Meet the Korean team

behind the Global Women's Performing Art Festival

HYE-JA JU

Co-Artistic Director (GWPAF)

Hye-Ja (Heather) Ju is a theatre director from Busan, South Korea, who explores human nature and social issues through actor-focused productions. A graduate of Kyungsung University's Theatre and Film Studies program, Hye-Ja founded BAE KWAN GONG Theater in 2004 to push the boundaries of stage art with original and reinterpreted works.

Hye-Ja's acclaimed productions include *Anne Frank*, performed internationally in Colombia and the United States; *My Dear, Helen,* a show about the life of Helen Keller at the Busan Cinema Center; and *The Stone,* presented at Adapter Theatre. Her Korean adaptations, such as *Death and the Maiden*, *House Sonata*, *Mil Dawon*, and *Anna Christie*, showcase her dedication to socially relevant storytelling, engaging audiences with themes of memory, gender, and societal control.

Since 2020, Hye-Ja has led the Global Women Performing Arts Festival (GWPAF), which she co-founded to address women's issues globally and locally. GWPAF has become a platform for raising awareness of gender inequality, sexual violence, and other challenges, supporting female artists and fostering cross-cultural exchange through performance.

In addition to directing, Hye-Ja is a mentor and educator, having taught at Korea Video University and led acting programs at Dongnae Girls' Middle School. Her community programs include *Dream of a Musical Star* and *Another Downtown Walking Tour*, an initiative introducing students to theatre. Hye-Ja's extensive work emphasizes theatre's social impact, championing the arts as a vehicle for empathy and societal change in Korea and internationally.

JAKYUNG C. SEO

Co-Artistic Director (GWPAF)

Jakyung C. Seo is a founder and co-artistic director of Global Women Performing Arts Festival in Busan, South Korea. She is a designer with a portfolio spanning over 100 productions. Her work has graced renowned theaters such as the Cleveland Play House, Steppenwolf, and Congo Square Theatre in Chicago, as well as Dobama Theatre and Cleveland Public Theatre. Additionally, she has made significant contributions to Contemporary American Theatre Company (CATCO) in Columbus, HEAR theatre in New York, and Lodestone Theatre in Los Angeles. Internationally recognized, Jakyung's lighting designs have been showcased at esteemed venues including the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the UK, Avignon Off Festival in France, and the Sibiu International Theatre Festival in Romania. She has also participated in the Busan International Performing Arts Festival and earned accolades for her work with the Thrust Dance Company at the International Dance Festival in Saitama, Japan.

As a scholarly practitioner, Jakyung has presented over 20 sessions at events such as PQ Scenofest in Prague, United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT), and the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) since 2004.

Currently serving as the Artistic Director of the Global Women Performing Arts Festival (GWPAF), Jakyung is dedicated to amplifying the voices of female artists. Under her leadership, GWPAF has hosted virtual events, including a collaboration with the Martha Graham Dance Company.

In addition to her creative and scholarly endeavors, Jakyung is a passionate educator. She has conducted lighting design workshops in Thailand, Singapore, and South Korea. Jakyung holds the position of Professor of Lighting Design and serves as the Coordinator of BFA and MFA Design, Technology, and Production at Kent State University (KSU). Prior to her tenure at KSU, she held teaching positions at the University of Cincinnati, California State University, Fresno and University of Toledo.

JI-SOOK LEE

Producer (GWPAF)

Ji-Sook Lee is a cultural planner and theatre producer based in South Korea.

With a rich background in the arts, she currently serves as the president of Art Company Yeosul Ddaegabi and the director of the Creative Culture Vitality Center. Additionally, she is a producer for at BAE KWAN GONG Theater and is the General Manager of the Global Women Performing Arts Festival.

She was General Manager at Han-Gyeol Art Hall (2017-2018) as well as the operations manager at the Old City Creative Space Ddotado (2011 and 2016). Ji-Sook was also the secretary-general of the Busan International Kids & Youth Film Festival (2010 to 2011) and the General Manager for the Busan International Theatre (2006 to 2010).

Ji-Sook is known for her extensive work as a producer, bringing numerous theatrical productions to life. Notable works include *Anne Frank*, *My Dear Helen*, and international co-productions like *Little Chapel* (United States), *Didn't I Do Well?* (South Korea), *If It's Clear I'll See It* (Japan), and *Wave Girl* (South Korea). Her innovative approach to theatre was recognized in 2016 when she was selected for an international residency by the Busan Foundation for Culture where she coordinated the New York production of *My Dear Helen*.