

Friday 17 May 2024  
7pm  
Milton Court Concert Hall

**GUILDHALL**  
SCHOOL

# Um [Sprouting]

**Yeonjoon Yoon** piano & composition

**Yeji Kim** haegeum

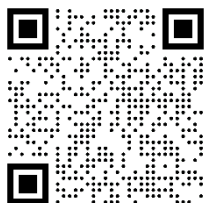
**Hannah Kim** percussion & voice

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## Digital Programme

To access our digital programme, please scan the QR code below on your digital device or visit:

[guildhall-programmes.co.uk/um-sprouting-may2024](https://guildhall-programmes.co.uk/um-sprouting-may2024)



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## Milton Court

Please make sure that digital devices & mobile phones are silenced during the performance. Eating is not permitted in the auditorium. Drinks are allowed inside the auditorium in polycarbonates. Filming or recording of the performance is not permitted. Latecomers will be able to enter the auditorium at a suitable break in the performance.

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Um [Sprouting] is a project of original works by pianist, composer, improviser and winner of the Guildhall Gold Medal 2018, Yeonjoon Yoon. Fusing his deep understanding of Western classical music with his native Korean roots, Yeonjoon's work draws inspiration from the sounds and sights of South Korea.

The concert begins with pieces for solo piano spanning from the Baroque era to the contemporary, featuring composers from Bach to Brad Mehldau, and Chopin to Philip Glass. The profound influence of these composers on Yoon's artistic journey is demonstrated in the final piece of the first half, his original composition Etude No 1, *Recursion*.

After the interval, Yeonjoon takes centre stage to showcase his original compositions and improvisations, accompanied by Korean traditional musicians Yeji Kim on Haegeum (string) and Hannah Kim on percussion and voice. The performance concludes with a tribute to Ryuichi Sakamoto, a rendition of his exquisite *Thousand Knives*.

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## Um [Sprouting]

Composed by **Yeonjoon Yoon**

Arranged and performed by **Yeji Kim, Hannah Kim and Yeonjoon Yoon**

Produced by **Daeun Kim and Yeonjoon Yoon**

Photo/Videography by **Dasol Kim**



**ARTS COUNCIL KOREA**

This project was generously supported by **Arts Council Korea**

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# Programme

JS Bach 'Prelude No 3 in C-sharp major' from *The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I, BWV 848* (1722)

Brad Mehldau *After Bach: Rondo* (2018)

Schönberg *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke, Op 19* (1911)

*I. Leicht, zart (Light, delicate)*

*II. Langsam (Slow)*

*III. Sehr langsame (Very slow)*

*IV. Rasch, aber leicht (Brisk, but light)*

*V. Etwas rasch (Somewhat brisk)*

*VI. Sehr langsam (Very slow)*

Isang Yun *Fünf Stücke für Klavier (I–V)* (1958)

Chopin *Etude Op 10, No 1* (1829)

Glass *Etude Book 1, No 2* (1995)

Yeonjoon Yoon *Etude No 1 'Recursion'* (2024)

## INTERVAL

Yoon Um: *Sprouting* (2023)

Yoon Mu-ak: *Shaman Dance* (2023)

Yoon *Improvisation*

Yoon Kiwa *Underwater* (2023)

Yoon *Jak-dal: Downpour* (2024)

Yoon San-myeong: *Trembling Peaks* (2024)

Ryuichi Sakamoto *Thousand Knives* (1978)

(arranged by Yeonjoon Yoon, Yeji Kim and Hannah Kim)

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## Notes

### **Etude No 1, *Recursion***

The creation of this etude stemmed from my obsession with groove, inspired by pop beats, namely the UK Garage genre. This was further deepened by the works of the South Korean painter Sangnam Lee, whose pieces I encountered at the Perrotin in Seoul. His works are products of repeated grinding, which almost attain the level of flawlessness seen in machine-made products. I found his craftsmanship analogous to playing the acoustic piano in a digital age: while repeated sounds can be flawlessly executed and created by machines, I somehow find meaning and value in striving to reach that state manually on the piano.

