

Songs of Love from Hawai'i



From Songs of Love : For Our Cherished Ancestors

Testimonials

“A beautiful film with very effective storytelling techniques, music with graphics and narration in both Korean and English. The music is enchanting and haunting at the same time and by itself evokes a lot of emotion.”

Chuck Parker, VP of Content, PBS Hawai'i

**“Songs of Love” is a testament to the artistry of capturing history.
It gently reminds us of the debts we owe to the past,
urging us not to be mere passengers but mindful stewards,
honoring the profound journey that has shaped our lives.”**

Choi, Tae Sung, Historian and TV Personality of S. Korea

**“Just beautiful from start to finish. One is left sort of speechless.
Such a masterful job of music, meaning, and Hawai'i.”**

Edward Shultz, interim dean of the School of Pacific and Asian Studies at Univ. of Hawai'i



Logline

A journey of untold stories of sacrifice, love, and unbreakable bonds of the first Korean immigrants in Hawaii.

Synopsis

Told in three unique stories, Songs of Love from Hawaii is a hybrid historical drama that uncovers the journeys of Hawaii's first Korean immigrants. From picture bride Lim Ok Soon to those isolated in Kalaupapa, their tales of love, sacrifice, and resilience come alive through stunning performances by world-class musicians and rare archival images against Hawaii's breathtaking landscapes.



Project Details

- Title: Songs of Love from Hawai'i / 하와이 연가
- Running Time: 62 minutes
- Director & Executive Producer: Jinyoung Lee
- Language: English / Korean
- Genre: Musical Drama Film
- Official Film Website:
www.therainbowwords.com/songs-of-love
- Theatrical Release: October 30, 2024 in S. Korea, attracting over 14,000 attendees and earning 9.7/10 on NAVER and 96% "Egg" rate on CGV.
- Currently, the film is available on OTT platforms in Korea and on Amazon Prime Video in the US and the UK.

Awards and Accolades



- Official Invitation to the 43rd Hawai'i International Film Festival
- Funded by Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation and the Academy of Korean Studies of Academy of Korean Studies (AKS).
- Aired on PBS Hawai'i once locally, captivating the local audience and garnering exceptional reviews for its heartfelt storytelling.
- Nationwide theatrical release in Korea via CGV / CJ Entertainment
- Screening invitation by Honolulu Museum of Art, Incheon Metropolitan Museum, Georgetown Univ. UC Irvine, The Korea Society and many more.

Summary

Embark on a 62-minute musical odyssey through the diverse history of Korean American immigrants in Hawai‘i. This film weaves together three stories, blending historical narratives with soul-stirring musical performances.

Part 1 : Their Footsteps

In this 13-minute story, viewers are transported through the captivating tapestry of Korean immigrant history in Hawai‘i. Beyond recounting historical milestones, the episode delves deep into the aspirations that drove these pioneers. An array of previously unseen archival images and footage, including direct descendants like former Mayor Harry Kim and Chief Justice Ronald Moon, offer an intimate perspective. The story resonates with musical performances that echo the emotions of the past, as Ignace “Iggy” Jang’s masterful violin and Christine Suehisa Jang's skillful piano conjure melodies that breathe life into the historic sites of O‘ahu Island.



