

Press Release
Updated 27.09.24

barbican

[Lear](#)

The National Changgeuk Company of Korea

International premiere

Barbican Theatre

3 – 6 October 2024 (press performance Thu 3 Oct, 7pm)

7pm 3-5 Oct; 2pm 6 Oct



Lear by The National Changgeuk Company of Korea. UK premiere at the Barbican Theatre, Oct 2024.
Credit Jeon Kangin

National Changgeuk Company of Korea (NCKK) make their Barbican debut this autumn with the international premiere of *Lear*, a visionary restaging of one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies into a spellbinding traditional Korean opera. This major new production, critically acclaimed at its premiere in Korea's National Theatre in 2022, retells the familiar story in the form of Changgeuk. This culturally significant and artistically rich theatrical form in Korea blends music, dance, and drama to create immersive storytelling experiences rooted in Korean tradition and heritage. Running 3 – 6 October, *Lear* will open the UK-wide K-Music Festival 2024, showcasing contemporary Korean music based on traditions.

The prestigious NCKK has been leading a great resurgence of this traditional Korean opera style for contemporary, multi-generational audiences in recent years, for increasingly global audiences. Choosing Shakespeare's timeless masterpiece as inspiration, NCKK's *Lear* incorporates ancient philosophy, Korean language and spectacular staging to explore the nature of our existence.

Lear is helmed by some of Korea's leading creatives, performers and musicians. The text, by one of the country's greatest playwrights, **Pai Sam-shik** (*Trojan Women*), intertwines Shakespeare's tale of a powerful king's descent into madness with Lao-tzu's ancient philosophy of water, the natural world and balance, connecting with the deep Korean emotion of "han" (symbolising grief and sorrow).

Direction and choreography are by **Jung Young-doo**, who has an extensive background in dance, theatre and musicals, with Pansori scores (a traditional Korean genre of musical storytelling) composed by **Han Seung-seok**. Additional music is written by K-Pop producer **Jung Jae-il**, behind the global hits *Parasite* and *Squid Game* (Season 2 will be available to stream on Netflix from December), who returns to the Barbican following his sold-out solo concert at the Hall as part of K-Music Festival 2023. The stunning set design by **Lee Tae-sup** conceals a 20-ton pool which gradually animates a quiet but vibrant world of water, drawing us to the deep, bottomless abyss of the human mind.

The cast is led by 33-year-old Pansori idol **Kim Jun-su** as Lear. Since joining the company in 2014 as the youngest performer in NCKK's history, he has become one of the most high-profile Pansori stars in Korea, highly praised for his interpretations of leading classical roles such as gender-swapped 'Helen' in *Trojan Women* and *Medea*, and his age-blind casting in *Lear*.

Finding versatility through Changgeuk, NCKK have created wildly popular, fresh interpretations of classic stories and characters for over a decade, featuring collaborations from the hottest contemporary Korean artists working alongside experts in traditional styles such as Pansori. Registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage with populist roots dating back to the 17th century, Pansori's epic storytelling is traditionally performed solely by a single vocalist or a *sorikkun*, weaving a story with *chang* (song), *aniri* (descriptive speech), and *nurumsae* (gesture) alongside a drummer (*gosu*) and with minimal staging. In *Lear*, NCKK present an experience that is uniquely Korean, masterfully incorporating Pansori techniques such as the instantly recognisable, guttural sound of the vocals, with the emotional punch of K-Pop played by a 13-piece orchestra, and a large cast performing on the elaborate and breathtaking set.

On *Trojan Women* (Edinburgh International Festival 2023)

★★★★★ "high-octane...scintillating from start to finish" – **The Guardian**

"visually and musically spectacular... a dazzling production" – **Financial Times**

ENDS

Press Information

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

HBL, Communications Manager (Theatre & Dance)

HBL@barbican.org.uk or +44 20 3834 1187

Sumayyah Sheikh, Communications Assistant (Theatre & Dance and Cinema)

sumayyah.sheikh@barbican.org.uk

For enquiries about K-Music Festival 2024, please contact:

Steve Rose, Measure PR

steve@measurepr.co.uk

Images

Images can be downloaded here:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/mwsfvb52xm7k7fx8o2tfw/ANI0E_d3BUxANQIC0LP6BL0?rlkey=d0grh4o1vh5st3py01gscdxog&dl=0

Listings

Barbican Centre

Silk St, Barbican, London EC2Y 8DS

National Changgeuk Company of Korea: *Lear*

UK premiere

Thu 3 – Sun 6 Oct 2024 (4 performances)

Press performance: Thu 3 Oct, 7pm

Barbican Theatre

7pm on Thu 3 – Sat 5 Oct; 2pm on Sun 6 Oct

3 hours 10 mins (inc interval)

Age guidance: 12+

Content guidance: This production includes swearing, some violence and fake blood.

From £16 plus booking fee; £15 Young Barbican tickets available

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2024/event/changgeuk-company-of-korea-lear>

Performed in Korean with English surtitles

Creative Team:

Jung Young-doo: Director & Choreographer

Pai Sam-shik: Playwright after Shakespeare

Han Seung-seok: Pansori Composer & Music Director

Jung Jae-il: Composer

Lee Tae-sup: Set Designer

Ma Sun-young: Lighting Designer

Ji Young: Sound Designer

Jung Min-sun: Costume Designer

Park Hyun-yi: Prop Designer

Jung Ji-ho: Hair & Make-up Designer

Cast:

Lear: Kim Jun-su

Gloucester: Yu Tae Pyung Yang

Cordelia: Min Eun-kyung

Goneril: Yi So Yeon

Regan: Wang Yun-jeong

Edgar: Lee Kwang-bok

Edmund: Kim Su-in

Albany: Choi Ho-seong

Cornwall: Choi Yong-seok

Oswald: Cho Yu-ah

Knight: Park Sung-woo

Chorus: Kim Woo-jeong, Park Kyung-min, Lee Seong-hyun, Lee Na-kyung

Musicians:

Geomungo: Choi Young-hoon

Ajaeng: Park Hee-jung

Buk: Cho Young-su

Daegeum: Lee Won-wang

Piri: Lee Sung-do

Gayageum: Hwang So-ra

Percussion: Jun Kye-youl

Saenghwang: Oh Cho-rong

Synthesiser: Lee Ye-jee

Synthesiser: Yu Chan-mi

Violin: Ahn Se-hoon

Vilola: Cho Jae-hyun

Cello: Ra In-kuk

Presented by the Barbican

National Changgeuk Company of Korea's presentation of *Lear* is supported by the Korean Cultural Centre UK.

Part of K-Music Festival 2024

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the National Changgeuk Company of Korea

National Changgeuk Company of Korea is one of the resident companies of the National Theater of Korea and it has been presenting traditional Korean opera for the past six decades. Since 2012, the company has explored wider possibilities within the genre, adopting contemporary themes, collaborating with international artists and reaching a global audience for the first time. The company made their UK premiere with their acclaimed restaging of Euripides' *Trojan Women* (LIFT 2018; Edinburgh International Festival 2023).

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [the BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Britten Sinfonia](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Theatre Productions](#).

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