### **Um: Sprouting**

Written during my military service in Paju, Korea, this piece was inspired by the mountain lines of the region, which overlooks the borders of North Korea. “움트다 (um-teu-da)” in Korean means ‘to sprout’. This work embodies aspirations for unity, not only for the reunification of South and North Korea, but also for the unity of mind and body, and of the self and the other.

### **Mu-ak: Shaman Dance**

“무악 (mu-ak)” is the name of the district in Seoul where I reside, and it's where shamans reside along the mountain lines of In-wang. In Korean, “무악” happens to mean ‘Shaman Dance’. This work portrays the mysterious energy of the shamans, whose sound and presence I encountered during occasional strolls along the In-wang mountain.

### **Improvisation**

What does it mean to improvise? It is an act of exploring the world of the subconscious, where there is no room for judgment. It is an investigation into the world of 선 (Seon), which in the Western world is known as Zen. Haegeum player and composer Yeji Kim, who has been a frequent improvisation partner, joins me for a free improvisation.

### **Kiwa Underwater**

“기와 (ki-wa)” is a traditional South Korean roof tile, often seen in Korean landscapes. These tiles evoke a sense of calm amidst the forest of apartments that dominate the Korean scenery. I attempted to capture this sentiment through this work.

### **Jak-dal: Downpour**

I have been fascinated by repetitions and have sought out natural sounds that repeat. The sound of falling rain captured my attention and inspired me to convey its energy through the piano and Korean instruments. “작달 (jak-dal)” means ‘heavy rain’ in Korean. This piece is my portrayal of the Sturm und Drang, accompanied by haegeum, percussion, and voice.

### **San-myeong: Trembling Peaks**

Chirping birds, howling wind, swaying leaves, wandering animals, bells ringing, praying shamans... Countless sounds of the In-wang mountain come together and resonate. “산명 (san-myeong)” means ‘resonating mountains’. This work is my attempt at capturing them through the piano, haegeum, and percussion.

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## About the Artists

### **Yeonjoon Yoon** piano & composition

Born in Seoul, pianist/composer/improviser Yeonjoon Yoon (previously Joon Yoon) explores music without boundaries and collaborates with Korean traditional, band, jazz, and electronic musicians. In 2021, he was forced to halt his musical endeavours due to the Coronavirus pandemic and mandatory military service in his homeland, South Korea. He became aware of a newly realized aesthetic upon exploring the sounds of a worn-out upright piano, which was the only available piano to him in the military base. This inevitably led him to compose, and improvise. Upcoming works include an ARKO (Arts Council Korea) sponsored project of original works titled 'Um' featuring Korean traditional musicians, to be presented at Barbican's Milton Court by Guildhall School, and the JCC Creative Centre (designed by Tadao Ando) in Seoul in August 2024, in addition to collaborations with artists of diverse genres and mediums, and film.

Yeonjoon is a graduate of the Peabody Preparatory, Juilliard School in New York, Yale University School of Music, and Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London with full scholarships. He also studied at Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin as a DAAD scholar, where he is a candidate for the school's highest degree, Konzertexamen. He has won numerous prizes in international piano competitions in the USA, France, Spain, and Italy, and was the unanimous winner of Guildhall School's prestigious Gold Medal prize, for which he was named a BBC Music Magazine Rising Star.

### **Yeji Kim** haegeum

Yeji Kim is an artist making various attempts across all genres, from Korean traditional to improvisation and modern music, with her unique powerful touch and delicate sensibility. She continues to study the boundaries between noise and music and applies them through musical expressions. She served as a standing member of Cheongju City's Gugak Orchestra and is a candidate for a master's degree at Seoul National University Graduate School of Music, focusing on research, performance activities and studies on musical instruments. She is a member of the electroacoustic trio, saaamkiim.

### **Hannah Kim** percussion & voice

Hannah Kim is a Korean traditional percussionist and multi-instrumentalist. She explores a range of areas, including experimental jazz, electronic, contemporary, and improvised music. Since 2015, she has performed in countless performances both on international and domestic stages. In 2023, she released her song *Out to the Ocean*, supported by the National Gugak Centre.