

“A composer who revitalizes the stage and reminds us why we make music.” — NPO Klassiek

Composer, performer, and curator **Il Hoon Son** asks questions through music—questions that do not seek answers, but rather create space for pause and presence. Observing the space where music lingers—between light and shadow, between time, between silence and speech—he composes, performs, and curates wherever his presence is needed. As he lives and thinks within music, he weaves together diverse structural languages including literature, dance, Korean traditional music, and improvisation, shaping a musical language that is at once structural and immediate, playful and precise.

A defining strand of his work is the **Musical Game Series**, where the concept of “game” becomes a compositional method. These pieces unfold as real-time listening games onstage: performers respond to one another in the moment, the audience can sense and follow the rules as they emerge, and the stage becomes an arena of shared attention—often closing in laughter and applause. Among the most widely performed is **20 Questions**, a dialogue in which two pianists take turns asking and answering through performance, producing a different outcome every time. Premiered at Dag in de Branding in The Hague, the work drew immediate attention and has remained a frequent presence on stage. **Rhythm Bomb**—premiered at Muziekgebouw Amsterdam—is a rhythmic game piece that merges structure with improvisation; warmly received by both audience and ensemble, it returned again in the Nieuw Ensemble’s farewell concert. Son’s later works **Game of Yut “All or Nothing”**, translating a traditional Korean board game into musical action, and **Sense**, featuring a human and a robot conductor in creative cooperation rather than conflict, were premiered by the National Orchestra of Korea and subsequently covered by outlets including Classic FM and Forbes.

“20 Questions is an astonishing game that delights in sound and playfully reimagines how music is made.” — Auditorium Magazine

Son’s musical world also emerges from subtle moments where reality and imagination overlap—slower than words, yet somehow closer. Several of his works are available via streaming. **Meditations**, a three-movement chamber work, invites listeners into quiet time, gently opening their senses. The recorder solo **Narcissus / Movement within Stillness** traces the emotional resonance of narcissism, echoism, and self-reflection. **Gradient** for solo flute explores gradual shifts in density and color, revealing changes that are almost imperceptible until a new atmosphere is suddenly felt. **Meeting Point** is a piano four-hands work born from memories of meetings and farewells in train stations and airports across Europe. **Skytree’s Blue Hour**, evoking the atmosphere of Tokyo, was performed live at Suntory Hall in celebration of the 60th anniversary of Korea–Japan diplomatic relations.

He has collaborated with artists such as Yeoleum Son, Sunwook Kim, Richard-Hyungki Joo, Yekwon Sunwoo, Yoonseung Cho, Sunhae Im, Jongdo An, Ena Uotani, Jonghai Park, Laurens de Man, Ivan Vukosavljević, Alex Kordzaia, Heejin Chang, Sunghyun Cho, Youngjin Hur, Taeguk

Moon, Jaehyeong Lee, Sooyeol Choi, Ryan Bancroft, Ed Spanjaard, Leonard Kwon, and Seunghyun Baik. Ensembles include Nieuw Ensemble, Amsterdam Piano Quartet, Rotterdam Alexander Kamerkoor, Ensemble ClubM, Neo-Fanfare 9×13, AltemusikSeoul, BachsolistenSeoul, and Korean Arts Wind. Orchestras include the National Orchestra of Korea, the Seoul Metropolitan Traditional Music Orchestra, the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra, the Geumjeong Classic Week Orchestra, and Korean Chamber Orchestra Modernism.

“His piece Meditations articulates what modern sound truly feels like.” — KBS Classics

His questions do not stay within the music alone. As a curator, Son is drawn to “mix-and-match” programming across eras—from Renaissance music to contemporary works—while placing classical repertoire in dialogue with Korean traditional music and jazz, and bringing overlooked or lesser-known pieces back into the light. His artistic leadership includes serving as Artistic Advisor for Music in PyeongChang (2019–2022), Music Director for Bupyeong Arts Center’s Brunch Concerts in Incheon (2021–2024), Artistic Director of the 9th M Classic Festival at Mapo Arts Center in Seoul (2024), and Artistic Director of Geumjeong Classic Week in Busan (2024–2025), under themes such as Legato: The Art of Connection. He also hosts the broadcast dialogue series Il Hoon Son’s Questions on Hankyung ArteTV, continuing his inquiry through conversation and listening.

As a producer and pianist, Son released the album *In Early Spring* (2024) with cellist Hoechan Lee, reinterpreting art songs by Grieg alongside works by Schubert, Brahms, Schumann, and Mahler. He later released the solo piano album *At Your Dawn* (2025), expanding his recorded world toward solitude, afterimage, and quiet continuity of time.

Recent and upcoming projects continue to extend his musical questions forward. *Fanfare sempre in avanti* for orchestra was premiered by Sunwook Kim and the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra. His new work *Ouga, Song of Five Friends*—setting the Joseon poet Gosan Yun Seondo’s sijo—was premiered by Soo-Yeol Choi, featuring singer Lee Bong Geun and Korean Chamber Orchestra Modernism. In 2026, he will present a wind quintet, a solo horn piece, and a duet for so-geum and sheng. In 2027, he is scheduled to premiere a Latin Mass for the closing ceremony of World Youth Day. As the phrase *sempre in avanti* suggests, Son’s music focuses less on arrival than on the act of moving forward—sharing, each time, the courage and energy to continue.