

## Gimhae, KOREA

### Gimhae Promotes UNESCO Creative Assets through the *Gayageum*: World National Anthems and City Symbolic Songs Arranged into *Gayageum* Pieces as Gifts

Gimhae, which became a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network of Crafts and Folk Art in 2021, conducted a project in December 2023 to disseminate *gayageum* music, promoting the excellence of the city's crafts and folk art creative assets and expressing the desire for active network cooperation with other cities around the world.



The project aimed to spread the traditional culture and excellence of the *gayageum* through the *gayageum* music performed by Gimhae's representative creative asset, the Gimhae Municipal Gayageum Orchestra (director: Hwang Jeong-suk), and to create opportunities for active

international networking with UNESCO Creative Cities.

According to the *Samguk Sagi* (Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms), the oldest existing history book in Korea, the *gayageum*, also known as the *gayago*, was created by King Gasil of the Gaya Kingdom, an ancient kingdom of Gimhae. A unique traditional Korean stringed instrument, the *gayageum* is a representative creative asset of Gimhae, which is branded as the “Royal Capital of Gaya, Gimhae.”

The city established the Gimhae Municipal Gayageum Orchestra in 1998 to preserve the history and authenticity of the *gayageum*, to promote its succession and dissemination, and contribute to the development of arts and culture. Gimhae stands out among local governments by operating a *gayageum* orchestra composed exclusively of this instrument. The Municipal Gayageum Orchestra performs about 30 times a year, presenting traditional music imbued with the spirit of our ancestors and contemporary creative music, fulfilling its role as a cultural ambassador.



Since July 2023, the city has been reaching out to both domestic and international UNESCO Creative Cities as well as sister/friendship cities, sharing *gayageum* performance promotional videos, promotional materials of crafts and folk art creative assets, and information about the *gayageum* performance dissemination project.

Several cities sent musical scores from various genres, including national anthems and songs symbolizing cities, with the wish to have them performed by the *gayageum*. After careful consideration, a total of six cities were selected. The selected cities include Bida in Nigeria, a creative city of crafts and folk art, as well as Gimhae's sister cities of Biên Hòa in Vietnam, Wuxi in China, Lakewood in the USA, and Munakata in Japan, as well as the Embassy of India.

Gimhae City arranged and recorded these pieces on the *gayageum*, preserving the original feeling and intentions of the composers. In addition, to convey the meaning of this project, the city produced a video explaining the process, introducing creative assets, and expressing the hope for active network exchanges in various fields. This video, along with the *gayageum* pieces, shared with domestic and international creative cities.

Through this project, Gimhae expects its excellent creative assets to be shared and enjoyed by all creative cities.

Woo-in JANG  
(Focal Point of Gimhae)