Film Synopsis

Part 2 : My Halmeoni's Brass Bowl

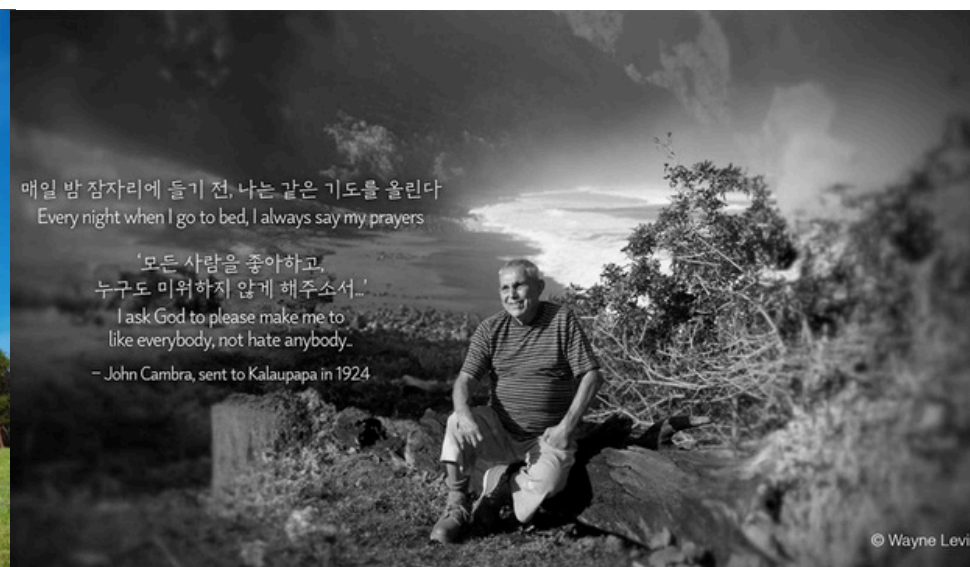
Spanning 25 minutes, this forthcoming story weaves a poignant tapestry of the life of Lim Ok Soon, a young Korean woman who was orphaned by the Japanese invasion. With little options, she became a picture bride to a Korean immigrant plantation worker in Hawai'i. With bravery, she navigates the trials of a foreign land, forging a legacy of love and determination. Accompanied by a poignant musical repertoire including "Thinking of Brother," "Arirang," and "Danny Boy," Grammy Award-winning Korean American violist Richard Yongjae O'Neill infuses Lim's story with deep emotional resonance. Filming in historical landmarks such as Kuli'ou'ou Beach Park, Ho'omaluhia Botanical Gardens, and Nu'uuanu Memorial Park, the story melds history and music seamlessly.



Film Synopsis

Part 3 : For Our Cherished Ancestors

Concluding the film, this 18-minute-long story is a heartfelt musical tribute to the souls who found their rest in Molokai's Kalaupapa. Through hauntingly beautiful renditions of “Aloha ‘Oe” and more, the episode immortalizes their memory. The world renowned violinists of Chee-Yun and Ignace “Iggy” Jang, coupled with Keola Beamer’s soulful slack-key guitar and vocals, weave a powerful elegy against Kalaupapa's backdrop. Amidst the island’s remote landscapes, the story not only showcases resilience in the face of adversity but that home is not a place, it is the people.



매일 밤 잠자리에 들기 전, 나는 같은 기도를 올린다
Every night when I go to bed, I always say my prayers

‘모든 사람을 좋아하고,
누구도 미워하지 않게 해주소서.’
I ask God to please make me to
like everybody, not hate anybody.

– John Cambra, sent to Kalaupapa in 1924

Director’s Statement

As a journalist and filmmaker, I’ve always felt a deep connection to my heritage and the untold stories of those who came before me. Songs of Love from Hawai‘i is not just a historical account—it’s a heartfelt tribute to the courage and dreams of the Korean immigrants who laid down roots in Hawai‘i over the past century. Music, like history, has the power to transcend time and borders, and this film represents my effort to weave both into a tapestry that honors my ancestors and preserves their legacies. I hope audiences walk away not just with knowledge of history, but with a sense of the humanity and shared experiences that define us all.

Director’s Biography

An award-winning journalist-turned-filmmaker, Jinyoung Lee earned her degree in Journalism and Multimedia from Ewha Womans University in Seoul, Korea. Since her relocation to Hawai‘i in 2005, she seamlessly transitioned from journalism to cinema, leveraging her extensive background in Korean media. In 2012, Jinyoung founded Now Production Films, a nonprofit film studio with a vision to create impactful films that bridge gaps between cultures and contribute positively to society. Her debut film, “The Words of Wisdom from the Rainbow State” (2021), received global acclaim and graced prestigious events like the 41st Hawai‘i International Film Festival. In her latest project, “Songs of Love from Hawai‘i” (2024), Jinyoung merges cultures through music, combining rare historic photographs with enchanting performances by world-renowned musicians.



Cast and Key Crew

Matt Yamashita, Director of Photography

An Emmy Award-winning filmmaker from Moloka‘i, earned a BFA in Film Production from Chapman University. As Moloka‘i’s first professional filmmaker, he has been in the industry since 2001, contributing to productions aired on PBS National and Arte France. Matt played key roles in Part 3 of “Songs of Love.”

