energy in the room to remain flexible and circulate, since that is what I feel my work is about as an artist: circulation.

Q: You scored "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle," a multi-media performance based on Haruki Murakami's novel. How was the experience to capture the music for Mu-

each character.

Q: Have you used Korean traditional sounds or rhythms in your music?

A: I am particularly interested in this circle of how old and ancient circulates with the new and modern. It is very much like the yin/yang found in the center of the Korean flag, and the philosophy of balance, and cir-

"My works are 80% structured within a set-list and then 20% left as margin to 'breathe' and adjust to the energy in the room. It is important to me as a performer, that there is space left for improvisation, in order to allow for the energy in the room to remain flexible and circulate, since that is what I feel my work is about as an artist: circulation."

and a classical concert experience, but with transparency, seeing the objects, the sound makers, performance, with moving image.

Q: With so many instruments and sounds in the performance and so many different venues, how much do you improvise?

A: My works are 80% structured within a set-list and then 20% left as margin to 'breathe' and adjust to the energy in the room. It is important to me as a performer, that there is space left for improvisation, in

rakami's literary world?

A: Live scoring and performing as the musician in the "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" was one of the most enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding projects I've ever been a part of. As a composer, it refined and expanded my language of how to live-score what is virtually an on-stage film. Developing a language of what instruments depict which characters / locations (water, well, dream world, hotel world, in between worlds) and composing different musical themes for

ulation. I am realizing there is a great deal of this sentiment in my work, as I create this new record and album.

Q: Recently you also performed with Vong Park, the Korean percussionist in New York.

A: I have been interested in collaborating with Vong for many years. His sonic palette as a traditional Korean percussionist in drumming and dance offers a different language than what I do, in a great and dynam-

ic way. Collaborating with Vong offers the spice or "doenjang" (*fermented soybean paste, "miso" in Japanese) of Korea, mixed into the modern side of my music, to create something that encompasses both analog and digital, traditional and contemporary. A phrase I heard my mother say many years ago: "Piga ddaenggyeo!" has intrigued me for years.

It literally means that your blood pulls when you know your own, or you can recognize something that is of you. There comes a point in one's artistic and personal development where you start to wonder WHY you are who you are, WHY you make what you make.

Q: Then what was the influence from your parents on your music?

A: The more I study my recent body of work, and also where my parents are from, Jeollabuk-do, the tradition and history of Pansori, and mudangs, and the shamanistic / spiritual / animistic connection of music and spiritual circulation, I see correlations and similar aspects of how I approach the philosophy of music and arrangement, and how I create my creative compositions. It makes me wonder whether at times, I might literally be creating just my own version of Pansori with everyday objects and modern or classical instruments at my disposal today.

One track on my forthcoming record features my mother speaking to me on voicemail and also is created from an altered childhood rhythm called 'Cups'. It is lovingly titled: "Jansori Pansori"

Q: You have also collaborated with Korean kinetic sculptor Uram Choe on making a musical film incorporating his art.

A: Last fall, I traveled to Korea with filmmaker Adam Larsen, to meet Uram Choe, and film his otherworldly artworks of during his annual art exhibit at Hyundai Gallery in Seoul. Uram's frighteningly beautiful sculptures are both ancient and futuristic, dangerous and alluring, breathable and alive.

The creative process behind these 'art films' has been to pair filmmakers and visual artists with the sonic aesthetic and visual imagery of a featured musical track from my forthcoming record "Sunken Cathedral."

Q: What is the sound you like most?

A: Thunderstorms.

Q: What is the sound you dislike most?

A: I don't think there is a sound I dislike, oddly. Even the most irritating sound has the ability to say something in the work that I do, like cinematic storytelling through sound and music.

Q: And what is music to you?

A: A medium in which human communication and expression finds a language to speak, tell stories, and express itself in abstract, beautiful ways.

By Sukie Park