Yeajee Lee, Producer

A graduate of Ewha Women’s University, was a producer at KBS Korea’s National TV Broadcasting from 2005 to 2014, creating nationally popular programs. In 2015, Yeajee joined SM Group, where she is currently the SM C&C Studio Head, overseeing non-script original contents' content planning. She played a crucial role as a producer in content development for “Songs of Love.”

Michael-Thomas Foumai, Music Composer

Michael is the Director of Artistic Engagement and the first Composer in Residence for the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra. His music, described as “vibrant and cinematic” (New York Times) and “full of color, drama, and emotion” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel), beautifully created melodies for “Songs of Love.”

Gary Pak, Writer

A writer, director, jazz pianist, and Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, he directed, co-produced, and wrote the full-length documentary Huli, which was invited to HIFF 2020. Pak graduated from Boston University with a BA and from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with an MA and a PhD. Born and raised in Hawai'i, his grandfathers fled from a Japanese-occupied Korea in 1905. In Songs of Love from Hawai'i, his storytelling shines in Part 2, drawing from cherished memories with his grandmother, Lim Ok-Soon, who came to Hawai'i as a picture bride.

Ye Soo-jung, Actress

A renowned South Korean actress since her 1979 debut, is an icon in the industry. Known for her exceptional performances in theater and cinema, she played notable roles in films like <The Thieves> (2012), <TRAIN TO BUSAN> (2016), and <Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds> (2017). Her voice acting in “Songs of Love” Part 2, portraying Lim Ok Soon, adds depth to the film.



Cast and Key Crew



Richard Yongjae O'Neill

Emmy Award winner and Grammy nominee Richard O’Neill, a virtuoso violist, has mesmerized global audiences, collaborating with esteemed orchestras and leading initiatives to introduce chamber music to thousands in South Korea and Japan. Recognized for his artistic contributions, O’Neill serves as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Korean Red Cross, Special Olympics, and UNICEF.

Ignace “Iggy” Jang

Renowned violinist Ignace “Iggy” Jang, Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra’s concertmaster, captivates audiences worldwide with his extraordinary style, impeccable musicianship, and exquisite timbre. Born to Korean parents in France, Jang’s artistry graces prestigious stages from Paris’ Théâtre des Champs-Élysées to Seoul Arts Center. A graduate of the Paris Conservatory, he earned an Artist Diploma degree from Indiana University and went on to serve as a visiting scholar.

Keola Beamer

Keola Beamer has breathed new life into slack key guitar music yet stays true to its deep Hawaiian roots. He is a Hawaiian legend: singer-songwriter, composer, guitar master, with an impeccable, gorgeous style that is featured on The Descendants soundtrack and his 17 CDs. His music, featured in the Part 3 of “Songs of Love” showcases true humanity.

Chee-Yun

Violinist Chee-Yun, a prodigy from Seoul, enchants audiences with her brilliant concerto performances worldwide. Trained at Juilliard and mentored by renowned instructors, she has graced stages with orchestras like the San Francisco Symphony and NHK Symphony, leaving an indelible mark on the international classical music scene.



Media Coverage



English Language



About Creating Songs of Love from
Hawaii'i



Filmmaker of 'Songs of Love'
Jinyoung Lee



New musical film premiering at HIFF
that showcases Korean immigrants in
Hawai'i



The Intriguing Tale of
Korean Diaspora!
with Film Director Jinyoung Lee



Korean Language



“사진과 음악으로 무한대의 감동을!”
120년 하와이 이민사를 그려낸 음악 다큐
[신장식의 뉴스하이킥], MBC 230811 방송



[인터뷰] 120년 전 하와이로 간 ‘사진신부’를
아세요? 영화 <하와이 연가> 이진영 감독



[주말문화] 미주 한인 이민 120년 하와이
에 울려 퍼진 사랑의 노래'



사진 한장 보고 결혼하던 시절... 미주 한
인 이민 120주년 다큐 ‘하와이 연가’

Songs of Love from Hawai'i (2024)

Film Stills & Behind the Scenes



High Res Film Stills [DOWNLOAD](#)

Film Trailer [English](#) / [Korean](#)

Film Screener is available upon request



Songs of Love from Hawai'i



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From Songs of Love : My Halmeoni's Brass Bowl